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VIGILANCE IN PENNSYLVANIA:

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD ACTIVITIES
IN THE KEYSTONE STATE, 1837-1861

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If you've never heard of William Still, then you're missing one of the great stories in Pennsylvania history.

The youngest of eighteen children, Still was a son of former slaves who started working as a clerk in the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society during the 1840s and became the principal organizer of the state's Underground Railroad network during the years before the Civil War. Still's passion for aiding fugitives really blossomed after he had the extraordinary experience of being reunited with his own brother who had arrived in the Anti-Slavery offices as one of many former slaves looking for assistance, unaware at first that the clerk he was addressing was actually his youngest brother.

Energized by this dramatic and tearful reunion, Still soon took command of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, a semi-public organization which acted as a kind of clearinghouse for runaway slaves who arrived in Pennsylvania looking for help relocating either within one of the Northern free states or Canada. Along with other members of the committee, Still interviewed the runaways and kept an invaluable journal documenting their frequently terrifying escapes and experiences in bondage. He also corresponded with various participants in the underground network who regularly assisted those runaways and carefully warned him whenever "boxes" or "packages" were due to arrive in Philadelphia.

There were many unsung heroes like William Still during the years when slavery existed in this country, people whose moral outrage and personal bravery compelled them to risk their lives and careers to help the unfortunate victims of a wicked system. But

what separated him from nearly any other figure from this period was that Still meticulously preserved the evidence of their struggles, hiding the Vigilance Committee records in a cemetery during the Civil War, and finally publishing them to wide acclaim in 1872.

Yet people today often remark that the Underground Railroad was secret and therefore no documents exist to verify its existence, at least by traditional means. This is just not quite true. For Pennsylvania alone, using Vigilance Committee records, newspaper advertisements and press accounts of runaways, court cases involving the recovery of fugitives and other selected diaries and letters, it is possible to document nearly 2,000 escapes between 1830-1861 --using only contemporary evidence. This impressive data set doesn't even include the numerous oral traditions and local folklore that suggest thousands more legitimate escape stories from across the Commonwealth.

That is one of the most important conclusions contained within the following study. It turns out that Pennsylvania offers the best documentation of the Underground Railroad anywhere in the nation. For those who are familiar with the state's African-American history, this judgment will come as no great surprise. Pennsylvania's free black population was one of the nation's largest, richest, and most socially active in the years before the Civil War. Self-made free black strivers like William Still were not only common in cities like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but also in small towns such as Columbia, Mercersburg, and Norristown.

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Their churches, newspapers, fraternal organizations, political societies and extended family networks provided the principal institutional support that clothed, fed, and relocated most escaping slaves. Popular accounts often depict fugitives hiding in secret passageways under the homes of white abolitionists, but anyone who stops to consider the issue will understand immediately why it made much more sense for most runaways to stay within black neighborhoods. This is not meant to deny that some whites helped fugitives. They did. Especially within this state, a small network of abolitionist Quakers (called Hicksites) provided invaluable aid, both monetary and physical. However, the bulk of the work and money for Underground Railroad activities came from free blacks like Vigilance Committee chairman Still.

The state government's interest in documenting such activities comes during a period of renewed public interest in the topic. Thousands of newspaper features, magazine articles and documentaries have appeared in the last several years, discussing topics connected to the Underground Railroad and runaway slaves. In 1998, after nearly a decade of study, Congress passed the National Underground Network to Freedom Act, which authorizes $500,000 annually to protect the legacy of the Underground Railroad. With that goal in mind, plans are currently underway to construct the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, an estimated $80 million heritage museum project. Major heritage tourism efforts, such as those in Lancaster County, are becoming commonplace in regions that once harbored fugitives.

Yet amidst this explosion of public attention, there has been relatively few signs of academic engagement. After generations of scholarship and folklore that celebrated a legendary network of heroic white abolitionists, there has been a growing realization in historical circles that most fugitives escaped on their own and relied mainly on the

kindness of black strangers to achieve their freedom. At least among academic historians, this striking revisionism, coupled with a lingering impression that there is relatively no contemporary evidence, has created an unusual degree of wariness about reaching any further conclusions. "Among historians," one scholar has suggested recently, "the underground railroad has become a dead issue."[1] As if to confirm that judgment, the most ambitious study of runaway slaves yet undertaken, published in 1999, contains only two index entries for the Underground Railroad. The authors of that widely acclaimed monograph, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, are candid about the reasons for this decision. "Although historians continue to disagree about various aspects of the Underground Railroad," they write, "few deny that even today it is shrouded in myth and legend."[2]

For residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this judgment offers a particular challenge, since arguably no state was more vital to the fugitive aid networks that existed across the antebellum North. Local studies invariably exaggerate the role of their own region, but the case for Pennsylvania is strong and rests upon such fundamental matters as geography and demographics. The state was not only the largest positioned along the Mason-Dixon line (which historically demarcates North from South) but also it was the closest to the slave states which contained the highest percentage of urban and literate slaves, or in other words, the ones likeliest to flee. Nonetheless, it was the state's own antebellum demographics which explains why Pennsylvania, an otherwise conservative place on issues concerning slavery and race, became such an unlikely haven for fugitives. While many people are familiar with the region's unique Quaker heritage

[1] Stanley Harrold, "Freeing the Weems Family: A New Look at the Underground Railroad," Civil War History 42 (December 1996), 290.

and that sect's historic (but sometimes overstated) association with abolitionism, there is less awareness regarding the state's extraordinarily rich black heritage. In many ways, the story of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania chronicles the struggles of those free black residents as much as the dramatic escapes of the fugitives.

This study offers a set of starting points and strategies for scholars, teachers and preservationists who want to use the evidence from Pennsylvania sources in order to achieve a better understanding of how the Underground Railroad operated in antebellum America. From the outset, it should be acknowledged that this study is largely based upon discoveries and insights from generations of other scholars in Pennsylvania history and relies especially on some excellent recent work in the state's antebellum social and political culture. Although many readers will be surprised by the information contained in these pages, the truth is that most Pennsylvania historians have been aware of these developments for quite some time. Nonetheless, there is a clear need --even among those professional scholars-- for a monograph that synthesizes all of the disparate elements that have been unearthed over the last several years. To begin this process, the study has been divided into three sections. The first section offers a thematic overview of the Underground Railroad, attempting to place the story in the larger context of state and national history. Section Two provides a description of the people and operations of Pennsylvania's Underground Railroad. The final section offers suggestions for further research and an analysis of selected preservation issues.

Ultimately, this study represents just the first phase of a major on-going effort by the state's historic and preservation agencies to reinterpret the network to freedom that existed in antebellum Pennsylvania. In many ways, the next phase will be even more

[2] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York:

important, as local historians join with these state agencies to initiate a comprehensive effort to examine and document various local traditions about the state's Underground Railroad. If successful, this monograph will provide a general road map for those investigators, offering useful context, reference material and bibliographical support to hard-working agents in the field. Hopefully, there will be many such agents. Most of the state's 67 counties contain some historical connection to the triumphs and struggles of fugitive slaves or free black residents. There is much work to be done. Our goal must be nothing less than finding a new generation of William Stills to preserve and commemorate these stories that are so vital to the history of freedom and the legacy of race in America.

Oxford University Press, 1999), 336n.

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SECTION ONE

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

OVERVIEW

Attempting to place the Underground Railroad in a historical context raises literally dozens of potential issues. Political historians can focus on the role of abolitionists in the break up of the Jacksonian-era party system. Cultural historians might choose to evaluate the self-made ethos that drove many fugitives out of bondage. Legal historians are apt to find abundant material in the state sovereignty questions raised by the various federal fugitive slave acts. Transnational historians could place the runaways in a larger demographic context, as part of a general movement of peoples in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Social historians could analyze the complicated inter-racial dynamics of abolitionism. Local historians often find in the story of the Underground Railroad confirmation of Pennsylvania's once dominant position in American culture and political life. Folklorists consider the topic as a case study in the dilemmas of integrating oral tradition into standard narratives. All of these approaches have some validity. The question is how to organize them into a coherent framework.

This study attempts to do so by identifying three major themes that will help place Pennsylvania's Underground Railroad in a meaningful historical context. The first theme considers the ***Symbolism*** of the network to freedom. In many ways, the symbolic nature of the Underground Railroad has had an even greater significance on the national consciousness than the immediate impact of its operations had during pre-Civil War days. Reaching such a conclusion should not undermine the real value and risk of maintaining the fugitive support network, but any study of the Underground Railroad must begin by coming to terms with elusive judgments about its fundamental nature and scope of

operations. The second theme embraces the large rubric of ***Slavery and Anti-Slavery*** in the development of the American nation. Despite all of the research and writing about the institution of slavery and the opposition it generated across the United States, there are still complexities to this great debate that are not widely understood. Moreover, these unexpected wrinkles --on topics such as resistance to slavery and the divisions among abolitionists-- have a direct impact on interpretations of the Underground Railroad. Finally, the last theme discussed at length concerns the ***Crisis of the Union*** and attempts to outline how the escaping slaves not only contributed to the coming of the Civil War, but also helped define Pennsylvania's role in that tragic conflict.

1. SYMBOLISM

Throughout American history, there has been a tendency to celebrate certain national symbols that provide short cuts for explaining complicated developments and offer dramatic versions of a heroic past. For generations of Americans, the "frontier" and the "melting pot" have offered such appealing storybook elements, but few national symbols of resistance have proved as enduring as the Underground Railroad. It has effectively become part of the national consciousness, transcending a particular historical moment or the bitter legacy of racial division. Any person who sympathizes with the cause of freedom finds inspiration in the story of the runaway slaves escaping from tyranny. Recognizing this moral component is necessary, especially at the outset of a historical endeavor, because often the recitation of facts and the careful scrutiny of evidence appear to diminish the grandeur of such cherished symbols. Yet this should not

be so. Establishing accurate historical context or seeking the truth about the past, however imperfectly, represents a different, but equally important, assertion of values.

Origins of the Term. Before addressing the larger question of how to separate symbolism from reality regarding the operations of the Underground Railroad, it is worth considering the origins of the term itself. There have been a number of local legends about the birth of this phrase --all quite similar-- but many readers, especially from Pennsylvania, will be familiar with a tradition that places the earliest usage in Columbia, Lancaster County. According to one version of the story, sometime in the early nineteenth century, slave owners began realizing that they could not track their runaways past the small Pennsylvania borough near the Mason-Dixon line that was heavily populated with Quakers and freed slaves. Aging abolitionists recalled that the frustrated slave hunters from the South "seemed to have reached an abyss, beyond which they could not see, the depths of which they could not fathom, and in their bewilderment and discomfiture they declared *there must be an underground railroad somewhere*."[3] While there is little harm in believing such stories, there is no satisfactory method for proving them.

There are, however, some profitable approaches to resolving this question. First, since railroads did not become commonplace in the United States until the 1830s, it is logical to conclude the term could not have originated prior to that period. Second, recognizing the limitations of nineteenth-century communications, one must presume that

[3] Robert C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 34-5. Essentially, the same story also appeared that year in Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans, History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with biographical sketches of many of its pioneers and prominent men (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1883), 74. See also, Lancaster New Era, "Did the Term 'Underground Railroad' Originate With Incident In Columbia," July 1, 1994. Some have mistakenly dated this story in 1804, confusing it with another tale concerning the attempted

the likeliest source for disseminating this popular phrase was through the newspapers. In his groundbreaking 1961 study, The Liberty Line, historian Larry Gara was unable to identify any newspaper articles or advertisements that contained the phrase "Underground Railroad" before the 1840s. The first example he turned up was from the Chicago Western Citizen, an abolitionist journal that reprinted a story in 1842 about a fugitive who had been recaptured and returned to the South. Under duress, the slave reportedly admitted to his master "the abolitionists had a railroad under ground" which had carried him to Oswego, New York. Various other abolitionist newspapers, particularly from "western" states such as Illinois and Ohio began employing the metaphor frequently throughout the 1840s. Gara reports that many newspapers actually ran advertisements touting the success of the "Liberty Line" and even announcing impending organizational meetings for various "conductors" and "agents." Regardless of the exact moment of conception, it was these early efforts at propaganda that popularized the phrase. By 1856, Frederick Douglass was actually bemoaning the general lack of discretion. "I have never approved of the very public manner, in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the 'Under-ground Railroad,'" he wrote, "but which, I think, by their open declarations, has been made, most emphatically, the 'Upper-ground Railroad.'"[4] Yet ironically, Douglass himself had been guilty of publicizing the same fugitive escape network in his work as publisher of newspapers such as The North Star and Frederick Douglass' Paper. Extant issues of these papers contain several early references to the Underground Railroad, including a detailed 1848

kidnapping of noted abolitionist Stephen Smith's mother, also related by Smedley. That anecdote, however, involved a slave owner from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania --not the South.

description of the New York State Vigilance Committee, "composed mostly of colored people" and "instituted expressly for the management of the underground railroad."[5] The truth is that the "Underground Railroad" was already old news by the 1850s. In 1848, for example, noted advocate for public education and Massachusetts congressman Horace Mann had celebrated the supposedly covert network on the floor of the House of Representatives, stating that "the escape of the children of Israel into Canaan is a direct precedent for the underground railroad to Canada."[6]

The inherent contradiction exposed by these examples should be obvious. If the *Underground* Railroad required so much secrecy, then why all of this publicity? The answer begins to unmask some of the myths behind the phrase. From the beginning, the Underground Railroad was a symbol as much as a physical reality. It was a principal tool in the sectional propaganda war. Southerners had an interest in exaggerating northern aid to fugitive slaves in order to explain the flight of their supposedly loyal property and to win tougher legal protections from the federal government. Meanwhile, northern abolitionists had an equally compelling interest in hyping their support for fugitive escapes, thereby helping to raise funds and dramatize their cause. Clearly not all of the operations of the Underground Railroad were conducted in secrecy.

Definitions and Descriptions. So how were they conducted? There has long been a popular impression, fueled mainly by historical fiction and local newspaper features, that the Underground Railroad was a well-organized, national network of white,

[4] The first three quotations in this paragraph, including Douglass's, come from Larry Gara, The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996 ed. --orig. pub. 1961), 144n, 144-5, 147-8.
[5] (Rochester, NY) The North Star, May 19, 1848. See also issues from February 25, 1848; December 15, 1848; May 9, 1849; May 25, 1849; and from (Rochester, NY) Frederick Douglass' Paper, August 6, 1852.
[6] "Speech of Mr. Horace Mann of Massachusetts in the House of Representatives," June 30, 1848, (Washington DC) The National Era, September 21, 1848.

usually Quaker, abolitionists who plucked slaves from southern plantations and carried them all the way to freedom in Canada. Along the way, the fugitives were allegedly hidden in secret rooms and spirited through underground tunnels in desperate flight from the relentless pursuit of evil slave-catchers. In more recent years, the popular literature has focused greater attention on the fugitives, describing, often in rich detail, the hidden codes and symbols that runaways reportedly used while following the North Star to freedom. While there is some truth to these impressions, the real story is predictably much more complicated. Larry Gara devoted a large portion of his revisionist 1961 study to dispelling the myth that there was an organized, national network of fugitive aid operatives. "Far from being secret," Gara argued, "it was copiously and persistently publicized, and there is little valid evidence for the existence of a widespread underground conspiracy."[7] Actually, serious historical accounts both before and after the appearance of The Liberty Line have offered at least some disclaimers along those lines--with equally limited impact on the popular legend. Wilbur H. Siebert, whose 1898 monograph was a particular target of Gara, made no special claim for a national "Underground Railroad" organization. "In truth," Seibert wrote, "the work was everywhere spontaneous, and its character was such that organization could have added little or no efficiency."[8] The powerful railroad metaphor has always implied far more organization than ever existed. Subsequently, this has created a problem in establishing parameters of a workable definition. Was the term "Underground Railroad" meant to include any escape from slavery that employed assistance or just escapes that relied upon

[7] Larry Gara, The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad (orig. pub. 1961--Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 193.
[8] Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898), 67, 69. "It is quite apparent," Siebert wrote, "that the Underground Railroad was not a formal

covert and organized aid? Few authors have bothered to work out a systematic answer to that question. In recent years, the National Park Service has leaned toward the broader view. The 1998 Theme Study defines the Underground Railroad as "the effort -- sometimes spontaneous, sometimes highly organized-- to assist persons held in bondage in North America to escape from slavery." Likewise, the public pamphlet distributed by the agency claims the term "refers to the movement of African-American slaves escaping out of the South and to the allies who assisted them in their search for freedom."[9] Yet surely every escape required some help --one doesn't move from Virginia to Canada entirely alone-- and thus the current definition being promoted by the National Park Service presumably covers all cases of runaway slaves. There is nothing inherently wrong with such a broad view, but this represents a significant departure from the traditional meaning of the phrase.

Another possible approach is to shift the focus from specific escapes toward general questions of fugitive aid. In Pennsylvania, for example, participants in the Underground Railroad spent as much time collecting and spending funds as they did eluding bounty hunters. Nor were they very quiet about their activities. In fact, the opposite is true. Most Pennsylvania residents who assisted fugitive slaves did so defiantly, often openly, and without too much concern for secrecy. They had some contacts in the South itself (which

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organization with officers of different ranks, a regular membership, and a treasury from which to meet expenses." Neither quote appears in Gara's revisionist study.

were kept much more discrete), but for the most part, Pennsylvania's underground agents focused on fugitives only after their arrival within the Commonwealth. At least in this state, the Underground Railroad might best be defined as a series of semi-public fugitive aid networks (some formally organized and some not) that provided money and labor for a variety of legal and extra-legal purposes --all designed to contribute to the immediate destruction of slavery. Unlike some more theoretical abolitionists, the agents of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania worked toward very practical goals. They purchased freedom for selected slaves, compensated reliable guides or friendly ship captains who transported runaways, fought fugitive slave and kidnapping cases in the courts, outfitted runaways with new clothes and identities, and attempted to relocate ex-slaves within free black communities both inside and outside the United States. They did not quibble over philosophical doctrine or legal codes or hostile public opinion. In their immense outrage against moral injustice, they simply acted. However, it is worth noting that the sheer variety of their activities provided useful cover for any more dangerous (and illegal) operations. They were radical --but not foolhardy. Years ago, Albert Bushnell Hart, offered an eloquent description of this outlook in the introduction to Wilbur Siebert's classic work. “The Underground Railroad was simply a form of combined defiance of national laws, on the ground that those laws were unjust and oppressive,” Hart wrote.

> It was the unconstitutional but logical refusal of several thousand people to acknowledge that they owed any regard to slavery or were bound to look on fleeing bondmen as the property of the slaveholders, no matter how the law read.

[9] Marie Tyler-McGraw and Kira R. Badamo, Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study (Washington, DC: NPS, September 1998), 1. C. Peter Ripley, et.al., The Underground

> It was also a practical means of bringing anti-slavery principles to the attention of the lukewarm or pro-slavery people in free states; and of convincing the South that the abolitionist movement was sincere and effective.[10]

Within Pennsylvania, their numbers were small and their presence scattered, although concentrated mostly in the state's southeastern counties. Also, despite the invaluable support of numerous white abolitionists, the majority of the state's participants were black.

Scale of Operations. The "combined defiance" that was the Underground Railroad manifested itself most intensively from the 1830s until the outbreak of the Civil War. During those years, traditionally referred to by historians as the "antebellum period," the movement to abolish slavery steadily gained adherents across the North. The abolitionist organizations most prominently associated with aiding fugitives (and preventing the kidnapping of free blacks by slave catchers) were called "vigilance committees" --a common nineteenth-century term that effectively meant a working group. According to historians James and Lois Horton, these committees were "the most structured aspect of the underground railroad."[11] In 1836, David Ruggles and other Empire State abolitionists formed the nation's first fugitive Vigilance Committee in New York. The Philadelphia Vigilance Committee organized in August 1837 after a series of confrontations between the city's black community and various kidnappers and slave catchers. The Philadelphia group conducted a vigorous business until 1842 when a race riot in the city shook the confidence of the committee's largely black leadership. Then

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Railroad (Handbook 156, Washington DC: NPS, 1998), 45.

[10] "Introduction" by Albert Bushnell Hart in Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898), viii-ix.

after a period of lessening activity, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act reinvigorated the militant sensibilities of several black leaders and they established a reconstituted --and more aggressive-- Acting Committee in 1852 under the leadership of William Still. Other vigilance committees sprung up in places such as Boston, Detroit, and Cincinnati. These were semi-official organizations that elected officers, published at least some notice of their activities and generally appeared to coordinate fugitive aid efforts. Their influence, however, was confined mainly to their own states or regions, although there was still plenty of contact across both state and national borders, as members corresponded with an ever-evolving network of agents, allies and donors in selected southern ports, northern free states, Canada and Great Britain. Most of the agents were black or from mixed race backgrounds, although there were still a number of key white supporters.

HELP THE FUGITIVES.

The following "secret" notice for the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, under the heading "Help the Fugitives," originally appeared in the Pennsylvania Freeman, an abolitionist newspaper from Philadelphia. It was reprinted in the (Toronto) Provincial Freeman on July 8, 1854.

"Fugitives from southern injustice are coming thick and fast. The underground railroad never before did so large a business as it is doing now. The Vigilance Committee have their hands full, and all they want is the pecuniary means to meet the demands made upon them. This is a matter that of course cannot be made the subject of much public remark. A word to the wise is sufficient. The members of the Acting Committee are Wm. Still, 31 N. 5th St; N.W. Depee, 334 South St; Jacob C. White, 100 Old York Road, and Passmore Williamson, S.W. corner of Seventh and Arch streets. Any money placed in the hands of either of these gentlemen, or forwarded to Charles Wise, corner of 5th and Market streets, Treasurer of the Vigilance Committee, will be secure of a faithful and a judicious appropriation." --*Pa. Freeman*

Unfortunately, there is not much contemporary documentation for their activities. Few letters survive. Newspaper accounts and court records are scattered. Those who kept diaries or record books, such as Robert Purvis, one of the original heads of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, usually destroyed them, fearing such evidence might

[11] James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, In Hope Of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 230.

prove incriminating if seized. However, at least from Philadelphia there is still an extraordinary body of evidence available for examination. Various minutes and journals of the "Vigilant Association" that had been kept by secretary/agent Jacob C. White (covering roughly the period from 1839 to 1844) were rescued from the cellar of a black church that was about to be razed in the 1930s and have been published. Then there is the story of William Still, a free black native of New Jersey, who worked as a clerk for the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society and headed up the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee's renewed fugitive aid efforts during the 1850s. He stubbornly preserved the extensive record of his committee's activities, even going so far as to hide them in a black cemetery during the Civil War. After the fighting was over, Still published the documents he had collected along with some additional commentaries and recollections. This book remains the single most important source on the Underground Railroad. In the preface, Still credits the impulse to preserve his activities –despite the inherent dangers—to a dramatic personal epiphany. Although he had been free-born, Still had older brothers who had been reared as slaves in Delaware. One of them eventually escaped and showed up at Still's office in the Antislavery Society, totally unaware of their connection. As Still listened to the fugitive's story, he slowly realized it was his own brother. The profound tragedy and blessing of that moment convinced him that only "by carefully gathering the narratives of Underground Rail Road passengers" might at least "some of the bleeding and severed hearts … be united and comforted."[12]

Estimating the numbers of fugitives who were "comforted" by the Underground Railroad is a difficult business. The 1850 Census reports just over 1,000 suspected runaways in the previous year from the entire slaveholding South. The next census

William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 4.

(1860) indicates an annual figure of about 800 reported fugitives nationwide. On the eve of the Civil War, there were nearly four million slaves in the United States and only about 230,000 free blacks in the North (plus over 250,000 free blacks in the South). During the antebellum years, the slave population had actually been rising faster than the free black population. There were around 20,000 free blacks in Canada --some American fugitives, but also many descendents of former British slaves or free blacks from either Canada or the United States. Scholars have been essentially forced to rely on unsatisfactory fragments like these to calculate the scale of Underground Railroad operations. The result is widespread disagreement. "Estimates of the number of slaves who made it to freedom in the North vary considerably," according to John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger.

> It is probable, however, that perhaps one or two thousand per year were successful during the post-1830 period. Not all of them traveled along the routes of the Underground Railroad, however. Whatever the exact number, it is clear that the fugitives who made it to freedom in this manner represented, as one historian said, a "mere trickle from among the millions of slaves." By contrast, tens of thousands of slaves ran away each year into the woods, swamps, hills, backcountry, towns, and cities of the South. Indeed, running away in the South was commonplace."[13]

Pennsylvania presents a good example of how difficult it is to measure fugitive traffic. The extant minutes and journals from the Vigilance Committee's activities during the early 1840s suggest that the traffic in fugitives escalated until reaching an average of

[13] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 367n.

three cases per week (or over 150 per year) before the group disbanded.[14] The journal Still kept during the 1850s indicates that nearly 500 fugitives passed through the city from December 1852 through February 1857. His book (which covers a slightly longer period) also documents an additional 300 runaways, suggesting an average of about 100 per year. Presumably extrapolating from this information, the National Park Service handbook on the Underground Railroad concludes that about 9,000 runaways entered the city between 1830 and 1860.[15] Yet local records suggest that there were serious fluctuations in activity. When Still took over in December of 1852, for example, a leading Pennsylvania abolitionist publicly acknowledged that in recent years fugitive aid work in the city had been practiced in a "very loose and unsystematic manner."[16] Of course, it is possible that escaping fugitives passed through the city at the rate of 100 or 150 per year with or without systematic help. Unfortunately, other sources do not add much. Newspaper accounts and court records document a few hundred scattered cases over the entire antebellum period. Thomas Garrett, a Quaker "stationmaster" in Wilmington, Delaware, who sent almost all of his fugitives through Philadelphia, claimed at a public meeting in 1859 that he had been carefully tracking his efforts and had assisted 2,245 runaways during his previous twenty years in the business. Another prolific stationmaster who also utilized the Philadelphia route and reportedly kept a record of successful escapes was Daniel Gibbons of Lancaster County. According to William Still, between 1815 and 1824, Gibbons helped one hundred runaways, and between 1824 and 1853, he aided another eight hundred. Local historians from Pittsburgh

[14] Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 325.
[15] C. Peter Ripley, et.al., The Underground Railroad (Handbook 156, Washington DC: NPS, 1998), 61.

have estimated that about ten percent of the fugitives who made it to Canada passed through Western Pennsylvania.[17] As far as the rest of the state is concerned, there is just no way at the present time to estimate concrete numbers. Almost every county, especially along the Mason-Dixon line, contains oral traditions of white and black families helping fugitives, but nobody has yet attempted to catalogue and systematically analyze these sources. Thus, the only indisputable conclusion one can draw is that there are currently available contemporary records documenting nearly 2,000 escapes through antebellum Pennsylvania. Yet whether that figure represents one hundred percent or ten percent or one percent of the actual total, it provides a stunning (and surprisingly under appreciated) data set for students of the Underground Railroad to examine. Few people realize, for example, that this body of evidence is by far the most complete in the nation. Local historians from other places can make reasonable claims for the prominence of their respective states in the antebellum fugitive traffic, but no other region has the advantage of deriving insights from so much so-called "hard" evidence.

2. SLAVERY AND ANTISLAVERY

If running away was truly "commonplace," yet most slaves never made it to the North, then some old assumptions about southern life need to be reconsidered. In fact, there are a number of previously held notions about the "peculiar institution" that have been revised in recent years. The portrait that has emerged of antebellum slave life is far

[16] J. Miller McKim, secretary of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, writing in the Pennsylvania Freeman n.d., quoted in William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 611-12.
[17] Delaware County (PA) Republican, December 23, 1859. William Still, Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 647. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "Arthursville Abolitionists Ran Underground Railroad Through Pittsburgh," February 22, 1999.

more complicated than the old "Sambo" stereotypes. Historians have rediscovered examples of subtle (and not-so-subtle) assertions of slave independence. It turns out that day-to-day many slaves managed to fight back against their oppressors in ways not yet fully absorbed by the popular imagination. Of course, this trend toward greater detail has also influenced historical judgments about the anti-slavery movement, exposing rifts and prejudices among abolitionists that often got overlooked in earlier, more heroic treatments of the great crusade. In both cases, the results suggest the need for important alterations in the historical context of the Underground Railroad.

Development of North American Slavery. Slavery is as old as human society and has appeared in various forms throughout the world. Yet the development of slavery in the Americas was unique in one particular aspect. For the first time in world history, there was an organized traffic in imported, race-based human chattel (or property) that lasted approximately four hundred years, from 1450 to 1850. During that period, between 10 and 12 million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic, mainly from sections of West Africa that had been torn apart by wars and political chaos. The overwhelming majority of those victimized by the slave trade ended up either in the Caribbean, Central America, or South America --only about five percent arrived in British North America. The Spanish brought the first Africans to North America during the sixteenth century, but the permanent introduction of African labor in the Chesapeake colonies did not begin until 1619, when a Dutch ship seeking food and supplies sold twenty unfortunate captives to Virginia settlers. It is unclear whether those Africans were considered slaves or indentured servants, although it appears likely that for at least the next fifty years, many Africans were treated as servants, not much different than other

white laborers from England. During this era, indentured servitude was a relatively common and legal form a temporary slavery, where a worker (usually a poor, single, young man) signed away most of his rights for a finite period of time, generally seven to 14 years. In exchange for this promise of labor, the owner of the servant agreed to provide food, shelter, training and usually some form of final payment (or "freedom's dues) upon termination of the contract.

Since the labor shortage in colonial North America was acute (and the influx of indentured servants proved socially destabilizing), the importation of slaves increased rapidly. Although most slaves were brought to the tobacco plantations of the Chesapeake region, about ten percent arrived in northern ports like Philadelphia. Slavery had existed in colonial Pennsylvania from the very beginning. A few black slaves had actually preceded the founding Quakers into the Delaware Valley, arriving in the 1660s and 1670s with the first Dutch and Swedish settlers.[18] Most Pennsylvania Quakers did not initially balk at the practice of slavery. For example, not long after William Penn declared his settlement "an holy experiment," 150 African slaves landed in Philadelphia. By 1750, there were about 11,000 black residents in Philadelphia – or one out of every three inhabitants-- and over half of these Africans were slaves.[19] Even William Penn owned some slaves. In fact, during the early years of the colony, 70 percent of the Quakers who led the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting were slaveholders.[20] Nor were Quakers the only Pennsylvania colonists who engaged in the slave business during the early part of the

[18] Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 9.
[19] James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, In Hope Of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5. Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5.

eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin, for example, printed advertisements for runaways in his newspapers and owned slaves himself. In 1750, he wrote his mother that he and his wife were planning to sell two of their slaves at "the first good Opportunity," because "we do not like Negro Servants." If anything, however, Franklin's distaste for those servants appeared to be based on their work habits and skin color –not out of humanitarian concern. "I am partial to the Complexion of my Country," he wrote in a pamphlet urging the exclusion of Africans ("Blacks" and "Tawneys") from the colonies, "for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind." Before long, Franklin purchased several other slaves for his family. Yet eventually the logic of the American Revolution, exposure to hard-working and intelligent free blacks in Philadelphia and rising antislavery sentiment during an age of Enlightenment, weighed on Franklin's keen mind. By the 1780s, he had reversed course, publicly denouncing slavery and even serving as the president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.[21]

Sectionalism and Slavery. Fortunately, Franklin was not alone in changing his mind about the status of slavery in North America. By the 1750s, most Quakers had turned against the institution. In fact, the earliest antislavery protests in the colonies seemed driven by the concerns of various Protestant religious sects, especially the Quakers, but also groups such as the Covenanters, Methodists, and Moravians. As early as 1688, a handful of Quakers (who had formerly been Mennonites) from Germantown had issued a public appeal against the peculiar institution. But it was not until the Revolutionary era (1763-1787) that antislavery sentiment became truly popular. By then

[20] Jean Soderlund, Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 34.
[21] Quoted in Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), ix-x.

both colonists and their British rulers were painfully aware of the hypocrisy of white Americans who demanded political freedom for themselves as they simultaneously reduced Africans to the status of property. Some historians attribute the race-based nature of American slavery to this fundamental paradox. Others insist that racial prejudice defined the importation of Africans from the beginning. Regardless of this dispute, however, a significant number of Americans had begun working toward the ultimate abolition of slavery --especially after more than 5,000 blacks served in the Revolutionary armies. The emancipation movement took hold most prominently in northern states, where slave labor was less vital to the economy. The territory of Vermont abolished slavery in its proposed state constitution in 1777 but did not enter the Union until 1791. Among the original states, Pennsylvania was the first to declare bondage illegal with the gradual abolition act of 1780. However, this statute (and subsequent legislation) placed almost as much emphasis on its "gradual" nature as it did on abolition. Slave owners were allowed to keep permanent possession over all slaves born before the statute took effect as well as temporary ownership (for 28 years) over any children of their slaves –as long as they were properly registered with state authorities. In theory, this could have allowed for the continuation of slavery in Pennsylvania through the Civil War era. Nevertheless, the institution died out more quickly, and by 1810, the U.S. Census recorded only two slaves still kept in bondage in Philadelphia.[22] Other states north of the Mason-Dixon line eventually followed Pennsylvania's somewhat uncertain lead. The Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled slavery unconstitutional in 1783. New Hampshire's state constitution of 1783 effectively abolished slavery. Gradual abolition laws passed in

[22] Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4. See table on PA slaves, p.5.

Connecticut (1784), Rhode Island (1784), and New York (1799) during the eighteenth century. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, passed under the Articles of Confederation, banned slavery north of the Ohio River (in territories that would later become the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin). Maine was admitted as a free state in 1820 as part of the Missouri Compromise. Stubbornly, New Jersey refused to pass a final abolition act until 1846 --and the state still contained 18 legal slaves at the time of the Civil War. Delaware, along with other Union border states (or territories) such as the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, maintained slavery through the Civil War. West Virginia did not split away from Virginia and become a free state until 1863. A handful of other free states from the West (California, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon) entered the Union as part of various early nineteenth-century political compromises or during the war itself.

CHRONOLOGY OF EMANCIPATION

1780	Pennsylvania
1783	Massachusetts, New Hampshire (and approximately 20,000 slaves emancipated by British troops after the Revolutionary War)
1784	Connecticut, Rhode Island
1787	Northwest Ordinance
1791	Vermont
1799	New York
1820	Maine
1829	Republic of Mexico
1834	Great Britain and dominions
1844	Oregon
1848	French and Danish colonies
1846	New Jersey
1850	California
1862	District of Columbia
1863	West Virginia, Kansas
1864	Maryland, Nevada
1865	Slavery abolished throughout U.S.

Although there was also some antislavery sentiment in the South during the Revolutionary period, no southern state actually adopted emancipation. Some slaveholding states, such as Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, enacted legislation that authorized "manumission," or the legal option of releasing slaves upon the death of a master or through a financial transaction. In addition, southern delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia agreed to end the notorious foreign slave trade,

accepting a ban on the importation of Africans to the United States after 1808. There were also compromises at the Constitutional Convention over provisions for allocating political representation to the slave states (i.e. the "three-fifths" arrangement) and for discouraging fugitive escapes (Article IV, Section 2). However, some historians have argued that the most eloquent indication of revolutionary sentiment against slavery was the noticeable absence of the word itself from the Constitution. The Framers went to considerable lengths to avoid enshrining what they generally viewed as a necessary evil within the nation's most sacred political text. Yet whatever the level of discomfort over slavery might have been, most public opposition to the institution disappeared in the South after 1793. That was the year that Eli Whitney introduced the cotton gin, a device that improved the way the way short staple cotton was processed and subsequently revolutionized the nature of slavery and southern culture. Essentially, the rise of "King Cotton" transformed the southern life by making slavery far more profitable, especially in the old Southwest (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas) where only short staple cotton could be grown. This resulted in a reordering of slave culture (and power) away from the Chesapeake and tobacco and toward the cotton plantations of the Deep South. The repercussions of this change cannot be overstated. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the South became an export-driven agricultural --almost colonial-- economy, while northern free states steadily adopted industrial capitalism as their economic orientation. As sectional differences grew ever more pronounced, many Americans noted ominously that the nation increasingly resembled two separate countries. Southerners began to defend slavery not as a necessary evil, but as a foundation of their culture and values. On the other hand, many northerners began to

perceive the "slave power" as a threat to their own liberties. But even more important for this study, the changes in the southern economy translated into a thriving domestic slave trade. Planters from the Upper South, suffering from a relatively stagnant tobacco economy, tried to escape their debts by selling off slave property to more prosperous cotton planters in the Deep South. Perhaps more than any other single factor, this fear of being sold "down river" motivated slave to escape.

Escaping Slavery. According to the records of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, the slaves who finally determined to escape into Pennsylvania generally shared a number of characteristics. **1)** An overwhelming majority of the fugitives who arrived in southeastern Pennsylvania came from four places: Delaware, Maryland Washington D.C. and Virginia. **2)** In addition, a significant majority of those slaves came from towns such as Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond, where they were frequently involved in trades and lived within households that contained only a few slaves, rather than on large plantations working in the fields. **3)** Occasionally, fugitives traveled together (sometimes with groups as large as two dozen men, women and children) and a fair number came armed. **4)** Almost all runaways had to purchase transportation or food along the way --the Underground Railroad did not often come for free. **5)** Most successful fugitives were young, adult men. **6)** Water routes, via schooner or steamship or river crossing, were almost as popular as (and more likely to succeed than) traveling over land. **7)** Although many escapes depended on sheer determination and physical stamina (running by night and hiding by day), a significant minority involved elaborate deceptions like assuming false identities or forging travel documents and occurred in the full light of day. **8)** And finally, a number of fugitives who arrived in Philadelphia

benefited from the assistance of a small, brave group of southern "conductors," who worked quietly in slaveholding towns and ports.

Slave Life in the Upper South. Recognizing these shared traits requires some revision of previous assumptions about antebellum slave life, particularly in the Upper South. Despite stringent laws requiring slaves to carry "passes" or official travel documents, it was not uncommon to see blacks travelling alone or in small groups in sections of the South. One must remember that there was over a quarter of a million free blacks living in southern states by 1860. In addition, many cash-starved slaveholders, especially in urban areas (like Baltimore or Richmond) were willing to hire out their slaves to other employers. This not only created a steady traffic of blacks, especially in and around southern cities, but also a sense of independence among some hired slaves, who were often allowed (or able) to keep some of their earnings. According to the most recent estimates, 31 percent of the slaves from urban homes and 6 percent of those from rural plantations or farms were hired out.[23] This explains how many fugitives were able to pay for transportation or food along their journey. In fact, it is possible that a majority of fugitives who arrived in Pennsylvania had been hired out at one point or another during their servitude. Several recent studies have also examined the frequency of slaves "lying out" in woods, swamps or free black neighborhoods to assert their independence, escape from punishment, or visit with estranged family members and friends. "Absenteeism was so common," writes John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, "that most masters attempted to deal with it by inflicting mild punishments or ignoring it

[23] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.

altogether."[24] Strong-willed and experienced slaves could escape unmolested for at least brief periods of time in the antebellum South. A number of fugitives found that they had unexpected but critical head start once they determined to make a permanent break.

On the other hand, the logistical challenge and unknown dangers of permanent flight to the North stymied all but the most ambitious or desperate runaways. For slaves who were almost universally illiterate and intentionally kept ignorant of political and social realities in the free states, it was nearly impossible to gather reliable information about such escapes. Nothing better illustrates this crippling disadvantage than the poignant recollection of Peter Still, the brother of Pennyslvania's well-known Underground Railroad organizer William Still. Upon arriving in Philadelphia after making his escape from slavery, Peter learned from his long-lost brother that their mother was alive and residing in New Jersey, but that news only puzzled him because he had never before heard of such a place.[25] Yet once again this represented another relative advantage for slaves from the Upper South. They were more likely than the plantation slaves of the Deep South to have contact with northerners --in produce markets along the Mason-Dixon line, around the ports of the Atlantic coast, or perhaps through contact with visitors-- and thus better information about possible routes to freedom. They were also more likely to have some exposure to education, especially those who were involved in the various craft trades of the port cities. Slaves like Frederick Douglass (then known as Frederick Bailey) in places like Baltimore were able to teach themselves to read and write and subsequently use those abilities to forge necessary travel documents.

[24] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98.
[25] Kate E. R. Pickard, ed., The Kidnapped and the Ransomed: Being the Personal Recollections of Peter Still and His Wife "Vina," After Forty Years of Slavery (Syracuse, NY: 1856), 247-51; quoted in Gilbert

All of these factors help explain why the vast majority of fugitives who came into Pennsylvania arrived from states like Maryland and Virginia. For similar reasons, slaves from border states such as Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee and western Virginia were the ones most likely to attempt the dangerous river crossings that might land them safely in the Midwestern free states of Illinois, Indiana, or Ohio. Nonetheless, there was still significant movement in other areas of the South. A very few slaves actually trekked northward from Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. But often overlooked is the fact that Mexico, like Canada, was also a free country and slaves along the Texas border frequently took advantage of this opportunity. One slaveholder from San Antonio wrote in 1855 that his slaves "cannot be Kept here without great risk to their running away," because there were "always Mexicans who are ready and willing to help the slaves off." Some slaves, especially in the hill country of the Carolinas or the swamps of Georgia and Florida, simply drifted away into semi-permanent "maroon" communities. Also, towns in the South that contained concentrations of free blacks proved to be popular and often permanent hiding places for runaways. According to John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, New Orleans "was a favorite destination for runaway slaves seeking help from free black relatives."[26] Ultimately, the portrait that emerges of antebellum American slavery, suggests that, especially around its edges, there was a surprising degree of fluidity, as both masters and slaves struggled to impose their own sense of order on an unnatural arrangement.

Osofsky, ed., Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 17.

[26] George S. Denison to Eliza, San Antonio, February 10, 1855, quoted in Franklin and Schweninger, Runaway Slaves , 26, 70.

Antislavery Reaction. Just as slavery was a dynamic system, subject to changes over time and real differences depending on location, the movement to oppose slavery also manifested a complicated and turbulent evolution. After some Revolutionary-era success in achieving gradual emancipation policies throughout the North and increased manumissions in the South, white antislavery advocates faced a curious dilemma. Many of them were uncomfortable with the consequences of their own actions --namely, free blacks living among them in rough political and legal equality. As Alexis de Tocqueville, the keen French observer of nineteenth-century America, once cogently noted, "the prejudice which repels the Negroes seems to increase in proportion as they are emancipated."[27] In many ways, this became the underlying rationale for northern free blacks to increase their participation in the Underground Railroad. Frustrated by their own precarious status in northern society, many blacks shed inhibitions about violating national laws and determined to do whatever they could to help slaves escape. Over time, a small but dedicated portion of the white abolitionist movement joined them, some orchestrating helpful publicity, others providing necessary financial support, and a very brave few risking their own lives and property to aid the fugitives.

Foundations of the Black Community. Not long after the introduction of emancipation in Pennsylvania, the black community in Philadelphia began confronting the problems of racism in a free society. Unsatisfied with what they perceived as the narrow focus of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (which had been formed in 1775 as the "Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage"), two black leaders, Absolom Jones and Richard Allen, formed the Free Africa Society in 1787. Abolition Societies existed across the North, even in small towns such as Washington,

[27] Brinkley, 1: 418.

Pennsylvania (1789), but they were white-dominated and intent on fighting slavery strictly through legal and political channels.[28] By contrast, the Free Africa Society was black-led and aimed to provide direct economic assistance to black widows and orphans. Even this group, however, soon broadened its own focus and helped contribute to the emergence of organized black churches in Philadelphia. Jones established the city's first all-black religious institution, the African Church of St. Thomas, and also the first black Masonic lodge. Meanwhile, Allen founded the nation's first African Methodist Episcopal Church, known as "Mother Bethel." Other black churches soon followed, pioneering institutions such as the African Zoar Methodist (1794), First African Presbyterian (1807), and First African Baptist (1809). By 1820, there were about 15,000 free blacks living in Philadelphia County (out of a population of 135,000) who owned more than $281,000 worth of property.[29] Just about half of the adult free blacks in Pennsylvania belonged to some type of mutual aid society or self-help organization.[30] According to the African Repository (a census of Philadelphia's black community), during the 1830s, free black residents in the city supported 14 churches, 2 public halls, and over 60 benevolent associations.[31] This pattern of community building through mutual aid, Protestant churches and fraternal organizations was repeated on a smaller scale throughout many northern towns. In most states, members of these black communities not only paid taxes, but also voted (at least initially) and served in the armed forces. When British troops threatened to invade Philadelphia during the War of 1812, for example, leading figures

[28] Whitfield J. Bell, Jr. "Washington County, Pennsylvania, in the Eighteenth Century Antislavery Movement," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 25 (Sept-Dec. 1942), 135-42.
[29] Philadelphia Tribune, "Business is not new to Black Philadelphians," February 11, 1997.
[30] Charles L. Blockson, The Underground Railroad (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987, 228.
[31] Julie Winch, "'You Have Talents—Only Cultivate Them': Philadelphia's Black Female Literary Societies and the Abolitionist Crusade," (pps. 101-118) in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds.,

such as Richard Allen faithfully organized a "Black Brigade" of 2,500 men to defend the city.[32]

Removals and Restrictions. Unfortunately, few whites were impressed by these demonstrations of good citizenship from the black community. An early sign of trouble came with the surprising popularity of "colonization," a movement to relocate blacks outside of the United States. When a Quaker slave owner first attempted to organize a serious relocation effort of former slaves to Sierra Leone during the 1780s, Philadelphia blacks had reacted coolly and the idea quickly died.[33] However, in December 1816, white southerners formed the American Colonization Society and only a few years later managed to establish a colony for former slaves and American free blacks in Liberia. Although never as successful as many of its supporters had hoped, the organization (backed by such prominent political figures as Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln) ultimately convinced about 14,000 American blacks to immigrate to Africa. Nor was the prospect of relocation limited by an African connection. After slaves in Santo Domingo (or Haiti) revolted during the 1790s and created the first independent black-led nation in the Western Hemisphere, many considered the island as a potential haven for African-Americans. At least in this case, some militant free blacks were also intrigued by the idea, mainly out of respect for the reputation of Toussaint L'Ouverture. The Haitian leader had not only defeated Napoleon's colonial armies, but also freed slaves in the Spanish colony of Hispaniola and even dreamed of ending the slave trade altogether by

The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 101n.

[32] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 183.

[33] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 179. In 1815, free black

invading West Africa.[34] In 1824, some Philadelphia blacks actually organized a Haitian Emigration Society and by the end of the decade over 8,000 blacks from across the North had reportedly moved to the island --although a number soon returned.[35] As late as 1862, President Lincoln called free black leaders into the White House to encourage them to join a colonization expedition in Central America that he had convinced the wartime Congress to finance. The black elite in Philadelphia was flabbergasted. "Shall we sacrifice this, leave our homes, forsake our birthplace, and flee to a strange land," they demanded, "to appease the anger and prejudice of the traitors now in arms against the Government?"[36] Nonetheless, many proponents of colonization considered themselves antislavery, and at various times, several leading black figures, such as Pittsburgh's Martin Delany, also toyed with the idea of mass black migration out of the United States. Yet inevitably those advocates would confront the injustice and impracticality of the cause and abandon their plans. However, it is not unreasonable to consider how the Underground Railroad was also "an instrument of colonization," in the words of historian Larry Gara, since it probably succeeded in removing more blacks from the United States than all the rest of these other ventures combined.[37]

At least the white supporters for colonization usually claimed to be acting on behalf of black interests. Many other white Americans during this period were far less

sea captain from Massachusetts, Paul Cuffe (1759-1817) would attempt another settlement in Sierra Leone that also ended in failure.

[34] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 194.

[35] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157, 161.

[36] Quoted in David W. Blight, Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 140.

[37] For an interesting revisionist approach to the colonization movement, see Douglas R. Egerton, "Averting a Crisis: The Proslavery Critique of the American Colonization Society," Civil War History 43 (June 1997), 142-56. Larry Gara's quotation comes from the preface to the 1996 edition of The Liberty Line, xii.

circumspect about expressing their deep-rooted racial hostility. During the 1830s, many states in the North, including Pennsylvania, revoked the franchise, or voting privileges, for black citizens. Race riots also became a familiar threat in northern towns. In Pennsylvania, there were racial disturbances in Philadelphia (1834, 1838, 1842), Columbia (1834-5) and elsewhere. Blacks were acutely aware of their precarious position in northern society and learned not to rely upon the law to protect them from racism. "We never travel far from home," wrote Sarah Forten, a leading figure in Philadelphia's black community of Philadelphia, "and seldom go to public places unless quite sure that admission is free to all."[38] Yet surprisingly, more than a few whites expressed contempt for their upwardly mobile black neighbors in a manner that suggested jealousy as much as prejudice. One Philadelphia commentator from the 1830s, for example, dismissed the city's racial minority as "dressy blacks and dandy colour'd beaux and belles" with an "overweening fondness for display and vainglory."[39]

Abolitionism. It was from within this climate of increasing racial polarization that the abolitionist movement was born. During the 1830s, Americans witnessed the appearance of a new, more radical group of antislavery agitators who insisted upon the immediate and uncompensated abolition of slavery. Most historians date this new era of abolitionism to the appearance in 1831 of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, The Liberator. Garrison famously proclaimed in his opening edition, "I am in earnest-- I will

[38] Letter to Angelina Grimke, Philadelphia, April 15, 1837, quoted in James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 171-2.

[39] John Fanning Watson, Annals of Philadelphia (1830), quoted in Phillip Lapsansky, "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images,"(pps. 201-230) in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 218-9. For an example of a stunning cartoon, lampooning free black social aspirations, see figure 19, p. 222.

not equivocate-- I will not excuse-- I will not retreat a single inch-- AND I WILL BE HEARD." That attitude found a ready audience from Americans who were caught up in a new far-reaching spirit of moral reform. Abolitionism was only one of several causes, such as temperance (or prohibitions on the sale of alcohol), the asylum movement (for more humane treatment of criminals and the insane), mass public education, utopianism (including free love communes) and feminism, that sought to remake northern society in bold, radical ways. For most of these causes, their driving force was a national religious revival that historians have labeled the "Second Great Awakening." Certainly, the abolitionists adopted several tactics of the wildly successful itinerate ministers and soon proved to be equally adept at populist organization. For example, Garrison helped create the American Antislavery Society in Philadelphia in 1833. Five years later, there were more than 1,350 chapters and over 250,000 members. The Pennsylvania Antislavery Society was founded in Harrisburg in 1837. Almost overnight, abolitionism became one of the most successful grassroots movements in American history.

Politics of Abolitionism. Like many other grassroots organizations, however, the American Antislavery Society quickly suffered from severe growing pains. The more broad-based the membership became, the less cohesion there existed among the leaders. Before long, the movement splintered during a famous confrontation at the 1840 national convention. Ostensibly, the dispute was over the selection of a woman to serve on the executive committee, but the rupture reflected several underlying cultural divisions. The Garrisonians were radicals in almost every sense, as willing to embrace feminism and pacifism as abolitionism and determined not to compromise their philosophical doctrines in order to gain popular support. On the other hand, many of the sincerest advocates of

abolition came into the movement out of religious devotion and did not otherwise share such radical approaches to politics and society. Both black and white abolitionists in Pennsylvania got caught up in this bitter internal feud. Ultimately, most of the state's leading abolitionists came to accept the more moderate and practical approach embodied by such famous (and wealthy) antislavery advocates as the Tappan brothers of New York. It was largely from this network that the Underground Railroad recruited its agents. In fact, it would be fair to say that most vigilance committees were off-shoots of the various state anti-slavery societies. The Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, for example, shared the Anti-Slavery Society's offices.

Slave Narratives. Abolitionists of all stripes, however, discovered that their most effective propaganda came from the stories of ex-slaves. For those who might have been disappointed that the number of passengers on the Underground Railroad has been characterized as only a "mere trickle," it should be noted that whatever their totals, these fugitives had a tremendous impact on the contemporary debate over slavery's evils. Nothing stirred the antebellum literate northern public more than dramatic escape stories and tales relating the horrors of slave life. There were over one hundred published slave narratives in the years before the Civil War that combined to sell hundreds of thousands of copies.[40] Some of the more famous of these were by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup. In addition, the best-selling novel of the age, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1851) by Harriet Beecher Stowe, vividly depicted both the horrors of slavery and the dangers of fugitive escape. For largely the same purpose, the members of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee interviewed all of their fugitive guests at length.

[40] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. The Classic Slave Narratives (New York: Penguin, 1987), ix.

They did this partly to guard against potential spies, but mostly to record the injustice of slavery for posterity.

3. CRISIS OF THE UNION

It is hard to dispute that the fugitive was at the center of the national crisis that led to Civil War. Escaping slaves helped fuel the growing sectionalism, as both sides disagreed, sometimes violently, over how to deal with problem of recovering human property. The issue created strange incongruities. For example, during most of the antebellum period, northern states were the ones loudly proclaiming their support for state's rights --as a vehicle to prevent the federal government from enforcing fugitive slave laws. In Pennsylvania, white politicians who had steadily helped erode the legal status of free blacks in their own state, found themselves compelled to enter a war that ultimately made those residents full legal citizens. And finally, there is abundant evidence to suggest that it was the Union policy of encouraging fugitives --or "contrabands" as they were called during the conflict-- to flee the South and join the Federal

COLONIAL-ERA FUGITIVE STATUTES

New Netherlands (1629): "And any Colonist who shall leave the service of his Patroon and enter into the service of another, or shall, contrary to his contract, leave his service, we promise to do everything in our power to apprehend and deliver the same into the hands of his Patroon or attorney, that he may be proceeded against according to the customs of this country as occasion may require."

Virginia (1642): "Whereas complaints are at every quarter court exhibited against divers persons who entertain and enter into covenants with runaway servants and freemen who have formerly hired themselves to others …Be it enacted and confirmed that what person or persons soever shall entertain any person as hireling, or sharer …without certificate … shall for every night that he or she entertaineth any servant, either as hireling or otherwise, forfeit to the master or mistris of the said servant twenty pounds of tobacco."

Pennsylvania (1700): " …whosoever shall apprehend or take up any Runaway servant, and shall bring him or her to the Sheriff of the County, such Person shall, for every such Servant, if taken up within Ten miles of the Servants abode, receive Ten Shillings; and if Ten miles or upwards, Twenty Shillings."

--source, Marion Gleason McDougall, Fugitive Slaves: 1619-1865 (orig. pub. 1891; New York: Bergman Publishers, 1967 ed.), Appendix A.

armies that provided a critical difference at a key moment in the fighting.

The irony of States Rights. One of the most important elements in the development of the underground network to assist fugitive slaves was the evolution of federal law –a story that turns several traditional expectations upside down. Statutes regulating the process for returning fugitives had existed since colonial days. Slave owners and masters of indentured servants felt perpetually aggrieved over what they perceived as insufficient public concern over the extent of the runaway problem. After the Quakers began turning against slavery in the middle of the eighteenth century, many southerners suspected that they were orchestrating escapes and protecting runaways --in essence, conducting an early version of the Underground Railroad. In widely quoted (and misunderstood) letter from 1786, George Washington commented sharply on such a dispute that had emerged in Philadelphia over freedom for a Virginia slave. He wrote that the slaveholder came to the city "to attend what he conceives to be a vexatious lawsuit respecting a slave of his, which a Society of Quakers in the city (formed for such purposes) have attempted to liberate."

I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of [slavery].

--George Washington, 1786

Washington was referring to the organization that was the forerunner of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and their legal wrangling to apply the terms of the 1780 Pennsylvania abolition law to slaves brought into the state by visitors --not to some covert scheme to physically "liberate" fugitives. Although Washington labeled the Quakers' legal maneuverings as "repugnant to justice" and as action taken "extremely impolitickly," he

also added a forthright statement of his own antislavery views. "I hope it will not be conceived from these observations," he wrote, "that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is be Legislative authority."[41]

The U.S. Congress enacted the first Fugitive Slave Law in 1793 as a response to a dispute that emerged between Pennsylvania and Virginia. This argument, however, was not ostensibly over any escaped slave, but rather a free black man who had been kidnapped [from Philadelphia] and taken to Virginia. The governor of Virginia refused to extradite the man despite repeated requests from the governor of Pennsylvania in protest against the absence of any federal statute regulating the return of fugitive property.[42] Presumably, this was an artificial crisis brought on in part to highlight the concerns of many southerners over the type of anti-slavery activities by the Quakers and others that had aggravated George Washington. From 1793 until a new, tougher federal fugitive slave law passed in 1850, there was ever increasing tension between North and South over slavery –and repeated attempts by southern congressmen to strengthen the provisions of the 1793 law. This heightened tension ignited during the 1840s when an explosive Supreme Court decision, Prigg v. Pennsylvania (1842) determined that states did not have to participate in the enforcement of federal fugitive laws. The case involved a Maryland slave owner who had been convicted in Pennsylvania for kidnapping after he

[41] George Washington to Robert Morris, Mount Vernon, April 12, 1786, George Washington Papers, Library of Congress, <<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgibin/query/r?ammem/mgw:@field(DOCID+@lit(gw280323))>>
[42] Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig. ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 7-8.

tried to seize one of his runaways on his own --without any formal legal proceeding. Although the court overturned his conviction on the grounds that the state law unconstitutionally deprived him of his property, it reaffirmed the general rights of states to regulate the use of their own resources in connection with federal mandates. The result was that most northern states passed new "personal liberty" laws that asserted their "states' rights" by prohibiting their sheriffs and constables from aiding in the pursuit of fugitives and forbade the use of state or local jails to house the suspected runaways. Pennsylvania instituted such a law in 1847.

Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Furious southerners soon began calling for federal laws that would override states' rights and impose some sense of order on the fugitive process. Their agitation ultimately led to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which was passed as part of a general compromise over the admission of California into the Union. The "Great Compromise," as it was known, however, involved a complicated set of legislative tactics designed to smooth the way for California's entrance as a free state --an important political development since it would alter the delicate balance of free and slave states. The new fugitive law was designed to placate southerners upset by this decision. It provided for a new class of U.S. commissioners who had financial incentives to recapture fugitives and provided them with the authority to deputize citizens to aid in the enforcement of the law. The statute also shifted the burden of proof and limited fugitive rights in court. Ironically, few northern politicians anticipated that these provisions would arouse any public opposition.

Yet reaction to the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law was violent in certain quarters in Pennsylvania. Within a year, a group of citizens in Lawrence County publicly

resolved to "make war upon that infamous law."[43] Abolitionists in Lancaster County managed to do just that. The so-called Christiana riot on September 11, 1851 resulted in the death of a Maryland slaveholder named Edward Gorsuch and three black men who fought off the slave hunting party. The subsequent "treason" trial mobilized the state's abolitionist community. Along with a handful of other violent encounters in 1851, such as confrontations in Boston over fugitives Shadrach Minkins and Thomas Sims, this episode in Christiana significantly hardened public opinion in North. Over eighty fugitives had been returned to the South in the year after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, but violent resistance cooled the ardor of the bounty hunters.[44] Although slave catchers continued to cross into Pennsylvania during the 1850s armed with their federal warrants, they were much less pervasive than the popular literature has suggested. Out of the 332 documented fugitive slave cases in all northern courts during the 1850s, only 82 originated from Pennsylvania.[45] Numerous newspaper articles and court records attest to the indignation these bounty hunters aroused among both free blacks and white abolitionists. In August 1850, whites and blacks rioted outside of a Harrisburg jail as slave owners attempted to seize three of their slaves who had been in local custody.[46] While attending a national free soil convention in Pittsburgh in 1852, noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass famously told the cheering delegates that the "only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make a half a dozen or more dead kidnappers." A

[43] Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig. ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 52.
[44] James McPherson, Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction (2nd edition; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 81-2.
[45] Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law: 1850-1860 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), Appendix, 199-207.
[46] Pennsylvania Telegraph, August 28, 1850, quoted in Eric Ledell Smith, "Researching the Underground Railroad in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania," forthcoming case study from PHMC.

significant number of people in antebellum Pennsylvania were willing to follow his advice.[47]

Political Realignment. However, despite the pockets of abolitionist outrage in Pennsylvania, the state's political leaders, personified by future president James Buchanan, chose to pursue what many considered policies of excessive accommodation with southern interests --principally out of a desire for party unity. The two major political parties of the Jacksonian era had been the Democrats, who supported President Jackson, and the Whigs, who opposed his administrative style and many of his social and economic policies. For both parties, slavery was a dangerous issue that threatened to divide their northern and southern wings. Subsequently, whenever possible, the political leadership in Washington, or in state capitals like Harrisburg, chose to ignore the growing sectional dispute over the peculiar institution. This studied indifference lasted in Pennsylvania for most of the 1850s as well. Despite the excitement over events like Christiana, the leading political issue of the day was "nativism" or the fear of many native-born Protestants that foreigners, especially Irish Catholics, were destroying the traditional values of the American republic. The nativists (or "Know Nothings") dominated state politics during the mid-1850s. Coupled with increasing agitation over slavery, this had the effect of disrupting the old Democratic-Whig party system. The resulting chaos presented an opportunity for political abolitionists, who had been marginalized in the old system, to create new alliances with former Whigs and anti-slavery Democrats (like Pennsylvania congressman David Wilmot). This loose coalition soon evolved into the Republican Party, which, especially in Pennsylvania, worked

[47] Address to Free Democratic Convention, Pittburgh, Pa., August 11, 1852, in John W. Blassingame, ed., The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One: Speeches, Debates, Interviews (Vol. 2 1847-54, New Haven:

diligently to co-opt the Know Nothing or nativist movement. This realignment of political parties, which occurred across the North, was especially complicated and protracted in Pennsylvania.[48] Thus, while many northern states became active in organized resistance to the enforcement of the fugitive slave laws and other issues connected to the controversies over slavery, Pennsylvania politicians remained distracted. The state's legislature did not pass a resolution condemning Stephen A. Douglas's controversial 1854 plan to repeal the Missouri Compromise and open the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to referendum (or "popular sovereignty") on slavery. Nor did the state pass tougher personal liberty laws, which were devices employed by several New England states between 1854-1860 to continue to discourage federal slave-catchers from operating within their borders. In fact, in 1852, Pennsylvania repealed the 1847 personal liberty statute that it had instituted in the aftermath of the Prigg decision.[49] By 1857, although Democrat James Buchanan had won the recent presidential election (a three-way contest among Democrats, Republicans and Nativists), the Republican Party was firmly established in most northern states. Within a few years, as the last nativist political organizations collapsed, the Republicans would emerge as the majority party in the North.

John Brown's Raid. Subsequently, by the end of the decade, the nation was now --for the first time-- socially, economically and politically divided along sectional lines. Practically every significant development seemed to further inflame the growing

Yale University Press, 1982), 2: 390.

[48] See especially Tyler N. Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and William E. Gienapp, The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[49] For an interesting discussion of the evolution of northern personal liberty laws, see Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig. ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 170-86.

extremism on each side. Hundreds died as pro- and anti-slavery forces battled for the right to decide whether the territory of Kansas would protect or abolish slavery. The Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857) that blacks were not citizens and suggested that Congress could not prohibit slavery --a position that had been the cornerstone of the new Republican Party. The Panic (or recession) of 1857 created additional ill-will as regional economic divisions deepened and pro-slavery defenders taunted suffering northern industrial workers as "mud-sills." But no single event illustrated the polarized nature of the late antebellum period more than John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in October 1859. For most of his life, Brown, who had operated a tannery in New Richmond, Crawford County, Pennsylvania from 1825-1835, appeared an unlikely candidate for national fame (or infamy, depending on the perspective). He was a strict Calvinist who raised a large family and muddled through several business ventures before throwing himself completely into the abolitionist cause. Brown and his sons spent time in Kansas during the period of most intense skirmishing, where they gained notoriety by murdering several pro-slavery settlers with broadswords. Over the next few years, Brown moved quietly between Canada, the Northeast and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, as he planned a more decisive strike against slavery. Brown, who had participated in Underground Railroad activities during his years at New Richmond, now raised funds for a plan to invade the South. He hoped to open a new pathway for fugitives along the Appalachian mountains, and even, possibly, spur a full-scale slave revolt. Most Pennsylvania abolitionists, although partly awed by Brown's passion, kept their distance from what they perceived as a crazy plan. In practical terms, the invasion, which began with an assault on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, was an

unmitigated disaster. Several men were killed, Brown was captured, and no slaves escaped or revolted. However, the prophet-like abolitionist understood that his hanging in December and subsequent martyrdom would ultimately further his aims. "I am worth inconceivably more to hang than for any other purpose," he said.[50]

Brown's raid had a dramatic impact on the business of the Underground Railroad. Back in Philadelphia, William Still deemed it "prudent" to stop his practice of elaborate record-keeping for the Vigilance Committee. "The capture of John Brown's papers and letters, with names and plans in full," he wrote, "admonished us that such papers and correspondence as had been preserved concerning the Underground Rail Road, might perchance be captured by a pro-slavery mob."[51] Moreover, the inflamed rhetoric from each side over the Harper's Ferry fiasco spilled over naturally into the upcoming election. For many abolitionists, despite their misgivings about mainstream politicians, this was no time for radicalism but rather, finally, the moment to focus their energies on winning the national election. Most joined in supporting the Republican Party nominee from Illinois, a moderate but still firmly antislavery candidate named Abraham Lincoln. Their pragmatism proved justified, when Lincoln was elected President in November 1860 despite winning absolutely no electoral votes in the South,. The purely sectional nature of the Republican success, however, triggered the final rupture in the escalating crisis. Even before Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861, seven states from the Deep South voted to secede from the Union.

Contrabands and Wartime Emancipation. Southern secession created a surreal effect in several ways. First, President Lincoln refused to acknowledge the legal rights of

[50] Stpehen B. Oates, To Purge this Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown (New York , 1970).
[51] William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 531.

states to secede, insisting throughout the war that the Federal armies were merely putting down a criminal insurrection, not defeating a sovereign nation. Second, since it was southerners who divided the Union and fired the first shots of the conflict, northern politicians initially determined that the most effective way to conduct the war was over the straightforward question of preserving the Union. Although, as Lincoln later stated, all knew that slavery was "somehow, the cause of the war," it seemed imprudent, and perhaps unconstitutional, to wage a war to free slaves. Yet almost immediately events conspired to overwhelm such inhibitions. Slaves in southern states recognized that the war represented a chance to turn the "mere trickle" of the Underground Railroad into an over-ground tidal wave. Wherever possible, they began fleeing into Union lines, creating a logistical and political nightmare for Federal generals. One Union commander, Benjamin Butler, settled the problem by declaring these fugitive slaves, "contraband of war," and employing them in physical labor behind the lines. His phrase delighted the northern press and led many to begin labeling the fugitives as "contrabands." During the first two years of the war, Lincoln revoked several attempts by his military subordinates to emancipate the contrabands under their control and resisted efforts by the Congress to provide for permanent "confiscation" of rebel property, fearing such actions were unconstitutional. Finally, however, the President determined that the timing was right for an executive decision to emancipate rebel slaves as a necessity of war. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, did not therefore free slaves in Union controlled territories or states, but it promised something perhaps more significant. The executive order opened the way for the recruitment of blacks into the Federal armies. By the end of the Civil War, over 185,000 blacks had served on the Union side, providing

a critical surge in manpower just as many northern whites, suffering from war weariness, were starting to protest against the draft and lose interest in continued military service. In Philadelphia, former Underground Railroad leaders like William Still, now devoted their energies to the war effort, in places like Camp William Penn, a staging ground for black troops in present-day LaMott, Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County. Here they believe was finally their opportunity to prove the humanity and potential of black citizens to skeptical whites.

Final Victory. The valuable contribution of black soldiers did prove at least one essential fact about the Civil War conflict. Despite the immense material advantages of the Union over the Confederacy --more guns, more factories, more supplies, more money, etc.-- the outcome was still decided by people. Without numerous examples of bravery among the combat soldiers and abundant perseverance from the bulk of those left on the homefront, there was always a chance that the Confederates might win. Nothing demonstrates the contingencies of the war more clearly than an extraordinary meeting between President Lincoln and Frederick Douglass that occurred in the summer of 1864 and concerned the Underground Railroad. It had been a bad summer for the Union side. General Ulysses S. Grant, who had recently been given command over all Federal armies, was engaged in a bloody stalemate with Confederate General Robert E. Lee in the terrain outside of Richmond. The continued carnage, coupled with additional calls for new enlistments, had created a shift in public opinion toward opening peace negotiations. Panicked, several Republican political leaders met secretly to discuss the possibility of dumping Lincoln as the Union nominee for president. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party was preparing to contest the 1864 presidential election on the grounds that the war had

been unnecessary. They were offering to restore the Union "as it was," meaning with slavery kept intact. Many political observers predicted that Gen. George McClellan, the likely Democratic nominee, would capture the White House in November. In many ways, it was the lowest moment of the war for the president. He responded to this threat by asking Douglass, the most famous black American of the age, to prepare plans t o reconstitute the Underground Railroad. Stunned and saddened by the prospect that slavery might survive the fighting, Douglass nevertheless complied with Lincoln's request.[52] Fortunately, a few weeks later, Union general William Sherman led his troops into Atlanta, and the public mood brightened considerably. Lincoln won reelection, the Confederate war effort collapsed and within a year slavery was abolished throughout the nation as a result of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

Frederick Douglass Plans for a New Underground Railroad

Rochester, New York, August 29, 1864

Hon. Abraham Lincoln
President of the United States
Sir:

Since the interview with wh[ich] your Excellency was pleased to honor me a few days ago, I have freely conversed with several trustworthy and Patriotic Colored men concerning your Suggestion that Something should be speedily done to inform the Slaves in the Rebel States of the true state of affairs in relation to them and to warn them as to what will be their probable condition should peace be concluded while they remain within Rebel lines and more especially to urge upon them the necessity of making their escape. All with whom I have thus far spoken on the subject, concur in the wisdom and benevolence of the Idea, and some of them think it is practicable. That every Slave who Escapes from the Rebel States is a loss to the Rebellion and a gain to the Loyal Cause, I need not stop to argue the proposition is self evident. I will therefore briefly submit at once to your Excellency --the ways and means by which many such persons may be wrested from the enemy and brought within our lines:

1st. Let a general ag't be appointed by your Excellency charged with the duty of giving effect to your Idea as indicated above. Let him have the means and power to employ twenty or twenty-five good men, having the cause at heart, to act as his agents.

2nd. Let these agents which shall be selected by him, have permission to visit such points at the front as are most accessible to large bodies of Slaves in the Rebel States….

3rdly. In order that these agents not be arrested or imed[ed] in their work, let them be properly ordered to report to the Generals Commanding the several Departments they may visit….

4th. Let provision be made that the Slaves or Freedmen thus brought within our lines shall receive substinence until such of them as are fit shall enter the service of the country or otherwise be employed….

This is but an imperfect outline of the plan, but I think it is enough to give your Excellency an idea of how the desirable work shall be executed. Your Obedient Servant,
Fredk Douglass

[52] Douglass to Lincoln, Rochester, NY, August 29, 1864, reprinted in Philip S. Foner, ed., The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (4 vols., New York: International Publishers, 1952), 3: 405-6.

Of course, the end of slavery did not mean the realization of full equality for blacks. The freed slaves encountered considerable obstacles in the reconstructed South, eventually losing many of their legal and political rights as a system of formal segregation emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century. Yet until the first few decades of the twentieth century, over 90 percent of American blacks lived in the former confederacy. It took literally generations of persistent discrimination, economic inequality and unpunished mob violence, coupled with job opportunities in the industrialized northern cities, to achieve what the Underground Railroad had never managed --a wholesale migration of blacks following the North Star. This time, however, many of them came on real railroads in broad daylight to cities like Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia. Still, all was not peaceful. Race relations in the North deteriorated and many white families fled the cities for the suburbs, creating yet another chapter in the history of American social demographics. And so the historical context continues, proving once again that no victories or defeats are ever completely final.

SECTION TWO

PARTICIPANTS AND OPERATIONS

OVERVIEW

Despite a flurry of historical scholarship focusing on the extensive free black community in antebellum Pennsylvania, the general public remains largely unaware of both the longstanding roots of black culture within the state and the national prominence of many the state's black residents. Even Wilbur H. Siebert, whose work has often been dismissed in recent years for overly celebrating the role of the white abolitionist in the Underground Railroad, recognized the contributions of blacks to the process. "In the South much secret aid was rendered fugitives, no doubt, by persons of their own race," he wrote, albeit somewhat grudgingly. But as his focus shifted northward, Siebert became more certain. "In the North," he added, "people of the African race were to be found in most communities, and in many places they became energetic workers. Negro settlements in the interior of the free states, as well as along their southern frontier, soon came to form important links in the chain of stations leading from the Southern states to Canada."[53] The problem for Siebert and other historians has been to recover evidence of this extensive black role. Other than documentation for a few prominent figures like Harriet Tubman, there has been comparatively few historical records turned up for the many black or mixed race individuals who risked their lives and donated their money to aid fugitives. Yet this does not mean that the evidence does not exist. Through years of scholarship and with recent advances in technology, modern historians have been able to produce much more sophisticated portraits of nineteenth-century figures whose voices have been unavailable (or ignored) in previous narrative accounts. This section profiles

[53] Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898), 91.

some of these free black leaders, as well as their key white allies, who operated in or around Pennsylvania during the years of greatest Underground Railroad activity. The central profiles concern members of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, an organization that directed (or inspired) much of the state's Underground Railroad activities for over two decades.

PHILADELPHIA VIGILANCE COMMITTEE (1837-1861)

According to newspaper reports from the period, the "Vigilant Association of Philadelphia" organized in August 1837 with a standing committee of fifteen, a small group of three officers, and a paid agent. The president of the new association was James McCrummell. Jacob C. White served as secretary and agent, while James Needham filled the position of treasurer. All three men were leading figures in the city's black community. McCrummell was a dentist, White a barber, and Needham had been treasurer of the Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons. The stated purpose of the organization was "to create a fund to aid colored persons in distress." Members who contributed 75 cents annually were allowed to participate in the balloting for the fifteen-person Vigilance Committee. The Association met in the African Zoar Church on Broom Street and published its proceedings in the city's leading abolitionist newspaper, the Pennsylvania Freeman. Within a year, a "Female Vigilant Association" was formed to "act in concert" with the men. The women's president was Elizabeth White.[54]

Determining the impetus behind this new development is actually a little complicated. Joseph Borome, who wrote the seminal article on the formation of the

[54] National Enquirer, August 10,31, September 7, 1837; Pennsylvania Freeman April 26, May 10, July 5, 1838; quoted in Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 323.

Vigilance movement in Philadelphia, attributes the birth of the group to the "persuasion" of twenty-seven-year old Robert Purvis (1810-1898). According to Borome, the young Purvis had been energized by an ongoing confrontation that had captivated black Philadelphia since the summer of 1836, involving certain Maryland slave catchers and four fugitives known as the Dorsey brothers. The case spawned several violent encounters, dramatic courtroom moments, tense negotiations and exciting getaways that culminated with a well publicized escape for one of the brothers the very month that the Vigilant Association was formed. Borome bases this interpretation largely on a recollection that Purvis provided to Robert Smedley for his 1883 book on the Underground Railroad in southeastern Pennsylvania. The aging ex-abolitionist recalled how the four fugitive slaves from Maryland, all brothers and all reportedly the children of their master, appeared at his home one day requesting assistance. Already known as someone who aided runaways, Purvis took a special interest in these men, perhaps because he was also the product of mixed race parents. Actually Purvis' lineage was quite unusual for the time. His maternal grandmother was a Moor (black North African) who survived the "Middle Passage," won her freedom at nineteen and married a German-born Jew. His mother was born in Charleston, South Carolina, where she met and married a white Englishman. An abolitionist by nature and a wealthy businessman by profession, William Purvis moved the family to Philadelphia in 1819, beginning a new life as a philanthropist. He soon died, however, leaving his sixteen-year-old son both a large inheritance (reportedly $120,000) and a disposition toward antislavery radicalism. Robert Purvis attended Amherst College and returned to Philadelphia where he married Harriet Forten, the daughter of the city's most notable black couple, James and Sarah

Forten. He became active in both the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society. Described by one scholar as "tall, handsome, and articulate," Purvis soon became a dominant figure in mid-nineteenth-century Philadelphia.[55] Although the time-consuming and expensive nature of the Dorsey brothers' case might very well have convinced Purvis of the need to better organize fugitive aid, it seems unlikely that he would have been the moving force behind the operation without being named as one of its initial officers.

What seems more probable is that Purvis did not become fully active in the vigilance organization until 1839, when the group reorganized and called upon him to serve as its new president. Several changes made at that time appear to indicate a desire to spread the workload and energize the fundraising. In May, the committee added a vice-president, Edwin H. Coates, a local tailor and its first white officer, and designated Robert B. Ayres, a black tailor, as its new secretary, thereby allowing Jacob White to focus on his job as paid agent. Also, the committee formalized White's salary at the rate of $250 per year. The new standing committee included twelve members, exactly half of whom can positively be identified as black residents of the city (James J.G. Bias, a dentist; Daniel Colly and James Gibbons, both attendees of the Colored Convention movement; Stephen H. Gloucester, editor of the Colored American; Walter Proctor, pastor Bethel AME Church, and Shepherd Shay, clothing dealer). Subsequently, the committee kept regular minutes and records of cases, a practice that continued more or

[55] Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 320-23. Purvis recollection, n.d., in R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 353-62. For comments on Purvis' appearance and other trenchant observations, see Roger Lane, William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America (New York:

less for about two years. Recalling the events nearly fifty years later, Purvis simply confused this second phase of the operation with its beginnings. "I think it was about the year 1838, that the first organized society of the Underground Railroad came into existence," he wrote, "of this, I was made President, and Jacob C. White, Secretary. With the exception of myself, I believe Edwin H. Coates is the only remaining one of the original members."[56]

If Purvis was not necessarily the prime mover behind the original Vigilance Committee, then who --or what-- was? At the time, James McCrummell, the city's first vigilance leader, was equally prominent in the local community and the antislavery movement. For instance, along with Purvis, he had been one of the few blacks who were original members of the American Antislavery Society.[57] In addition, both men had also attended the organizational meeting of the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society (along with only five other black residents from the state) just six months prior to the formation of the Philadelphia Vigilant Association. At the 1837 Harrisburg convention, the Philadelphia abolitionists had probably heard a great deal regarding the activities of the recently formed New York Vigilance Committee. Some of the comments might have been negative, since the Antislavery Society had a reputation for emphasizing abolition

Oxford University Press, 1991), 99-100. One of the fugitive brothers, Thomas Dorsey, later became Philadelphia's top caterer.

[56] Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 324. Purvis recollection, n.d. in R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 355. The other members of the 1839 standing committee include: Samuel Hastings, Joseph Healy, Westwood F. Keeling, Samuel Levick, Ralph Smith, and George H. Stewart. See also "Black Operators in Pennsylvania," in Charles L. Blockson, Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania (Jacksonville, NC: Flame International, 1981), 191-3.

[57] Martin Delany described McCrummell (sometimes spelled McCrummill) as a "skillful surgeon dentist" who was "equal to the best in the city." Martin R. Delany, The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States Politically Considered (Philadelphia, 1852), posted on the Internet at <<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/writers.htm>>.

doctrine over practical fugitive aid --a fact that distressed many black leaders. By 1840, the white dominated group had even formed a special committee "to inquire into the cause of the diminution of interest among the colored people in respect to association with us."[58] It is possible that the 1837 Vigilant Association began as a way for black leaders to supplement the Antislavery Society's efforts. On the other hand, the answer may lie with the ambiguous wording of the Committee's initial resolution, "to create a fund to aid colored persons in distress." Such broad language would have allowed the group to address issues such as the kidnapping of free blacks, thereby providing a natural cover for possibly illegal assistance to fugitive slaves. Some scholars have disputed this conclusion, attempting to distinguish Underground Railroad activities from "vigilance" actions on behalf of free blacks, but the participants did not. Both Robert Purvis and later William Still, for example, equated their work for the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee with participation in the Underground Railroad.

The threat to Pennsylvania's free blacks of being kidnapped and sold into slavery was certainly a real one. During the early years of the nineteenth century, kidnapping rings repeatedly stole away young black males from Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia, creating near panic within the minority community. Rev. Absalom Jones and other prominent black residents of Philadelphia sent various petitions to Congress and the state legislature, but by the 1820s, according to one local historian, "kidnapping free blacks had become a well-organized business venture" reportedly stealing upwards of fifty black children per year. Eventually, the criminal activity outraged selected white citizens who joined with the black elite in forming a Protecting Society of Philadelphia,

[58]Quoted in Charles L. Blockson, African Americans in Pennsylvania: A History and Guide (Baltimore:

in what may have been a forerunner of the vigilance movement. Thus, it seems like no coincidence that just as the Vigilant Association was being formed, the city was buzzing once again with rumors that a "noted kidnapper" was back at work, seizing children.[59]

Once the Vigilant Association swung into operation, however, nearly all of the committee's focus was on the fugitive. The first available --and most complete-- records come from the last seven months of 1839 (June to December) and show that out of 54 cases of assistance, only two were directed toward free blacks from the area. All the rest were fugitives, including three people identified as "imposters" who were helped anyway. The committee recorded only eight of the fugitives' names --most were referred to simply as "man" or "woman" or even just "case." The committee's secretary (Jacob White) never appeared to use any railroad terminology such as "passenger" or "conductor." Out of the 45 records with gender information, 33 were listed as men or boys and 12 as women, including an "elderly" woman from Blue Ridge, Maryland. There were also 45 fugitive records with place of origin data. Of these, 24 came from Virginia (including one "very interesting" family of eight travelling together), 18 from Maryland, one from Delaware, one from New Orleans, Louisiana, and one (imposter) from Columbia, Pennsylvania. There was hardly any mention of age. In about one-third of the cases, however, the secretary noted the

"Record Of Cases Attended To For The Vigilent [sic] Committee Of Phila by the Agent"

No. 25. Oct 15th [1839] Man, dark complexion from Bal [timore], sent to N.Y. for Trinidad. Note to Wm. B. Johnson. Expence $2.62

No. 26. Oct. 17th [1839] Man, light complexion from Vir.[ginia] Sent to N.Y.C.V. for Can. Note Williams, Junior. Ex. $2.45

No. 27-28. [Oct.] 18th [1839] Two cases, man & woman from Myd sent to Quakertown [Pa], to J. Leas --n. ex. Two week board 3 carriage, 3 toll in[cidental] $7.09

No. 29-30. [Oct.] 27th [1839] Two boys from Ken [MD] sent to Byberry [Pa], one 16, the other 10, by E. Coates. Ex. carriage toll $3.75

Black Classic Press, 1994), 17.

fugitive's complexion (i.e. dark, light, or, in one case, pockmarked) --an important fact emphasized in runaway advertisements. Generally, the information provided in the records was sketchy, usually including some reference to which member of the committee was handling the case, where they sent the fugitives and how much the assistance cost. Typically, the committee spent a few dollars per fugitive, usually to pay for incidentals, carriages and tolls. Most of the fugitives were sent northward to Canada, often through the assistance of the New York Vigilance Committee. This is significant, because it confirms that there was a high degree of coordination across state lines.[60]

Unfortunately, there did not seem to be much coordination within the committee itself. Attendance among the standing committee members was never strong. Within six weeks after Purvis took control of the reorganized effort, two members had resigned and a third followed shortly thereafter. In a cost-cutting measure, the committee then moved in early 1840 that the salary of the secretary (Robert Ayres) be "rescinded." He promptly resigned. Before the beginning of the following year, the committee took an even more drastic step and voted out all of their white members. This coup appears to have been engineered by Purvis who subsequently brought his brother-in-law Robert B. Forten into the group. Without a paid agent, the members then created a special "Acting Committee" of three people who were supposed to rotate every three months while supervising the fugitive cases. Of course, this inevitably wreaked havoc on the keeping of the records. Thus, even though the minutes of an allied organization, the Female Antislavery Society,

[59] Julie Winch, "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 61 (January 1987), 4, 7, 23.
[60] The full minutes and records of the committee are republished in Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 331-51.

indicate that the Acting Committee had directed 163 cases in 1842, there is no evidence of this activity in the extant Vigilant Association materials.[61]

In fact, the report from the Female Antislavery Society appears hard to accept since the Vigilance Committee was falling apart through most of 1842 and 1843. Borome blames the collapse on the Philadelphia race riot of August 1, 1842 that occurred while some of the city's black residents were celebrating the anniversary of West Indian Emancipation Day with traditional parades. According to Joseph Borome, Robert Purvis's home on Lombard Street was one of the white mob's principal targets. Fearing the worst after the city's sheriff told him that there would be no guarantee of protection, Purvis fled to his country home in Byberry, Bucks County. For the next thirty years, he kept his primary residence out of the city. The affair embittered him. In a letter that was published in The Liberator, Purvis poured out his rage against "the apathy and inhumanity of the Whole community" which demonstrated sadly in his opinion the "utter and complete nothingness in public estimation" of blacks and their place in society.[62] From that point forward, Purvis's involvement in the Vigilance Committee appeared perfunctory, always a steady name on the lists but never the same dedication as in the past. In 1843, First Presbyterian Church pastor Charles W. Gardiner assumed the position of president at a public meeting designed to "revive & reconstitute" the ailing Vigilance Committee. Gardiner's leadership, however, did little to change the reversal of fortunes. The Committee even endured public humiliation when a fugitive woman

[61] Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 325n.
[62] The Liberator, September 9, 1842, quoted in Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 92 (January 1968), 327n.

named Harriet Bayley charged James J.G. Bias, a prominent dentist and active member of the committee, with embezzling funds collected on her behalf.[63]

In many ways, the collapse of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee in the aftermath of the 1842 race riots offers a striking metaphor for the general decline in the status and cohesion of the city's once proud black community. For many years, social historians, including even W.E.B. DuBois, attributed much of this reversal in fortune to an influx of ex-slaves into the city's demographics. According to this interpretation, these less educated, less capable individuals drained the community's resources and contributed to declining per capita wealth, rising crime rates and general political apathy. However, modern scholars have largely rejected this argument and focused instead on structural inequalities and the impact of the rising tide of racism associated with Jacksonian America.[64] Consider this: the movement to aid fugitives found organizational life in Philadelphia the same year that the new state constitution proposed stripping black Pennsylvanians of the right to vote. From this perspective, the first vigilance movement was born out of political desperation and faded quickly in economic frustration. During the age of Andrew Jackson, mass political parties and workingmen's associations celebrated the "common man," but often at the expense of women and minorities --both of whom were increasingly locked into subservient roles. In Philadelphia, this ominous

[63] Borome, "Vigilant Committee," 348-350. In the minutes, the report stated that Mrs. Bayley "left Phila in company with Mr. Douglass." Frederick Douglass had a sister named Harriet Bailey who escaped from slavery in 1842. Journals from the period verify that Douglass traveled with her once she had entered the North (see William S. McFeely, Frederick Douglass (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 98-9). Although the minutes refer to a newspaper article about this episode that appeared in the Weekly Elevator, a black abolitionist newspaper based in Philadelphia, on February 17, 1844, they do not specify exactly when the alleged incident originally occurred. It is possible that Dr. Bias was entangled in a controversy with Frederick Douglass' sister.

[64] See Theodore Hershberg, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Philadelphia: A Study of Ex-Slaves, Freeborn, and Socioeconomic Decline," in African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives edited by

trend became apparent in a number of ways, but one of the more telling involved public celebrations such as the parades that sparked the 1842 riots. For years at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city had been the "hub of black entertainment," according to cultural historians James and Lois Horton. Philadelphia not only contained Frank Johnson's famous Brass and Strings Band which performed at events and parades, but also a lively sub-culture of musical theater at clubs such as Dandy Hall where white and black audiences would enjoy popular tunes like Cooney in de Holler and Opossum Up a Gum Stump. [65] Phoebe Rush, one of the most prominent white hostesses in early nineteenth-century Philadelphia society, reportedly had a special affection for the band leader Johnson's musical talents and hired him for various parties and social functions.[66] But by the 1830s, the opportunities for black musicians had diminished as whites began masquerading in blackface, both on the stage in minstrel shows and on the streets in various parades. In Philadelphia, young white men often dressed as black women, calling themselves "Aunt Sallys," during the Christmas and other holiday processions. This seemingly juvenile trend actually signaled a dangerous turn, however, because blacks were becoming increasingly isolated from public life, and these gatherings of whites in blackface often degenerated into drunken, violent mobs.[67]

It took another crisis in race relations to jolt the lapsed Vigilance Committee out of its organizational stupor. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 stunned and scared Pennsylvania abolitionists, a feeling only magnified when Edward Gorsuch and his

Joe William Trotter, Jr. and Eric Ledell Smith (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1997), 123-47.
[65] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157, 161.
[66] Eric Ledell Smith, "Leader of the Band," Pennsylvania Heritage 25 (Summer 1999), 10.

fellow slave-catchers from Maryland confronted the runaways at Christiana, Pennsylvania in October, 1851. The resulting clash and treason trial reinvigorated the vigilance leadership whose old network had helped warn William Parker that Gorsuch was crossing state lines. Once the trial was underway, the temporarily reformed Vigilance Committee also launched a successful fundraising campaign on behalf of the accused.

PHILADELPHIA VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

The following excerpt appeared in Frederick Douglass' Paper (Rochester, NY) on March 4, 1852, detailing activities of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee in the aftermath of the Christiana Riot of 1851.

"The Committee have expended the following amount:

Paid to several Council, $200

For board, clothing, Medical Attendance, and passage to Canada of Geo. Williams, Jacob Moore, and their families, $125

Expended for the 25 prisoners during their four months of confinement, $150

Paid to Dr. A. Cain, $30, Joseph Benn, $20, Josiah Clarkson, $10 (to be distributed among the prisoners' families)

For board & incidental expenses of witnesses during the trials, $95

_____
$630

_____
Amount of Receipts, $689.41
Expenses, $630
Balance in hand, $59.41
There are several families not yet cared for. The committee return thanks to dealers in clothing on Second street, for the contributions so much needed, amounting to some one hundred and twenty-five pieces of clothing.

NATH'L. W. DEPEE, *Secretary.*
February 10, 1852

By the end of 1852, the city was ready once again for a full-time vigilance effort. Old rivalries were finally put aside and new leadership identified. The Pennsylvania Freeman, reported on December 9, 1852 that the Vigilance Committee, meeting in the rooms of the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society, had been reconstituted. According to the report, J. Miller McKim, the secretary of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, opened the public meeting with a lengthy overview of the need for stronger fugitive aid organization.

[67] James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among

> He said, that the friends of the fugitive slave had been for some years past, embarrassed, for the want of a properly constructed, active, Vigilance Committee; that the old Committee, which used to render effective service in this field of Anti-slavery labor, had become disorganized and scattered, and that for the last two or three years, the duties of this department had been performed by individuals on their own responsibility, and sometimes in a very irregular manner; and this had been the cause of much dissatisfaction and complaint and that the necessity for a remedy of this state of things was generally felt.

Several members of the audience then concurred with McKim's rather harsh assessment. Some people spoke out against any "more machinery or officers than might be necessary," indicating a general consensus to keep things simple. The group agreed to form a General Vigilance Committee of nineteen members, with Robert Purvis serving as the official chairman, and an Acting Committee, "to keep a record of all their doings, and especially of the money received and expended on behalf of every case claiming interposition."[68]

Those present decided to name William Still (1821-1902), who was then best known as McKim's capable and unassuming thirty-one-year old assistant at the Antislavery Society office, to hold the key position as the chairman of the Acting Committee. Selected to join Still were Nathaniel W. Depee, who lived on South Street; Jacob C. White, the original secretary/agent of the Vigilant Association and currently a successful barber and manager of the Lebanon cemetery; and Passmore Williamson, the

Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165.

[68] Pennsylvania Freeman 12/9/1852 and n.d., quoted in William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 611-12. The clipping includes names of the 19 members of the General Vigilance Committee as well as addresses for the four members of the Acting Committee.

only white member of this small group. Still was the youngest of eighteen children. Both his parents had been slaves in Delaware. His father had bought his freedom, but his mother was forced to escape (leaving behind two of her sons). They settled in New Jersey where William was born in 1821. He was largely self-educated, arriving in Philadelphia in 1844 and beginning his job at the Antislavery Society (officially called the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery) three years later. Still and his wife Letitia raised four children, two girls and two boys. During his years as chairman of the Acting Committee, Still often brought runaways to stay with his family. Many of the letters he received from fugitives who passed through Philadelphia, containing enthusiastic regards for his wife and little children, suggest that the Still home was a warm, friendly place.[69]

It is possible to put together a fairly intricate inside view of how the Acting Committee operated from 1852-1859 because of the documents that Still preserved and later republished in his 1872 monograph. Within that book, there are collected approximately 250 contemporary letters, dozens of runaway advertisements, and several extended newspaper reports. There are also hundreds of case narratives that are based upon --or taken directly from-- interview reports prepared in the offices at 31 North Fifth Street by Still and other members of the committee. In addition, there are about 25 profiles of active agents, usually written from recollections, and sometimes provided first-hand by the participants. The letters offer perhaps the most striking evidence available anywhere about the nature of the Underground Railroad. Most of the

[69] Information about Still's life comes principally from Larry Gara, "William Still and the Underground Railroad," Pennsylvania History 28 (January 1961), 33-44; and Roger Lane, William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America (New York: Oxford University Press,

correspondence comes from fugitives writing to Still after they have successfully arrived in Canada or other locations. However, a significant number of notes were sent by agents or "station-masters" to the Vigilance offices describing on-going fugitive aid operations.

Near the end of Still's first year on the job, he began an extended correspondence with a fugitive from Petersburg, Virginia named John Henry Hill, mostly concerning Hill's extraordinary escape and his desire to be reunited with the rest of his family in freedom. Writing from Toronto, Canada, Hill described his flight in dramatic detail. In Petersburg, he had been a carpenter, one of about a dozen other slaves owned by John Mitchell. Yet Hill was married to a free black woman named Rose McCrea and allowed to hire out his services --paying his master $150 per year for that privilege. Sensing that his young slave was becoming "a dangerous property to keep," Mitchell made plans to sell John Henry. According to Hill's recollection, he literally escaped from the auction block, fighting his way "tiger-like" until he reached the safety of a friendly residence in Richmond. "Nine months I was trying to get away," he recalled in his letters to Still. "I was secreted for a long time in a kitchen of a merchant near the corner of Franklin and 7th streets, at Richmond, where I was well taken care of, by a lady friend of my mother." Historians from the National Park Service have examined Hill's escape account in great detail, confirming several of the peripheral details, but relying on his testimony for the heart of the narrative. From city directories and details from other letters, they have concluded that Hill probably stayed with a German-born shopkeeper named Bauman who had a servant, possibly black, named William Mayo, who appears to have been Hill's principal contact. Hill wrote that he forged a travel pass for himself and eventually

1991). Letters to Still were reprinted in William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter &

through the aid of an unnamed "Conductor" who was "very much Excited" got passage about the steamer City of Richmond which carried him to Philadelphia for the fee of $150. From Pennsylvania, Hill traveled northward to New York, passing through Albany and Rochester on his to Toronto. The entire trip, once he left the kitchen in Richmond, took about two and a half weeks. Within a year, his wife and children joined him in Canada, a place he described as "Beautiful and Prosperous." Later, his brother, Hezekiah, also arrived. An uncle, James Hill, hid in Richmond with a friend known only as "C.A." for three years before making his escape to Boston. After the Civil War, the entire Hill clan returned to United States. John Henry went back to Petersburg to work as a carpenter and also serve as justice of the peace. His brother Hezekiah settled in West Point, New York.[70]

Although John Henry Hill was successfully able to reunite with his family, the fugitive letters sent to the Vigilance Committee from Canada and the Northeast reveal considerable tension over that issue. William Still seemed especially worried about the tendency of fugitives to attempt contact with family or friends in the South. He frequently admonished those whom his Committee had assisted to avoid the temptation of sending letters home, but the steady traffic in requests from Canada indicated a general failure to heed his warnings. Many ex-slaves approached white abolitionists in Canada for assistance in drafting their letters. Laura S. Haviland, a white woman who journeyed to Canada from Michigan to teach reading and writing to the former slaves, recalled that the “fugitives often came five or six miles for me to write letters to their friends in the

Coates, 1872), passim.

[70] John H. Hill to William Still, Toronto, n.d., and September 14, 1854,, and C.A. to Still, Richmond, 2/16/61, quoted in William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 191-2,

South." She reported that there was often "a secret arrangement" with "white people who were their friends" to receive the notes on behalf of slaves.[71] However, one especially determined fugitive announced his intention in 1858 to return to Maryland in person to rescue his family. Fearing the wrath of the Vigilance Committee, he wrote, "Mr. Still you must not think hard of me … as I cannot rest until I release my dear family." With either extreme confidence or foolishness, he added, "I have not the least doubt but I can get through without the least trouble." The records do not indicate whether or not he succeeded.[72]

Despite the apparent danger of their operations, Still received nearly 100 letters from his agents in the field, often commenting on operations in progress. A free black man from Norristown named John Augusta, whom Still described as a "first-rate hairdresser" and "trustworthy Underground Rail Road agent" wrote in 1857 that he had "Six men and women and Five children making Eleven Persons. If you are willing to Receve [sic] them write to me imediately [sic]."[73] Relying more on tongue-in-cheek humor than a passion for strict secrecy, Joseph C. Bustill, a free black teacher and agent in Harrisburg, sent a one-line note that read, "I have sent via at two o'clock four large and two small hams."[74] By far the largest number of letters Still received from field (over thirty) arrived from Thomas Garrett (1789-1871), a surprisingly feisty Quaker abolitionist from Wilmington, Delaware. In 1848, Garrett had been accused under the 1793 fugitive

202-3. National Park Service, Exploring a Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad (Washington DC: GPO, 1998), 31-41.

[71] Laura S. Haviland, A Woman's Life Work: Including Thirty Years Service on the Underground Railroad and in the War (5th ed., Grand Rapids, MI: S.B. Shaw, 1881), 195.

[72] John B. Woods to William Still, Glandford, Canada, August 15, 1858, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 402.

[73] John Augusta to William Still, Norristown, October 18, 1857, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 110.

[74] Joseph C. Bustill to William Still, Harrisburg, May 31, 1856, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 218.

slave statute of aiding and abetting runaways, for which he was fined several thousand dollars --a judgment that reportedly threatened to destroy him financially. Yet legend maintains that he rose in the courtroom, thanked the judge for his verdict and promised to "redouble his exertions" on behalf of the fugitives. He wrote Still and other members of the Vigilance Committee on several occasions about the activities of famed conductor Harriet Tubman, a former slave herself who returned to Maryland 19 times and helped approximately three hundred fugitives escape. In one letter written during the Civil War after their fugitive operations had ceased, Garrett admitted to Still that he had recently encouraged a young black man to join the Federal army. "Am I naughty," he asked cheerfully, "being a professed non-resistant, to advise this poor fellow to serve Father Abraham?"[75]

Letter from Thomas Garrett to J.Miller McKim

Wilmington, 12 mo., 29th. 1854

Esteemed Friend:

We made arrangements last night, and sent away Harriet Tubman, with six men and one woman to Allen Agnew's, to be forwarded across the country to the city. Harriet, and one of the men had worn their shoes off their feet, and I gave them two dollars to help fit them out, and directed a carriage to be hired at my expense, to take them out, but do not yet know the expense. I have now two more from the lowest county in Maryland, on the Peninsula, upwards of one hundred miles. I will try to get one of our trusty colored men to take them to-morrow morning to the Anti-slavery office. You can pass them on.

THOMAS GARRETT

Ironically, the only time that William Still got into serious trouble for his activities during this period came as a result of a lawsuit filed by a fugitive. In 1860, a former slave named Ellen Wells successfully sued Still for libel, forcing him to spend ten days in jail and pay a fine of one hundred dollars. She had been traveling across the North claiming to raise funds to purchase the freedom of her family still kept in bondage. For some reason, Still suspected fraud and wrote a letter to a Boston abolitionist implying

that she was an imposter and a prostitute. Although the chain of events is not exactly clear, somehow Wells received custody of the letter, which Still admitted authoring once he faced charges in court.[76] Even after the war, as Still continued his service in the cause of civil rights, leading the fight, for example, that integrated Philadelphia street cars, he seemed to stumble into occasional quarrels with other members of the black community. When he split with the city's Republican Party in 1874, he received an anonymous death threat (but one that historian Roger Lane believes came from a black man) that addressed him bitterly as "Mr. Nigger." Since he had become a prominent businessman, owner of one of the city's leading coal and ice yards, many scholars have dismissed the hostility as jealousy. However, both before and after the publication of Still's book on the Underground Railroad, he had engaged in a kind of running feud with Frederick Douglass, suggested that the jealousy may have run both ways. Still had once attacked Douglass's "fat salary" as a Reconstruction-era government official and the famed orator, perhaps annoyed that Still had omitted him from his book, belittled the former clerk in a letter to Wilbur Siebert.[77]

FUGITIVE AID THROUGHOUT PENNSYLVANIA

Beyond the Philadelphia Vigilance operation, there were several other less prominent and less organized societies coordinating fugitive aid activities. There was the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society (1833), one of the few mixed race organizations in antebellum Pennsylvania. The group was formed by Lucretia Mott and Sarah Forten

[75] Thomas Garrett to William Still, Wilmington, Del., January 23, 1864, profile of Thomas Garrett, and [insert] Garrett to McKim, December 29, 1854, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 641, 623-41, 296.
[76] The episode is described in Larry Gara, "William Still and the Underground Railroad," Pennsylvania History 28 (January 1961), 37-8.
[77] Roger Lane, William Dorsey's Philadelphia, 104-6 and Gara, "William Still," Penna. History, 40.

and generally provided financial support to the Vigilance Committee. Yet historian Jean Soderlund reports that after an initial burst of grassroots activism, this organization quickly settled into a "narrow, introspective circle of antislavery veterans."[78] An 1837 newspaper account briefly mentions a Vigilance Committee based in Buckingham, Bucks County.[79] In one of his letters to William Still, Harrisburg resident Joseph Bustill claimed that "we have formed a Society here, called the Fugitive Aid Society," but there are apparently no extant records of such an institution.[80] Out in western Pennsylvania, historian R.J.M. Blackett writes that the Philanthropic Society of Pittsburgh "acted as the defensive arm of the community" serving as "a link, if not the most important arm, in the Underground Railroad."[81] Nonetheless, it seems fair to conclude that outside of the counties where abolitionists worked closely with the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee (a region encompassing principally Berks, Bucks, Delaware, Chester, Lancaster, and Montgomery, but also occasionally including Adams, Dauphin, and York), fugitive aid was unsystematic. It is simply impossible to estimate numbers or construct a chronology for whatever aid was offered along the western and northern borders of the state.

Quaker Networks. Yet within the counties surrounding Philadelphia, where there was frequent contact with the Vigilance leadership, it is possible to create at least a dynamic portrait of the support network. One conclusion immediately apparent upon such a study is that Quakers were more involved in the Underground Railroad of

[78] Jean R. Soderlund, "Priorities and Power: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society," (pps. 67-99) in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 68.
[79] National Enquirer, July 27, 1837, quoted in Borome, "Vigilant Committee," 320n.
[80] Joseph C. Bustill to William Still, Harrisburg, March 24, 1856, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 43.
[81] R.J.M. Blackett, "'Freedom, or the Martyr's Grave': Black Pittsburgh's Aid to the Fugitive Slave," in Joe William Trotter, Jr. and Eric Ledell Smith, eds., African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 148-65.

southeastern Pennsylvania than anywhere else --undoubtedly because that was the region of their greatest concentration. If any aspect of the real fugitive aid process approaches the standard legend, it is here. This is not to say, however, that most Quakers were abolitionist, but rather that most of the state's abolitionists were Quakers. Within the Quaker movement during the early nineteenth century, there was an important schism that had a profound impact on the antislavery movement and the Underground Railroad. A traveling Society of Friends minister named Elias Hicks (1748-1830), preaching a doctrine that placed more emphasis on the Quaker tenet of "Inner Light" than more orthodox preachers, effectively created two branches of the denomination, Hicksite and Orthodox. Hicksite Quakers, such as the James and Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia, were far more inclined to support radical action against slavery than their Orthodox counterparts. The Motts, whose marriage William Lloyd Garrison once described as "like a little heaven below" were dominating figures in this era.[82] Among other actions taken by the Hicksites, including aid for the Underground Railroad, was an organized effort to boycott goods derived from slave labor. As an alternative, they operated stores and societies that sold only products made by free labor. Hicksite Quakers reportedly ran over fifty such "free produce" stores during the antebellum period in cities across the North, but nowhere did they prove more popular or enduring than in Philadelphia.[83] The tensions within the Quaker community erupted in Chester County in 1854 when the Friends of the Kennett Monthly Meeting disowned any members who supported the Underground Railroad, sending the radicals to form their own meeting, the Longwood

[82] Chris Dixon, Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1997), 85.

Progressive Friends Meeting.[84] In his 1872 collection of Underground Railroad documents, Still described Kennett Square as "a hot-bed of abolitionists and stock-holders of the Underground Rail Road."[85]

One reason for the predominance of Quakers in the history of the Underground Railroad is that early historians of the fugitive aid network, men such as Robert C. Smedley and Wilbur H. Siebert, relied heavily on the recollections of those from this particular region. An example of how this bias affected their narratives is apparent from this description of Underground Railroad operations by Smedley in his 1883 monograph. "Among the most active agents at Gettysburg, the station nearest the Maryland line," he writes, "was a colored man whose residence was at the southern boundary of the town, and Hamilton Everett, who lived a short distance north of the suburbs. Thaddeus Stevens, as a young lawyer, first practising [sic] his profession, rendered valuable assistance."[86] Thus, the names of two prominent white abolitionists entered his index of U.G.R.R. conductors, but not the name of the area's most active fugitive conduit, since he was black and outside of Smedley's usual network of correspondents.

The Quaker participants themselves were not always the most racially sensitive. In his published reminiscences, Levi Coffin, a Friend from the state of Indiana and widely known as the "President of the Underground Railroad," bluntly recalled that there were "a few wise and careful managers among the colored people, but it was not safe to

[83] Margaret Hope Bacon, "By Moral Force Alone: The Antislavery Women and Nonresistance," (pps. 275-97) in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 277-8.
[84] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester quoted in William C. Kashatus, "A Divided Spirit": Chester County and the Underground Railroad," 7.
[85] William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 303.
[86] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 36.

trust all of them with the affairs of our work."[87] Grace Ann Lewis, who along with her sisters providing regular aid to fugitives in Chester County, complained to William Still in an 1855 letter that one group of fugitives she had forwarded to the Vigilance offices were not safe with a free black agent in Norristown. "We fear that there they will fall into the hands of an ignorant colored man Daniel Ross," she wrote, "and that he may not understand the necessity of caution."[88]

Several routes reportedly worked through Chester County. One dubbed the "Northern Route," proceeded from Maryland to Fulton, East Drumore, Eden, Paradise, Salisbury (all in Lancaster County) and then Honey Brook, Phoenixville (Chester) and then to Norristown (Montgomery County) and finally, Philadelphia. Another Chester County route passed from Wilmington, Delaware to Kennett, East Marlborough, Newlin, Downington, Lionville, Kimberton and Phoenixville. A third Chester Co. route extended from Kennett, East Bradford, West Chester, Willistown until reaching Philadelphia.[89] The accuracy of these traditions is debatable, however. They rely heavily on the recollections of white abolitionists and contradict at least some of the information available through a careful reading of William Still's collected documents. Nevertheless, it seems indisputable that all of these locations contained either black or white abolitionists who supported fugitives.

Relying on similar traditions, local historians from Delaware County have claimed at least 14 separate locations for Underground Railroad activity in their county,

[87] Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin: The Reputed President of the Underground Railroad (Cincinnati, OH: Western Tract Society, 1876), 298.
[88] Grace A. Lewis to William Still, Kimberton, October 29, 1855, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 40.

included several that have only recently been destroyed. Perhaps the most unfortunate example of this relentless modernization occurred in 1995 when a popular convenience store chain razed a home on what had been the James Pennell Farm. Pennell appears to have been a "major conductor" on the Underground Railroad and one of the few who kept a diary of his activities. Vandals destroyed another site called the Bunting Freedom House in 1994. One invaluable piece of evidence that apparently has been preserved is a secret, coded account book in the possession of the secretary of the Honey Comb UAME Church, built in 1852 in Middletown Township, that purportedly documents fugitive escapes.[90] The key challenge for the next generation of scholars working in this field will be to identify, examine, and decode this remaining contemporary evidence.

Discussion of "routes" in the Underground Railroad presumes that there was some sort of systematic exchange of knowledge. Robert Smedley relates a compelling story about how the transfer of information probably worked among free blacks and slaves along this section of the Mason-Dixon line. According to his research, "Many of the farmers in Drumore Township (Lancaster County) went to the Baltimore market with loads of produce,"

> taking with them their colored drivers. The slaves sought opportunities to talk with these teamsters and to ask them many questions, as to where they came from, whom they lived with, and what kind of work they did, how they were treated, etc., etc. These colored teamsters gave them all the information they could, which was liberally conveyed to others, and especially to the slaves who accompanied

[89] Frances C. Taylor, The Trackless Trail Leads On: An Exploration of Conductors and Their Stations (Kennett Square, PA: KNA Press, 1995), Quoted in William C. Kashatus, "A Divided Spirit": Chester County and the Underground Railroad," 5.

> their masters from the planting states to Baltimore on business. They would tell it to other slaves on their return South, and say 'if they could get to Joseph Smith's in Pennsylvania he would help them on to a land of freedom.' This stimulated their inborn love of liberty to devising plans by which to reach Smith's, and from there be assisted to where no task-master should exact from their weary limbs the daily requirements of uncompensated toil.[91]

Perhaps no where was the interplay between Quakers and free blacks more extensive than in the Lancaster-York area, where the Friends were less numerous and therefore had to rely more frequently on aid from their free black neighbors. There were apparently a number of escapes that proceeded through York and then over the Wrightsville bridge into Columbia, Lancaster County. Presumably, one reason for the success along those routes was because a local constable, William Yokum, was "favorable to fugitives" and used "pass-words" with U.G.R.R. agents so that he could know where fugitives had fled and thus lead pursuing slave-catchers elsewhere.[92] Exploring the use of passwords, whether in signs, quilts or through spirituals, is also one of the most critical remaining challenges for Underground Railroad research.

The traditional accounts of slave escapes through York and Columbia indicate that urgent flights usually received help from William C. Goodrich, a light-skinned free black agent, who would send advance notice to friends in Columbia that important

[90] Delaware County Sunday Times, February 28, 1999, "Escaping slavery: Tracing Delco's Role in the Underground Railroad. See Leslie Potter from the Middltown Historical Society.
[91] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 228-9.
[92] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 46-7. It should be noted that the 1874 Columbia directory lists a "J.W. Yocum" on 25 South Second Street whose occupation was editor of the Columbia Spy. Original story about Yocum came from Still (1872), 693.

"baggage" was on the road. According to Robert Smedley, a black teamster named Cato Jordan delivered many such fugitives to additional black agents typically waiting on the other side of the Columbia bridge. The fugitives were then usually spirited through Black's hotel (owned by proprietor John H. Black and located, according to the 1874 Columbia directory, on the corner of Front and Walnut Streets) and then hidden within town, probably in the mostly black neighborhood known as "Tow Hill." Smedley reports that William Wright, a local Quaker, then organized the delivery of the fugitives to prominent Quaker abolitionist Daniel Gibbons or sometimes directly to Philadelphia, hidden in the "false end of a box car" that belonged to black lumber merchants Stephen Smith and William Whipper. Arriving in Philadelphia, they were supposed to find an agent from the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, such as William Still, waiting for them. From there, they would be re-outfitted and normally sent further northward.[93]

Sometimes, however, the usual subterfuge proved unnecessary. Thomas Bessick, a free black resident from Columbia, described by Smedley as a "light-skinned mulatto" and "one of the boldest and most useful agents," was featured in one story about the use of "above-ground" railroads. Apparently, Bessick at least once determined that the quickest and safest way to ensure the departure of two fugitives whose pursuers had just checked into a local hotel was simply to purchase them tickets on a real railroad train and send them off. Assessing the validity of this particular account illustrates a typical dilemma regarding the reliability of recollections. By the time Smedley began collecting stories for his monograph, Bessick had long since passed away, so obviously this report is second- or third-hand. However, an 1874 directory for the borough of Columbia lists

[93] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of

Mrs. Elizabeth Bessick of Concord Lane as the "col'd" widow of Thomas, thus at least confirming his existence and perhaps justifying his inclusion by Smedley, Wilbur Siebert and Charles Blockson in lists of known U.G.R.R. conductors.[94]

It is no easy matter for a student of history to corroborate works like Smedley's, built so often in haphazard fashion upon recollections of aging and generally self-proclaimed participants. The case of Thomas Bessick is but one of dozens of vexing examples. Smedley also refers at one point to a black teamster from Columbia named Cato Jordan, who reportedly provided regular and invaluable service for fugitives seeking to cross the Wrightsville-Columbia bridge. Neither Siebert nor Blockson include Jordan in their lists of conductors. Nor does Larry Gara use Jordan as an example of a free black agent of the Underground Railroad. Yet there is significant supporting evidence for Smedley's assertion. Once again, the Columbia directory of 1874 provides a useful entry, this time for Cato Jordan, "colored," of 158 South Fifth Street.[95] The Columbia Spy recorded Jordan's obituary in 1878, describing him as "an old and respected colored man, once well known as Col. Shoch's Coachman."[96] Admittedly, these fragments do not constitute "proof," but they suggest that at minimum Smedley was correct about the man's name, occupation and community status.

Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 45-6.

[94] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 47. Young's Directory of Columbia: Embracing a Full List of All the Adult Males and Heads of Families, With Their Occupation and Residence, For 1874 (Columbia: Grier & Moderwell, 1874). Charles L. Blockson, The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania (Jacksonville, NC: Flame International, 1981), 197. Although both Siebert and Blockson consider Bessick a white conductor, Smedley describes him as a "mulatto" and his home on Concord Lane sat next to the "colored" Baptist church. In addition, 18 out of 29 of the street's residents listed in the 1874 directory were designated as "colored."

[95] Young's Directory of Columbia: Embracing a Full List of All the Adult Males and Heads of Families, With Their Occupation and Residence, For 1874 (Columbia: Grier & Moderwell, 1874).

[96] Columbia (PA) Spy, November 30, 1878.

Smedley describes one striking episode from the York-Columbia route that probably occurred in 1842. According to his account, presumably based upon recollections from William Wright, a prominent Lancaster County abolitionist, a group of twenty-six armed slaves arrived unexpectedly in York one night. They headed towards Wrightsville but became "bewildered" by the cloudy skies and ended up accidentally heading toward Maryland until a free black resident from York intercepted them. Once turned around, they proceeded over the bridge into Columbia in broad daylight and "lay around on the ground, thinking they were safe in Canada." Perhaps nineteenth century folklore about the suspension bridge over Niagara had confused them. Their happiness turned to fear, however, when an unidentified person informed them that they were far away from Canadian soil and still in considerable danger. Hardly listening to the directions and advice this man offered, the armed gang then reportedly proceeded through the streets of Columbia, "defying any authority that might attempt to apprehend them."[97] If true, this strange and remarkable story indicates how escaping slaves could demonstrate fierce self-reliance in the face of severe obstacles.

Many of the examples of resistance or physical confrontation along the southeastern Pennsylvania border involve episodes connected to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. There is one story passed along from the Wright family concerning a Maryland slave owner who came looking for four of his male slaves (Tom, Fenton, Sam and George) in 1851. The four had arrived earlier at the William Wright mansion with clothes "hanging in tatters." The master and his deputies spotted the four runaways working with Wright on a barn and angrily demanded custody. Apparently, however,

[97] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of

they were not suspicious when the slaves offered to surrender, but asked for just a few moments to gather their coats. While the slaves left, Wright and his wife Phebe entertained the slave catchers with fresh water, cherries and bible reading for nearly three-quarters of an hour. As the discussion turned to the evils of slavery, the owner finally seemed to recognize the trap and demanded the return of his slaves. "Oh! that is not my business at all," replied Wright coolly, "if they are you[r] slaves, as you assert, you saw them, it was your business to take them." The furious and deceived owner then searched Wright's home, armed with federal warrants, but could not locate the four slaves who had scattered in the fields and a nearby carriage house. Still, the slave owner and his party stayed in the county and eventually captured one of the four slaves while he was working in the fields at a nearby farm. According to the Wright family tradition, he was taken to Frederick, Maryland and sold into the Deep South.[98] Not all of the encounters with fugitive slave catchers occurred after 1850. There is a brief fragment of contemporary evidence regarding the recapture of fugitives hiding among the borough's free blacks in 1849. The local newspaper, the Columbia Spy, reports under the heading, "Tow Hill," which was the popular name for the borough's mostly black neighborhood, the following:

> "Considerable excitement was created among our colored population, on Wednesday afternoon last by a gentleman claiming, and taking with him his runaway slave. We have not heard the particulars. Nothing serious occurred, however."[99]

Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 37-8.
[98] R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania, (Lancaster: Journal, 1883), 40-41. Story originally appeared in Still (1872), 694.
[99] Columbia (PA) Spy, September 22, 1849.

Central and Western Pennsylvania. It is far more difficult to document Underground Railroad activities in central and western Pennsylvania. That is because there were fewer free black residents, fewer white abolitionists, and fewer organized vigilance committees. In addition, since anti-slavery sentiment was less pronounced in the western section of the state, support for fugitives was especially dangerous. The need for discretion was greater. There were also more physical and geographical obstacles to successful escapes. Slaves in the Appalachian regions of the Upper South were less likely to be urban or literate, and thus less likely to run away. For all of these reasons, fugitive aid activities in western Pennsylvania were more sporadic and record-keeping less efficient. Yet this comparative vacuum represents an intriguing opportunity for local historians. Unlike in the eastern section of the state, where there has been abundant scholarship on the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee and the region's free black communities, there are more untold stories and fresh discoveries to be made. For example, a recent study jointly commissioned by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Commission and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, found significant Underground Railroad activities and free black communities in all nine southwestern counties that researchers examined --stories that are generally unknown to all but a few experts.[100]

Although the black community in Pittsburgh did not rival Philadelpha's in size or status, it was nevertheless the central point of the free black and fugitive aid network in the western part of the state. By 1850 there were nearly 2,000 blacks in the city and another 1,500 in Allegheny County. Most of the black residents lived in tight-knit

[100] Eliza Smith Brown and Ronald C. Carlisle. The African-American Experience in Southwestern

neighborhoods, such as an area called "Hayti" (or later "Arthursville" --a neighborhood that eventually became part of the larger "Hill" district of the city). Like Philadelphia, there were a number of black churches and benevolent organizations, but the Philanthropic Society, founded at the end of the 1830s, was reportedly the principal coordinator of Underground Railroad activities. The most prominent antebellum black leaders in the city active in the movement were Martin R. Delany, a newspaper editor and former Harvard Medical student (who had been expelled on the grounds of his race alone) and the Rev. Lewis Woodson of the Bethel AME Church. Woodson was also one of the city's most prominent black barbers. Delany was a controversial figure in antebellum America, a well respected black author who advocated voluntary colonization --not necessarily to Africa, but rather somewhere in the Caribbean or Latin America. Later, during the Civil War, he became the first black commissioned officer in 1865.

There were parallels between the evolution of the black communities in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. After an initial period of exciting growth, the free blacks in Pittsburgh found their progress thwarted by jealous and increasingly race-conscious whites. There were six black churches by the 1840s --Presbyterian, Baptist and four AME congregations-- but only the four AME churches survived into the Civil War. In 1834, the city's new public schools refused to admit black children.[101] Like Philadelphia, the city experienced "race riots" during the Jacksonian period, although not nearly as severe. Also, many black residents left the city following the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Pittsburgh's anti-slavery newspapers were full of reports of free

Pennsylvania: An Historic Context for Nine Counties (Prepared for Southwestern Pa. Heritage Preservation Commission and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1997).

[101] Eliza Smith Brown, Daniel Holland, et.al., African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1992), 89-90.

blacks and fugitives fleeing from fears of oncoming slave-catchers and offered several accounts of the meetings that took place in 1850 and 1851 for abolitionist-leaning citizens to express their outrage and indignation over the controversial new law.

Confrontations over enforcement of the fugitive slave law actually provide the bulk of the contemporary evidence available regarding fugitive aid in Western Pennsylvania. Black residents in Pittsburgh were apparently so agitated by the new statute that they seized upon almost any rumor of visiting slave-catchers with a fury that is not often emphasized in modern versions of the fugitive story. The Pittsburgh Gazette reported in 1855 that when a white visitor lodging in one of the city's hotels began making "a number of inquiries for the U.S. Marshal and the U.S. Clerk," anti-slavery advocates "took instant alarm" and rushed to his room, ready to confront him. Yet it turned out that the man had once helped rescue from slavery Solomon Northrup, a fugitive who had authored one the most famous slave narratives of the antebellum period. "It was rather mortifying," admitted the Pittsburgh Journal, "that after the years he had spent in the anti-slavery cause, he should so suddenly find himself classed with so dishonourable a set."[102] However "mortifying" to residents of the city at the time, in retrospect, this story is quite revealing. First, it demonstrates that even without the structure of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, Underground Railroad participants in Pittsburgh had an active intelligence network that quickly spread the word of the arrival of a potential slave-catcher. Second, it underlines the open defiance of some fugitive aid agents. Despite the less pronounced nature of anti-slavery sentiment in the western

[102] The episode is described in Eliza Smith Brown, Daniel Holland, et.al., African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1992), 107-8 and Larry Gara, The Liberty Line, 111.

sections of the state, people clearly did not respect --or intend to ignore-- the encroachments of southerners into their domain.

Another case from Indiana County offers an equally revealing window into the tense atmosphere of antebellum America. In Van Metre v. Mitchell 28 Federal Cases 1036 (1853), a Virginia slave owner sued to recover two slaves who had escaped in 1845. This lawsuit was initiated even prior to the passage of the 1850 fugitive law and relied on earlier statutes. The case was first heard in U.S. Circuit Court in Pittsburgh in 1847 and involved Dr. Robert Mitchell, a prominent abolitionist from Indiana, Pennsylvania who had harbored the fugitives at one of his tenant farms for about four months. The judge instructed the jury that "illegal harboring is not to be measured by the religious or political notions of the accused, or the correctness or perversion of his moral perception." Mitchell lost and continued to lose his appeals straight through the final verdict in 1853. The court records do not indicate whether or not the slaves were returned. However, local folklore claims that Mitchell had to sell a "magnificent pine forest" in order to pay the fines and expense of the suit.[103]

The same year that Mitchell lost his appeal (although across the state in northeastern Pennsylvania), U.S. deputy marshals in Wilkes Barre attempted to arrest a fugitive slave from Virginia named William Thomas, who had been working as a waiter in the Phoenix Hotel. Thomas resisted and was shot while escaping from the marshals. Reportedly covered with blood, Thomas dove into a local river and threatened to drown himself rather than surrender to the authorities. Apparently stunned by the fugitive's

[103] Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig. ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 123. R.J.M. Blackett, "Black Pittsburgh's Aid," 152-4. Sarah Christy, "Fugitive Slaves in Indiana County," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 18 (1935), 278-88.

courageous desperation, the marshals left the scene. Thomas survived and left Wilkes Barre with the support of members from the local black community. Amazingly enough, however, the case was not over. William C. Gildersleeve, a local abolitionist, filed charges against the U.S. deputy marshals and convinced a local magistrate to have them arrested. The judge who presided over the case was outraged by the blatant disregard for federal authority. "If any two-penny magistrate or unprincipled interloper," he raged from the bench, "can come in and cause to be arrested the officers of the United States whenever they please, it is a sad state of affairs." Yet Gildersleeve and other local abolitionists succeeded in having the hapless marshals arrested by local authorities twice more before finally conceding the issue.[104]

Taken out of context, these dramatic cases of resistance probably overstate the degree of day-to-day activity in the Underground Railroad network outside of the counties surrounding Philadelphia. The reason these confrontations were so compelling and energizing was precisely because they were so rare. Two separate recollections from Washington County in the southwestern part of the state underscore this point. According to a letter reprinted in the Washington (Pa) Reporter in 1900, the fugitives passed through "in trickles of one and two" and the leading abolitionists of the region, the McKeever family, never had more than eight runaways at any one time.[105] Washington County contains some of the best-documented Underground Railroad traditions. For example, there is the home of Dr. F. Julius LeMoyne, 49 East Maiden Street, a recognized national historical landmark and hiding place for fugitives. Also, researchers can benefit from the richly detailed recollections of Howard Wallace, an Underground

[104] Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig.

Railroad participant and a respected black businessman, who wrote his memoirs in 1903. Wallace recalled that he had occasionally helped pass a few fugitives from Brownsville to a placed called Ginger Hill in Centerville, "where a man by the name of Milton Maxwell … would take charge of them and forward them to Pittsburgh." Wallace also claimed that some ex-slaves were carried along in "skiffs" to a small free black settlement near Belle Vernon before heading toward Pittsburgh.[106] Other recollections and oral traditions from the region seem to confirm the haphazard nature of the enterprise.

Out of all the counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, Bedford County probably had the most active free black population and vigorous Underground Railroad traffic. Bedford provides the setting for David Bradley's prize-winning novel about the Underground Railroad, The Chaneyville Incident (1981). Local histories principally credit five free black residents with leading the fugitive aid network there: Rev. John Fidler, Elias Rouse, Joseph Crawley and James Graham. More needs to be discovered about all of them. In a recollection from the early 1900s about the county's role in aiding runaways, Joseph Penrose, a white Civil War veteran, described Rev. Fidler as "a fine colored man," but typically emphasized the prominence of local Quakers in the network. According to some accounts, Benjamin Walker was a local white anti-slavery leader who helped more than 500 runaway slaves between 1827-1860.[107]

Other counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, such as Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana, Somerset, and Westmoreland, also contain some evidence

ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 139-40.
[105] Brown, Holland, et.al., African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County, 111.
[106] Brown, Holland, et.al., African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County, 111.
[107] Eliza Smith Brown and Ronald C. Carlisle, The African American Experience in Southwestern Pennsylvnia: An Historic Context for Nine Counties (Prepared for Southwestern Pa. Heritage Commission and PHMC, 1997), 13-17.

of fugitive aid networks. In Blair County, the predominantly black "Chimney Rock" section of Hollidaysburg was reportedly a center of Underground Railroad activity. Altoona also had a small free black community and several prominent white abolitionists. Several local traditions from Johnstown in Cambria County attest to sometimes-fierce resistance to slave catchers (58). In Fayette County, Uniontown's black residents, people such as Eli Curry, hid escaping fugitives in secret cellars and locally known places like "Baker's Alley" and "Turkey's Nest." Since slavery had taken hold in some southwestern Pennsylvania communities more permanently than elsewhere, there were subsequently larger free black communities than might be expected during the antebellum period. Huntingdon County, for example, had a significant free black settlement known as "Black Log Valley" or simply "Black Valley." Many of the stories associated with this region are based upon recollections and oral traditions and have not yet been fully examined for possible corroboration.[108]

The relative lack of organization within the Underground Railroad across the rest of the state only heightened what was a particularly vexing problem for participants everywhere. This was the threat, both real and imagined, of traitors within their own ranks. William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, The Liberator, repeatedly warned against such outrages, commenting gleefully in the summer of 1856 when free blacks in Washington, Pennsylvania tarred and feathered a black man apparently working

[108] The best starting points for Underground Railroad research in southwestern Pennsylvania is Eliza Smith Brown and Ronald C. Carlisle, The African American Experience in Southwestern Pennsylvnia: An Historic Context for Nine Counties (Prepared for Southwestern Pa. Heritage Commission and PHMC, 1997) and Charles L. Blockson, African-Americans in Pennsylvania: A History and Guide (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994), 165-174.

on behalf of the slaveholders.[109] Escaped slave Peter Still, who entered Pennsylvania from Ohio through Pittsburgh, recalled thinking to himself, "Suppose … some Abolitionist should come along now, mighty friendly, and tell me where to go, and so I should be entrapped and sold again. I must be careful." Even after Still had arrived safely in Philadelphia and sat in the Vigilance Committee's offices with another black man who would turn out to be his own long-lost brother, he feared a trap. According to the story he told Abolitionist writer Kate Pickard, he "seated himself as near as possible to the door, and watched intently every motion of the young man whose treachery he so much feared."[110] William Still wrote, "Sometimes the abolitionists were much annoyed by imposters, who pretended to be runaways, in order to discover their plans, and betray them to the slave-holders."[111]

FUGITIVE AID BEYOND PENNSYLVANIA

The portrait that emerges from a careful study of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania is clearly not the image that has been conveyed through popular literature. The process of aiding runaways once they arrived in the state was often conducted by organized groups, usually led by free blacks, who proceeded with their work in a deliberate and not very secretive manner. In fact, there were numerous examples --from across the state and over a lengthy period of time-- that testified to the courageous

[109] The Liberator, August 29, 1856, cited in Gilbert Osofsky, ed., Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 19.

[110] Pickard, Kate E.R., with introduction by Maxwell Whiteman, Kidnapped and Ransomed: The Narrative of Peter and Vina Still After Forty Years of Slavery (1856 facsimile edition, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970), 249.

defiance of slavery (and slave-catchers) by many participants. This is not to say, however, that such popular visions are incorrect. Rather, they appear to be slightly misplaced. Those who aided fugitives from slave states en route to Pennsylvania engaged in almost all of the covert, dramatic activities that have been described and celebrated over the years. Yet the role of these "conductors," with the possible exception of the much-celebrated Harriet Tubman, has been greatly diminished over the years by revisionist historians who believe that the legend of an organized national underground network was more myth than reality. Ironically, in their attempts to unravel the exaggerations of post-war abolitionist recollections, these historians have been guilty of their own degree of over-enthusiasm for denying that a national network did exist. The documentary evidence from the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, both from the earlier period and from the years of William Still's leadership, indicates that members of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania were in regular contact with secret agents not only in other northern states, but also in the South.

One of the best-documented examples of these southern agents was Jacob Bigelow, an attorney in Washington DC who used the pseudonym "William Penn" in his correspondence with Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. Bigelow, from a prominent New England family, became a widower by the 1850s and lived alone on E Street in the nation's capital. Bigelow worked with several other secretive conductors, most notably "Powder Boy," so named because he had once been engaged in transporting gun-powder. In 1854, Bigelow became involved in an elaborate operation to help rescue a fifteen-year-old slave girl named Ann Maria Weems, whose family was trying unsuccessfully to

[111] William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 647.

purchase her freedom. Ultimately, Bigelow helped the Weems girl flee Washington disguised as a young boy. The full story is documented in rich detail by Stanley Harrold in a recent article that appeared in the academic journal Civil War History. Harrold argues that Bigelow's complicated role --ultimately some members of the family accused him of embezzling funds-- illustrates how Underground Railroad activities often began as fundraising operations, only to evolve later, and sometimes dangerously, into physical rescue schemes. Bigelow's letters to Still certainly demonstrate how important money was in fugitive aid operations. On at least one occasion, Bigelow suggested that the Vigilance Committee should find a "white man" who would regularly lead fugitives to Pennsylvania for "at least $5 each," an incentive Bigelow pointed out that would enable the man to "make a good living at it."[112]

There were some southern conductors who actually appeared to make a "good living" from transporting fugitives. William Still's records indicate that schooner captains such as Captain Alfred Fountain or Captain William Baylis, known to the members of the Vigilance Committee as "Captain B," were regular transporters of runaways for rates that reportedly approached $50 per person. Originally from Delaware, Baylis transported fugitives from Virginia coastal towns such as Norfolk and Petersburg aboard his schooner, the Keziah until 1858 when he was captured in Petersburg. John T. Kneebone, a Virginia historian who has recently recounted this dramatic narrative, reports that Virginia newspapers gleefully vilified Captain Baylis as a "medley of avarice and larceny." The newspapers reveled in accounts obtained from the interrogation of the

[112] William Penn [J. Bigelow] to William Still, Washington DC, October 3, 1854, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 187. Still describes the entire Ann Maria Weems story, complete with a portrait of the girl in her disguise, in his book, pps. 177-88. See also Stanley Harrold, "Freeing the Weems Family: A New Look at the Underground Railroad," Civil War History 42 (Dec. 1996), 289-306.

Keziah's fugitives about how the ship captain had allegedly approached them in the city's marketplace, extorting high payment in exchange for the promise of freedom. The trial was a public spectacle that resulted in conviction and a sentence of forty years in prison. Baylis's devoted wife Martha eventually moved to Richmond during the Civil War as she desperately attempted to secure his pardon. Amazingly, after six hard years in the state penitentiary, Baylis received his release from Confederate president Jefferson Davis and returned to Delaware where abolitionists friends, such as William Still, donated money to help set him up as a grocery merchant.[113]

Perhaps the most memorable story of a southern conductor who interacted with the Pennsylvania vigilance network was a black dentist named Sam Nixon who later became known as Dr. Thomas Bayne (c.1824-1888). Dr. Bayne began his life as a slave named Sam in North Carolina who escaped, but was eventually captured and purchased by local dentist in Norfolk, Virginia. The dentist, impressed by Sam's intelligence, trained him in the profession. Sam Nixon, who was literate and obviously gifted, later told William Still that his owner had not only taught him about the practice of dentistry, but also allowed him to keep the firm's books and make house-calls all over the town. This independence allowed Nixon (Bayne) to work covertly as an agent for the Underground Railroad, helping fugitives find schooner captains such as Fountain or Baylis who would carry them to Philadelphia. Eventually, Nixon became fearful that his activities might be discovered so he fled northward himself. Arriving in New Jersey, he stayed with a Quaker woman named Abigail Goodwin who expressed her shock (and skepticism) about his self-described accomplishments in a letter to Still. Although she

[113] The details of this remarkable story can be found in John T. Kneebone, "A break down on the

called Nixon a "smart young man," Goodwin wrote that he appeared to be a "great brag" who claimed "he was a dentist for ten years" --a fact which she found astonishing. She concluded, "I don't feel much confidence in him."[114] Nixon then settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts where he changed his name to Thomas Bayne and became a prominent local dentist. In fact, Bayne became so prominent that he was elected to the city council on the eve of the Civil War. During the years of Reconstruction following the conflict, he returned to Norfolk and became a leader in the Republican Party. However, he was severely criticized by the local white press and eventually driven out of politics. Just before the end of his life, suffering either from exhaustion or senility, Bayne was admitted to the Central State Lunatic Asylum in Petersburg. Virginia historian John T. Kneebone has identified him as one of the most "intriguing" stories in Virginia history.[115]

Underground Railroad: Captain B. and the capture of the Keziah, 1858," Virginia Cavalcade 48 (April 1, 1999).

[114] Abigail Goodwin to William Still, Salem, NJ, February 25, 1855, quoted in Still, Underground Railroad, 16-17; see also Still's comments on the story, pps. 254-259.

[115] Virginia Cavalcade 47 (Autumn 1998).

SECTION THREE

RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION

OVERVIEW

How to begin? That question haunts any professional or amateur historian at the onset of a major project. The challenge is to cast a net wide enough to catch relevant details and absorb period context while still creating a research agenda that is realistic. Especially for projects like researching the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania, the historical detective faces serious logistical challenges. There are a bewildering variety of sources --many not easily accessible. Some of the best resources have been traditionally considered the least reliable. All too often the evidence appears contradictory. And no matter how diligent the recovery effort, it is impossible to ignore the fact that significant elements of this critical episode in American history will remain forever underground, lost to the pages of history by the often covert requirements of the operation. Weighing these factors is by no means a simple task. Thus, to help meet these obstacles, this section offers a series of recommendations on using the various resources. Yet even these suggestions are tentative, as the recent explosion of interest in the Underground Railroad has generated a wealth of new material that historians are still absorbing.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

General Background. Most historians begin research projects by reading widely in the general secondary literature on the topic, gaining familiarity with the standard historical interpretation of the period and taking note of the general themes and trends that appeared to confront participants from that era. With that in mind, the best place to begin any study of the Underground Railroad is still Larry Gara, The Liberty Line (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996 ed. --orig. pub. 1961). Although now

somewhat dated, this book offers a lively revisionist approach to the topic that explains how some popular misconceptions developed. Some of Gara's judgments about previous scholarship are too harsh, but nonetheless this is a wonderful monograph. Noted Pennsylvania collector and scholar Charles L. Blockson provides two more recent contributions that are also worth examining, an important article, "Escape from Slavery," National Geographic (July 1984), 3-39, and a well organized field guide, the Hippocrene Guide to the Underground Railroad (New York: Hippocrene, 1994). The latter is especially useful as a travel guide for those who plan to visit particular sites. If you want to understand more about the recent explosion of interest in the fugitive aid networks, see Ann Eskridge and Sharon Fitzgerald, "There's A Movement Afoot: Tracing the Path of the Underground Railroad Movement," American Visions 14 (Feb. 1999). Another productive way to absorb the latest research on this topic is through exploring recent studies of particular escapes or fugitive conductors. Three excellent examples that provide narratives connected to Pennsylvania are: Gary Collison, Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stanley Harrold, "Freeing the Weems Family: A New Look at the Underground Railroad," Civil War History 42 (December 1996), 289-306; and John T. Kneebone, "A Breakdown on the Underground Railroad: Captain B. and the Capture of the Keziah, 1858," Virginia Cavalcade 48 (April 1999). Collison is a professor of American Studies at the York campus of Penn State University. Older secondary studies that contain valuable recollections include Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898) and Eber Petit, Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad (orig. pub. 1879-- Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1971).

National Park Service. The intense public interest in the Underground Railroad has led the National Park Service to produce a series of exceptional pamphlets and studies. See especially: Division of Publications, National Park Service (authors Larry Gara, C. Peter Ripley, Brenda E. Stevenson), Underground Railroad (Official National Park Handbook, Washington, DC: GPO, 1998); National Park Service, "Slavery and Resistance," Cultural Resources Management 21 (1998); National Register, History and Education and National Park Service, Exploring A Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad (Washington, DC: GPO, 1998); and National Historic Landmarks Survey (authors Marie Tyler-McGraw and Kira R. Badamo), Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study (Washington DC: GPO, 1998).

Antebellum Free Blacks. Arguably the most important contextual issues for the researcher of the Underground Railroad to address are related to the development and politics of free black communities across the antebellum North. Without the presence and support of those black residents, there would have been almost no chance for fugitive slaves to pass into freedom unmolested. The best source for national context is the influential study by James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Other prominent works include: Leonard P. Curry, The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream (Chicago: 1981); Leon Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negroes in the Free States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); and Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). For black life in Canada, see the definitive work by Robin

Winks, The Blacks in Canada (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), but also a more recent and provocative article from Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based on the MS Census of 1861," Social History 56 (November 1995): 465-81.

Slavery. There is an enormous amount of secondary literature on the subject of slavery. Some focus is indispensable. The most important aspects of the topic with regard to the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania are probably: runaway slaves, border state slavery, and the development of southern free black communities. For runaways, the recent study by John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) will likely become the definitive treatment. Another work sure to dominate the field for years to come and one that provides an excellent analysis of the regional development of slavery is Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Some runaways remained in the South at least temporarily in hidden "maroon" communities. A good, if somewhat abbreviated, description of these fascinating camps comes from Peter Hinks, To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997). The role of a national black church network in fostering escapes is discussed in Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America (New York: Random House, 1981). Most fugitives who arrived in Pennsylvania came from urban areas of the Upper South. For a general political overview, see Ralph A. Wooster, Politicians, Planters, and Plain Folks: Courthouse and Statehouse in the Upper South, 1850-1860 (1975). Urban slavery is well described in

Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities (1964) and Lawrence H. Larsen, The Rise of the Urban South (1985). Baltimore, Maryland actually had the largest concentration of urban blacks in all of antebellum America. For a detailed portrait of this community, along with interesting comparisons to the developments in Philadelphia, see Christopher Phillips, Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). For Maryland slavery in general, use Barbara J. Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century (1985). For slave and free black culture in Virginia, try David R. Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861 (1977) and Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg (1984). To better understand some of the methodological issues in play with the study of slavery, see Peter J. Parish, Slavery: History and Historians (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). A good general review of free blacks in the entire South is Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York: Vintage, 1976). Finally, for a strong, readable overview of the peculiar institution and many of these issues, see Peter Kolchin, American Slavery: 1619-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

Abolitionism. The rise of antebellum abolitionism is one of the great stories in American history. There are several sound starting points: Merton Dillon, Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); James Stewart, Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery (1976); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Press, 1994); and Shirley J. Yee, Black Women Abolitionists, A Study in Activism, 1828-1860 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

Politics of Sectionalism. The key antebellum political issue that impacted the Underground Railroad was the evolution of federal fugitive slave laws. The definitive secondary treatment of this topic comes from Stanley W. Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (orig. ed. 1968; New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), which includes an invaluable appendix of fugitive cases. The impact of the antislavery movement on politics is covered thoroughly in Richard H. Sewell, Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860 (1976). In Pennsylvania, the political realignment of the 1850s involved an especially protracted struggle between the emerging Republican Party and the nativist or "Know Nothing" movement. Two books that place this episode in national context are: Tyler N. Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and William E. Gienapp, The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859, largely planned in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, was one of the most decisive events of the troubled decade. See Jeffrey S. Rossback, Ambivalent Conspirators: John Brown, the Secret Six, and a Theory of Slave Violence (1982). For strong general treatments of the period, see two volumes from the Oxford History of the United States, William W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) and James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania. There are several useful books, articles and newspaper features that focus on fugitive aid activities within the state. For a general overview, with useful listings of operators and county-by-county site descriptions, see Charles L. Blockson, Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania (Jacksonville, NC: Flame International, 1981).

Southeastern Pennsylvania Operations. See: I.C. Arnold, “An Underground Railroad Station in Drumore Township,” Papers Read Before the Lancaster County Historical Society 55 (1951), 186-8; Robert Bishop, "The Underground Railroad and Antislavery Movement on the Upper Main Line," Radnor Historical Society Bulletin 1 (Spring 1955), 22-24; Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 42 (1968), 320-52; Marianna [Gibbons] Brubaker, “The Underground Railroad,” Lancaster County Historical Society (1911); Delaware County (Pa) Sunday Times. "The trackless train," February 28, 1999; John Eshelman, "Berks County's Station on the Underground Railroad," Historical Review of Berks County (1941), 107-9; Wayne Homan, "The Underground Railroad," Historical Review of Berks County (1958), 112-28; Lancaster New Era, "Did the Term 'Underground Railroad' Originate With Incident in Columbia," July 1, 1994; Edward Magill, "When Men Were Sold: Reminiscences of the Underground Railroad in Bucks County and Its Managers," Papers Read Before Bucks County Historical Society 2 (1909), 493-520; Nilgun Anadolu Okur, "Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, 1830-1860," Journal of Black Studies 25 (May 1995), 537-57; Philadelphia Inquirer, "Underground Railroad Had Its Area Stations," May 26, 1997; R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and Neighboring Counties (completed by Robert

Purvis and Marianna Gibbons; New York: Arno, 1969 ed. --orig. pub. 1883); Joseph Hutchinson Smith, "Some Aspects of the Underground Railroad in the Counties of Southeastern Pennsylvania," Bulletin of the Historical Society of Montgomery County 3 (Oct. 1941); Charles D. Spotts, The Pilgrim's Pathway: The Underground Railroad in Lancaster County (Lancaster: Franklin & Marshall College Library, 1966); Frances Cloud Taylor, The Trackless Trail Leads On: An Exploration of Conductors and their Stations (Kennett Square, PA: KNA Press, 1995); Harmon Yerkes, "Anti-Slavery Days: Experiences of Fugitives," Bucks County Historical Society Papers (1909), 504-12; York Daily Record, "Senate Recognizes York's Underground Railroad From His House on Philadelphia Street, William C. Goodridge," June 30, 1998.

Central and Western Pennsylvania Operations. See: Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., "Washington County, Pennsylvania in the Eighteenth Century Anti-Slavery Movement," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 25 (September 1942), 125-42; R.J.M. Blackett, "'Freedom, or the Martyr's Grave': Black Pittsburgh's Aid to the Fugitive Slave," in Joe William Trotter, Jr. and Eric Ledell Smith, eds., African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997); Arthur W. Blemaster, "The Community of Meadville on the Underground Railroad," Master's Thesis, Allegheny College, 1926; Eliza Smith Brown, Daniel Holland, et.al. African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1992); Eliza Smith Brown and Ronald C. Carlisle. The African-American Experience in Southwestern Pennsylvania: An Historic Context for Nine Counties (Prepared for Southwestern Pa. Heritage Preservation Commission and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1997);

Chambersburg (Pa) Public Opinion. "…Tracing the tracks to freedom," February 12-13, 2000; Sarah Christy, "Fugitive Slaves in Indiana County," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 18 (December 1935), 278-88; Robert F. Lark, "A Brief History of the Underground Railroad: An Account of its Possible Existence in Butler and Mercer Counties,"Mercer County History (1971); Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "Arthursville Abolitionists Ran Underground Railroad Through Pittsburgh," February 22, 1999; S.S. Rutherford, "The Under Ground Railroad," Publications of The Historical Society of Dauphin County (1928), 3-8; Eric Ledell Smith, "Researching the Underground Railroad in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania," forthcoming case study from PHMC; Howard Wallace, A Historical Sketch of the Underground Railroad from Uniontown to Pittsburgh (Uniontown, 1903); Hiram E. Wertz, "The Underground Railroad," Kittochtinny Historical Society, 1911; Kenneth P. Williams, "Crawford County on the Underground Railroad," Crawford County Historical Society (1959).

Pennsylvania's Antebellum Black Community. There have been numerous studies on Pennsylvania's antebellum black community, which was the one of the nation's largest and most active. See especially Charles L. Blockson, African Americans in Pennsylvania: A History and Guide (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1994); I.V. Brown, The Negro in Pennsylvania History (Pennsylvania Historical Studies, No. 11, 1970); Leroy Hopkins and Eric Ledell Smith, editors, African Americans in Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994); Roger Lane, William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Emma Lapsansky, "Networks and Community Values Among Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia Afroamerican Elites,"

Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 108 (1984), 3-24; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation and its Aftermath in Pennsylvania (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)and Gary B. Nash, Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Carl D. Oblinger, Freedom Foundations: Black Communities in Southeastern Pennsylvania Towns, 1780-1860 (Northwest Missouri State University Press, 1972); Edward J. Price, Jr., "Let the Law Be Just: The Quest for Racial Equality in Pennsylvania, 1780-1915," (Ph.D. diss., Penn State University, 1973); Joe William Trotter, Jr. and Eric Ledell Smith, eds., African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997); Edward R. Turner, Negro in Pennsylvania (1911); Julie Winch, "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 111 (January 1987), 3-25; Julie Winch, Philadelphia's Black Elite (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Richard R. Wright, Negro in Pennsylvania (New York: Arno, 1969 ed. --orig. pub. 1912).

Mid-Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania. The standard textbook on the state's history comes from Philip S. Klein and Ari Hoogenboom, A History of Pennsylvania (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1980). The resistance to fugitive slave hunters at Christiana, Lancaster County was one of the key political events of the 1850s. See Thomas P. Slaughter, Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Jonathan Katz, Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1974). On the role of Pennsylvania

Quakers in the antislavery movement, see Jean Soderlund, Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985). For a comprehensive review of Jewish involvement in the Underground Railroad and antislavery activities both in and around Pennsylvania; see the introduction by Maxwell Whiteman to Mrs. Kate E.R. Pickard, Kidnapped and Ransomed: The Narrative of Peter and Vina Still After Forty Years of Slavery (1856 facsimile edition, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970). There are good biographies for several key figures from the period who were from Pennsylvania or in some way connected to the Philadelphia vigilance movement: Margaret Hope Bacon, Valiant Friend, The Life of Lucretia Mott; Philip S. Klein, President James Buchanan (1962); William S. McFeely, Frederick Douglass (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); James A. McGowan, Station Master On the Underground Railroad: The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett (Kenett Square, PA: Whimsee Press, 1977); Stephen B. Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown (1970); Nell Irvin Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

PRIMARY SOURCES

After reviewing some of the best sources in the secondary literature, the most important step for someone intent on researching the Underground Railroad in a local community is the investigation of primary sources. This can be time-consuming and tedious, but ultimately indispensable for any serious student. At least for projects related to fugitive aid, there is an abundance of primary material --letters, diaries, newspaper reports, court documents, recollections, etc.-- available in printed form. This provides an

excellent and easy way to become familiar with the types of evidence that typically form the basis for most historical studies.

Printed material --Slave Narratives. Understanding the outlook of the fugitive is one of the more important and difficult aspects of Underground Railroad research. Fortunately, most slave narratives and interviews have now been published. There have been more than 6,000 collected --the largest such historical record of any slave culture in world history. The starting point for the study of this rich source of material should be Marion Wilson Starling, The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1988). One of the most useful collections because of its thoughtful introduction to the subject is from Gilbert Osofsky, ed., Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Although there were sporadic attempts to interview ex-slaves in the years following the Civil War, it was not until the Federal Writer's Project (FWP), began collecting and organizing various state oral history efforts that anything resembling a comprehensive national program to preserve first-person testimony about slavery emerged. Those critically important interviews, along with selections from some earlier oral history projects, have been reproduced in George P. Rawick, The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography (19 vols., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972). The 1981 edition also includes an index prepared by Donald Jacob. Still, there are many interviews not available in Rawick's monumental publication. One of the best additional sources, covering interviews from the state of Virginia and including an excellent introduction addressing methodological concerns, is Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden and Robert K. Phillips, eds., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-

Slaves (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976). Unfortunately, since most of the interviews were not conducted until the 1930s, there is little direct testimony about the Underground Railroad. According to the best available study, 83 percent of the ex-slaves interviewed for the FWP were under 21 at the time of the passage of the 13th Amendment.[116] Most were not born or just small children during the 1850s when the Railroad network was at its most active. Another interesting use of the ex-slave interviews comes from B.A. Botkin, ed., Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989). Selections from some of the best of the fugitive narratives have been collected by Charles L. Blockson, The Underground Railroad: Dramatic Firsthand Accounts of Daring Escapes to Freedom (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987).

Printed Material --Abolitionist Papers. Northern abolitionist newspaper editors and speakers provided the money, rhetoric, and even occasionally, the labor that made the Underground Railroad a reality. They were a literate, contentious group of men and women who frequently exchanged letters that provide wonderful insights into the antislavery network and outlook. The finest collection is the invaluable series by C. Peter Ripley et.al., ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers (5 vols., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985-93). For the correspondence of William Lloyd Garrison, the central icon of the movement, see Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, eds., The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison (6 vols., 1971-81). If Garrison was the leading white abolitionist, then Frederick Douglass was his black counterpart. His writings are

[116] Figures from Norman R. Yetman, "The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection," American Quarterly 19 (Fall 1967): 534-5, cited in Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden and Robert K. Phillips, eds., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), xli

currently being collected and republished in John W. Blassingame, et.al., eds., The Frederick Douglass Papers (Series One: Speeches, Debates, Interviews, 5 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985-91). During the Civil War, many abolitionists worked with the "contrabands," as the fugitives were then called, and later helped organize the Freedmen's Bureau to assist those ex-slaves in their post-war transition. A major documentary series has collected the papers of the Bureau, which include many priceless letters from slaves and ex-slaves, in Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie Rowland, eds., Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Printed Material --Fugitive Slave Law. Over three hundred fugitive slaves who escaped after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law were captured and faced judicial proceedings. Those cases as well as literally thousands of others concerning American slavery from 1619-1866 have been abstracted in a remarkable series edited by Helen T. Catterall, Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution, 1926-29). There is also heavily abstracted work produced by a nineteenth-century Harvard graduate student that provides a wealth of material on colonial statutes, treaty provisions and court cases not often considered in other studies. For this useful collection, see Marion Gleason McDougall, Fugitive Slaves: 1619-1865 (Prepared under the direction of Albert Bushnell Hart, orig. pub. 1891; New York: Bergman Publishers, 1967 ed.). There have also been several collections of runaway slave advertisements that can often be used to supplement Helen Catterall's edition of the judicial cases. One of the best collections for the colonial period was compiled by Latham A. Windley, Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary

History from the 1730s to 1790 (4 vols., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). For Pennsylvania, see Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, eds., Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

Printed Material --Vigilance Committee Records. Owing primarily to the diligence of two men, Jacob C. White and William Still, many of the records of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee have been preserved and published. These records now represent the best documentary evidence available for the Underground Railroad --in Pennsylvania or anywhere else. White kept records as the committee's secretary/agent roughly from 1839-44. They have been republished and extremely well analyzed by Joseph A. Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 42 (1968), 320-52. Still published various documents from his service as chairman of the Acting Committee (1852-1861) on his own in 1872. The book includes over 250 contemporary letters from fugitives and their patrons as well as runaway advertisements, journal entries, newspaper accounts and recollections. There is material from across Pennsylvania and the nation. Altogether, these documents bear direct contemporary witness to about 800 fugitive escapes. There is currently no version of the book that contains either annotations or an index --which makes the source especially difficult to use because Still does not follow a strict chronological order. However, the original table of contents is fairly detailed. See William Still, The Underground Railroad (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), but try not to use the collection without also reading a fascinating description of its author and production from

Larry Gara, "William Still and the Underground Railroad," Pennsylvania History 28 (1961), 33-44.

Printed Material --Underground Railroad Recollections. No primary source is more difficult for the student of history to evaluate than a recollection. Especially in the case of the Underground Railroad, researchers face the problem of corroborating the memories of aging abolitionists who have a natural tendency to want to associate themselves with what became, in retrospect, one of the most heroic causes in American history. Several early treatments of the Underground Railroad are really only still useful if treated as primary source recollections that must be subject to careful scrutiny. Examples include: Eber Petit, Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad (orig. pub. 1879-- Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1971); Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898), and R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and Neighboring Counties (completed by Robert Purvis and Marianna Gibbons; New York: Arno, 1969 ed. --orig. pub. 1883). In addition, many nineteenth century county histories from Pennsylvania contain references to Underground Railroad activity that are based upon the reminiscences of local residents. Most historians will not accept a recollected anecdote, especially from these sources, without at least some form of corroboration.

Archival Sources --Background. The most productive way to approach the challenge of corroborating recollections or oral traditions is through research in archival sources. Both the state archives and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (in Philadelphia) maintain vast collections of documents from the nineteenth century. Most counties in Pennsylvania also have local historical societies that provide public access to

their holdings. And finally, there are institutions such as colleges or universities that allow visitors to view most of the documents and objects they have stored in their collections. In fact, one of the most useful repositories for research concerning the Underground Railroad can be found at the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection at Temple University in Philadelphia.

For the uninitiated, archival research can sometimes be daunting. The rules and regulations are different and much stricter than for typical library research, mainly out of concern for the safety of the many fragile materials. Sometimes registration fees --and even references -- are required. It is not uncommon, for example, for archival staff to provide gloves to researchers to wear while handling old documents. Most stacks are closed, thus demanding patience from researchers in case the staffers who are serving them become overburdened with requests from other visitors. Generally, copying costs are also higher and the hours are more restricted than most lending libraries.

However, archival research truly offers the thrill of the chase. Researchers combing through old letters or diaries will feel like old-fashioned detectives. With only a little extra care and preparation even novice researchers can turn a trip to the local historical society into a fun and productive endeavor. The first question to ask is always about collection guides and finding aides. Since there are a wide variety of possible sources at every archive, many publish pamphlets or guides to their principal holdings. Even after consulting printed guides, however, it helps to discuss research projects with the staff. Only the trained personnel at each institution will be fully aware of its holdings and how to best utilize them. In addition, since genealogical research has long been so popular in Pennsylvania, many historical institutions here have created tools, called

finding aides, to help researchers locate particular people or documents. Nowadays, some institutions are even placing those tools on-line. For example, the Lancaster Historical Society has posted a bibliography of its African American resources with full descriptions of the various items at <<http://lanclio.org/lchsbb.htm>>.

Archival Sources --Types. What type of items might an Underground Railroad investigator expect to find scattered throughout Pennsylvania archives? The most likely reason for anyone to make a first visit to a local historical society or library is to seek out **rare books** --often old memoirs, local histories, or nineteenth-century studies simply not available at most lending libraries. For example, there is no modern edition of Robert C. Smedley's 1883 monograph on the fugitives in southeastern Pennsylvania. In addition to old and rare books, the next most useful source of archival material for the Underground Railroad will probably come from **manuscript collections** donated by families of former abolitionists or antebellum black residents. These collections typically contain incoming correspondence (most nineteenth-century figures saved their letters), diaries or journals, newspaper clippings and any other bills, receipts or documents likely to be stored. Bad handwriting sometimes makes using these collections frustrating, but occasionally scholars find gold mines. Several years ago, Haverford College professor Roger Lane effectively turned the extensive newspaper clipping file of William Dorsey, a prominent nineteenth-century black figure, into a remarkably rich social portrait of the city's black community. See Roger Lane, William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Another valuable resource is **institutional records** such as meeting minutes or annual reports from benevolent associations, fraternal groups, or churches. There was extensive

organizational support behind the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania that can be analyzed through research in these sources.

Although not as prevalent as manuscript collections or rare books, **city directories** and **local census surveys** and **"colored" registers** provide invaluable information for any researcher interested in Pennsylvania's black history. Most towns in Pennsylvania had directories identifying residents and businesses by name and address. In many instances, those directories indicated whether a person was "colored." Black teamster Cato Jordan, for example, who was named by Robert Smedley as a fugitive "conductor" from Columbia, Pennsylvania appeared in the town's 1876 directory, thereby confirming at least his own existence and increasing the credibility of the claim. Some towns, such as York and Lancaster, required all blacks residents to participate in a "colored" persons register, indicating their age, occupation and address. Even more valuable for social historians are the various local census surveys of the black population conducted haphazardly across the state during the antebellum period. In Columbia, for example, town officials surveyed black residents after the 1834-5 race riots. In Philadelphia, members of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society determined that the most effective way to lobby against the 1838 constitutional provision stripping blacks of the right to vote was to conduct an occasional census of the city's minority residents (called the African Repository) demonstrating their value to the community.

Many archives also contain record **oral histories**. You should always ask the reference librarians for information about this possibility. In addition, there are several archival repositories specifically devoted to oral history, including the Center for

Pennsylvania Cultural Studies, the University of Pennsylvania Folklore Archives and the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress.

There are also some important archival sources that are available on microfilm. These include the **U.S. Census** and **nineteenth-century newspapers**. Abolitionists relied heavily on newspapers to keep their members informed and spread their cause. There were a number of black newspapers based in Pennsylvania, such as the Pennsylvania Freeman (published by the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society) and the Christian Recorder (published by the AME church).

For those intent on proving the connection of a person or a site to the Underground Railroad, the most important archival information will probably come from **legal records** which can help create a paper trail that practically summarizes an individual's entire life or a property's history of ownership. These records include tax lists, marriage papers, juror's lists, estate inventories, constable reports (especially useful since they were often involved in fugitive cases), debtors reports, judgment bonds, probate records and various court filings. And finally, there are a variety of visual documents such as **maps** or **photographs** or **calendars** or **almanacs** that can be used to verify recollections about escapes and routes.

There are also key archival records in Washington that can help identify the political leanings of nineteenth century figures. For examples, beginning in the 1830s, many abolitionists and anti-slavery residents in the North signed **anti-slavery petitions** that were delivered to Congress and are now available at the National Archives**. Military records** from the Civil War often provide invaluable reference information, especially for many black males who have been otherwise lost in the documentary record.

Digital Tools. Just as many finding aides are now available "on-line," so are a number of full-text primary sources. In addition, digitization allows researchers the luxury to search the full-text of materials for specific words and to do so instantly. However, all too often users forget that most search engines do not automatically adjust to misspellings or different tenses. Effective searching requires the user to be familiar with the searching rules (i.e. "boolean" or natural language) and to make several attempts to cover all reasonable text possibilities. For example, there is a wonderful database now available on-line (although, unlike most sites, access is not free) from a Pennsylvania-based company at <<http://www.accessible.com>> that provides full-text searching of various African American newspapers, the Pennsylvania Gazette and several other nineteenth-century periodical and local Pennsylvania newspapers. It is a remarkably effective tool for genealogical research. However, typing in "William Johnson" will not result in "hits" for "Johnson, William" or "Wm. Johnson" or other variations on the name. One can also find Wilbur H. Siebert's listing of Underground Railroad operators in Pennsylvania (not complete or fully verified, but still useful) within the Menare Foundation's web site at <<http://www.ugrr.org/names/map-pa.htm>>. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center posts an extraordinary amount of information and useful material (although not yet much in the way of primary sources) at <<http://www.undergroundrailroad.org>>. However, there is a strong collection of primary source material (including Underground Railroad evidence) for Franklin County, Pennsylvania as part of the University of Virginia's "Valley of the Shadow" project, <<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/UGRR/underground.html>>. Also relevant to fugitive aid activities in western Pennsylvania, there is a web site affiliated

with the University of West Virginia devoted to noted Pittsburgh abolitionist Martin R. Delany at <<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/home.htm>> that includes the full text of several of his major writings. Also a number of virtual libraries have posted the full text of various slave narratives and abolitionist recollections. One of the best is the Making of America (MOA) digital library site from the University of Michigan <<http://moa.umdl.umich.edu>> which has posted over 1,600 books and 50,000 journal articles from the nineteenth century. These include full-text (searchable) recollections from such noted Underground Railroad participants as William Wells Brown, Levi Coffin, Frederick Douglass, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and J.W. Loguen. Finally, there is an excellent example of how the web can provide a powerful platform for historical research at a site sponsored by SUNY/Oswego and organized by Dr. Judith Wellman that explores the operations of the Underground Railroad in upstate New York << http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html>>.

Folklore --Background. For most people, folklore is actually the starting point for their interest in the Underground Railroad. Stories passed along through generations about slaves hiding in secret closets or tales about fugitives traveling by night along local creeks spark sympathetic imaginations and provide the basis a for powerful oral tradition or folklore. Several scholars, perhaps most notably Charles Blockson, have explored the symbolism of spirituals and their meaning in the context of Underground Railroad studies. The old divide between traditional historians and folklorists has been eroding over recent years, but is by no means gone. There is still a perennial debate over how to incorporate and evaluate oral evidence –especially, in cases like fugitive aid, where the usual suspects of archival research (letters, diaries, etc.) are less available. Yet if tales

and oral customs promise to fill this breech, they also sometimes threaten to create a timeless ether of disconnected memories. For a good starting point on the methodological issues at stake, consult the classic studies by Richard M. Dorson, American Folklore and the Historian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) and Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). Also useful is a monograph from Gladys-Marie Fry, Night Riders in Black Folk History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975). More recent works by Charles W. Joyner provide excellent role models. See Joyner's Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984) and Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Folklore --Techniques in Oral History. There are some practical guidelines that can help make oral history interviews more productive. First, the overriding question to consider at the outset of any interview is how the session will be recorded --by written notes, tape recorders or video cameras. Generally, more is better, as long as both the interviewer and the subject are comfortable. Since equipment problems plague many sessions, bringing back up technology is always helpful. Also, remember to identify the date, location and participants of each interview session at the outset of any transcript, whether it is written, audio or video. The key to a good interview is usually preparation --even the most reticent subjects will usually respond to a questioner who knows the topic well. However, preparation that translates into biased, leading questions is a pitfall to avoid. Whenever possible, ask questions that elicit specific information --names, dates, places, etc.-- that can be verified with outside research. Finally, remember that oral

history interviews conducted for research into the Underground Railroad are obviously not discussions with participants (and thus likely to contain many verifiable facts), but rather are useful primarily as measurements of the immense power of folklore and popular traditions. For a professional guide to oral history field techniques, see Edward D. Ives, The Tape Recorded Interview: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Folklore and Oral History, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995). For an example of how one scholar successfully used oral history to study a black community, see William Lynwood Montell, The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970).

Material and Popular Culture. In recent years, several scholars have explored the possibilities that fugitive slaves relied on codes hidden within songs, hand gestures, trail markers and even quilts in order to make their escape from slavery. A book on the purported secret instructions sewn into slave quilts briefly became a national sensation last year (Jacqueline Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad (New York: Doubleday, 1999). However, the notion that quilt patterns such as "Jacob's Ladder" and "Flying Geese" were used by runaways has long been a part of oral tradition and has even been the subject of previous scholarly studies. See Gladys-Marie Fry, Stitched From the Soul: Slave Quilts From the Antebellum South (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1990) or Maude Southwell Wahlman, Signs and Symbols: African Images in African-American Quilts (New York: Studio Books in association with the Museum of American Folk Art, 1993).

PRESERVATION

The National Park Service (NPS) is currently engaged in a far-reaching effort to identify and preserve sites associated with the Underground Railroad. As of June 1998, however, only two of the twelve sites designated by the NPS as national historic landmarks were located in Pennsylvania --the F. Julius Le Moyne House in Washington and the Johnson House in Philadelphia.[117] Clearly, there are more sites associated with the Underground Railroad within the state that qualify either as National Historic Landmarks (NHL) or as part of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official federal government listing of historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects that have played significant roles in American history or culture.[118] The criteria established by statute for these designations are quite specific --and demanding. The Commonwealth also as a specific program for dedicating State Historical Markers. As of January 1999, this effort had commemorated 120 sites connected with the state's black history in the state, including approximately 25 associated directly with the Underground Railroad.

Preservation --Background. For some, preserving Underground Railroad sites is approached with almost religious fervor. "This is one of the most important social and humanitarian movements, not only in North American history but also world history," claimed Vincent DeForest, a coordinator for the National Park Service, in 1998. "[119] Such passion is understandable, however, when considered in light of the destruction of so many property types associated with the history of fugitive aid. Before the recent revival

[117] <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/underground/themeh.htm>>
[118] See National Register Bulletin 16B, "Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form," (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1991) for additional information.
[119] Dallas Morning News, "Journey to Freedom: Groups work to preserve, interpret the saga of the Underground Railroad," September 27, 1998.

in public interest, there had been one example after another of historical memory being lost forever to urban renewal and suburban sprawl. Although many people deserve credit for refocusing attention on the Underground Railroad, a significant share belongs to Pennsylvania native Charles L. Blockson, who has devoted his lifetime to collecting and interpreting documents on the Underground Railroad. His collection of African-American history is currently housed at Temple University. Blockson wrote several articles and books on the Underground Railroad that reached a general audience, including former U.S. Rep. Peter Kostmayer (PA-08). It was Kostmayer, a Congressman from Bucks County, who introduced successful legislation (H.R. 3863) in 1990 that led to the federally funded effort directing the National Park Service to explore various methods to better commemorate and preserve the Underground Railroad experience within the United States.

Preservation --Physical Evidence. The language of the Underground Railroad propaganda leaned heavily on railroad metaphors. Thus, many people have referred to the buildings, structures, or sites (such as caves) that harbored fugitives as "stations" in the Underground Railroad. It is true that some participants in the fugitive slave support network used this terminology during their various clandestine operations, but for the most part, researchers should remember that the term "stations" is only a loosely applied shorthand description and not some formal label. According to the NPS, however, the matter is official enough that the agency does not consider individual rooms or parts of larger structures as actual "stations" themselves.[120]

[120] National Historic Landmarks Survey, "Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study," (Washington DC: NPS, September 1998), 35.

More important, the popular impression that secret tunnels connected Underground Railroad stations remains mysteriously entrenched. By now, hundreds, if not thousands, of previously innocuous root cellars and crawl spaces have been turned into hiding quarters for desperate fugitives by creative imaginations and enduring local folklore. The truth is that at least in Pennsylvania there was hardly ever a need for hiding places. From 1850 to 1860 slave catchers only managed to drag about eighty fugitives before federal or state magistrates. The reason they did not succeed in capturing more runaways had little to do with secret trap doors and underground tunnels. Slave catchers fared poorly mostly because the fugitives fought back. The lesson of the "riot" at Christiana was not lost on slave owners, nor was such resistance an isolated phenomenon. Newspaper reports and other contemporary evidence clearly document the willingness of both fugitives and free blacks to attack slave catchers who ventured across the Mason-Dixon Line into the Keystone State. Although the letters to William Still at the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee suggest all participants used caution and attempted to keep their movements discrete, there is very little in the contemporary record which supports the belief that fugitives in Pennsylvania spent a great deal of their time hiding anywhere.

By the same token, an absence of secret tunnels or rooms does not necessarily equate into a refutation of local legends. A few years ago in Ohio, a team of archeologists examined 17 homes that reportedly contained hidden passageways that had once been used to protect fugitives. They discovered no "subterranean hideaways" and

concluded that the local traditions were bunk.[121] Although this valuable review certainly demolished one part of the folklore, it did not settle every aspect of the story. More important than architecture is the political and social research necessary to identify the outlook and personal network of the figures under investigation. For example, last year a Missouri home owner finally decided to conduct some research on the original property owner of a stone structure that most local resident had always believed was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Town residents even insisted that underneath the home was a tunnel reaching the Mississippi River. He discovered that the home was not built until 1850 (with money from the California Gold Rush of 1849) and that the owner had been a "staunch Confederate" who died bankrupt in 1865. If such things happen, then Dr. William E. Clark, the original owner and unlucky rebel, has probably been rolling over in his grave every time someone from the town of Pevely, Missouri tells visitors that his home had been a haven for fugitive slaves.[122]

Preservation --Escape Routes. The National Park Service lists ten possible property types that might be associated with the Underground Railroad, but does not include escape routes. "Transportation routes have not been included," claims the NPS Theme Study, principally because "while the general direction of fugitives from slavery can be traced, the specific route followed by each individual or group of runaways was unique." Further, the authors of the study add, "the actual flight from slavery left no physical imprint on the landscape by which a route may be defined," concluding that

[121] Byron D. Fruehling and Robert H. Smith, "Subterranean Hideaways of the Underground Railroad in Ohio: An Architectural and Historical Critique," Ohio History 102 (1993), 98-117.
[122] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "Rumors of Ghosts and Tunnels Persist About Old Pevely House," December 6, 1999.

"transportation-related resources, especially those still in use, are by their nature dynamic and have often suffered a considerable loss of integrity."[123]

Nonetheless, people want to know about escape routes. Is there any responsible way to meet the public demand for information? The records of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee indicate that a surprising number of escapes took place on toll roads and real railroad lines. The Fugitive Aid Society sent slaves from Harrisburg to Philadelphia via the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. Some fugitives left Harrisburg on the Northern R.R. Line to Elmira, New York (and ultimately, Canada). Columbia lumber merchants William Whipper and Stephen Smith arranged for their teamsters to carry fugitives toward either Philadelphia or Pittsburgh along the major turnpikes of the day. Furthermore, many local historians, especially in southeastern Pennsylvania, have been able to "connect the dots" among the various abolitionist homes that regularly hosted runaways, using information culled from letters to William Still at the Vigilance office and from local traditions (see Appendix A, "Possible Escape Routes,"). Such efforts are well meaning and grounded at least partly in contemporary evidence, but they are practically impossible to verify with absolute certainty.

Part of the problem might be one of interpretation. People seem to imagine that the same routes were used over and over again, but that does not jibe with the facts available from the contemporary records. First, fugitives arrived in haphazard fashion. Even where there was a pattern of runaways from places like Norfolk, Virginia, they did not necessarily arrive in identical or even similar manners. Second, those who were willing to aid fugitives had an interest in varying their recommended routes, to guard

[123] National Park Service, (Marie Tyler-McGraw and Kira R. Badamo), Underground Railroad Resources

against discovery or betrayal. Besides, the point is not that fugitives came seeking particular pathways, but rather general assistance. They needed more than a direction. They required food, clothing, money and encouragement. It is the network, not the route, that needs preservation and deserves celebration. From this perspective, the priority would be to identify Pennsylvania's antebellum black neighborhoods and communities with white abolitionists, identifying both people and properties that invisibly defined the geographical boundaries of the fugitive aid networks. Places like the former Congo Square in Philadelphia, Tow Hill in Columbia or Hayti in Pittsburgh could become vehicles not only for commemorating the Underground Railroad, but also for illustrating the extensive antebellum black culture in Pennsylvania.

in the United States: Theme Study (Washington DC: GPO, 1998), 36.

APPENDIX A

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN PENNSYLVANIA

(source: National Park Service)

- F. Julius LeMoyne House, Washington
- John Brown House, Chambersburg
- Bethel AME Zion Church, Reading
- Oakdale, Chadds Ford
- White Horse Farm, Phoenixville
- Johnson House, Philadelphia

APPENDIX B

SELECTED PENNSYLVANIA STATE HISTORICAL MARKERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

(source: History Division, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)

STATE MARKERS WITH "UNDERGROUND RAILROAD" IN TEXT:

- Bethel AME Church, Berks Co.
- Hosanna Meeting House, Chester Co.
- Tanner Alley Marker, Dauphin Co.
- Thomas Garrett Marker, Delaware co.
- Freedom Road, Lycoming Co.
- Freedom Road, Mercer Co.
- African Zoar Methodist Church, Philadelphia
- William Still, Philadelphia
- Johnson House, Philadelphia
- William Whipper Marker, Philadelphia
- Robert Purvis Marker, Philadelphia
- Underground Railroad Marker, Union Co.
- William Goodridge House,York

STATE HISTORICAL MARKERS RELATED TO FUGITIVE AID NETWORK

- Thaddeus Stevens Marker, Adams Co.
- Bethel AME Church, Allegheny Co.
- Martin Delaney Marker, Allegheny Co.
- Lincoln University, Chester Co.
- John Brown's Tannery (1) Crawford Co.
- John Brown's Tannery (2) Crawford Co.
- Richard Henderson Marker, Crawford Co.
- St. James AME Church, Erie
- John Brown's Raid Marker, Franklin Co.
- Christiana Riot Marker, Lancaster Co.
- LaMott (Camp William Penn), Montgomery Co.
- First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia
- James Forten Marker, Philadelphia
- Francis Ellen Watkins Harper Marker, Philadelphia
- Free Africa Society Marker, Philadelphia
- Germantown AntiSlavery Protest Marker, Philadelphia
- Mother Bethel AME Church, Philadelphia
- AME Book Concern,Philadelphia
- Pa. Abolition Society Marker, Philadelphia
- Phila. Female Antislavery Society Marker, Philadelphia
- Pennsylvania Hall Marker, Philadelphia
- Prince Hall Grand Masonic Lodge, Philadelphia

- Stephen Smith Marker, Philadelphia
- Jacob C. White Jr. Marker, Philadelphia
- Cyrus Bustill Marker, Philadelphia
- Amanda Smith Marker, York

APPENDIX C

SELECTED PENNSYLVANIA SITES TRADITIONALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

(source: Charles L. Blockson, Hippocrene Guide to the Underground Railroad, (New York: Hippocrene, 1994), 81-140)

ADAMS
- Dobbins House, Gettysburg

ALLEGHENY
- Martin R. Delaney Marker, Pittsburgh
- Jane Swisshelm Marker, Pittsburgh
- Avery College and Church, Pittsburgh

BEAVER
- Underground Railroad Markers, Darlington
- Geneva College, Beaver Falls

BEDFORD
- Unmarked graves, Chaneyville

BERKS
- Kirbyville Inn, Fleetwood
- Hopewell Furnace, Birdsboro
- Bethel AME Church, Reading

BUCKS
- Mount Gilead AME Church, Buckingham

CENTRE
- Linn House, Bellefonte
- Milroy Presbyterian Church, Milroy

CHESTER
- Zebulon Thomas Home, Downingtown
- Vickers Taver, Lionville
- Anna Preston Home, West Grove
- John and Hannah Cox Farm, Kennett Square
- Hosanna A.U.M.P. Church, Oxford
- Sunnyside Home, Kimberton
- Longwood Progressive Friends Meetinghouse, Kennett Square
- Schuylkill Friends Meetinghouse, Phoenixville

CRAWFORD

- Richard Henderson Marker, Meadville
- John Brown's Tannery, New Richmond

DAUPHIN
- Thomas Chester Home, Harrisburg

DELAWARE
- Sellers Hall Marker, Upper Darby
- Honeycomb AME Church, Lima

ERIE
- Commodore Perry Memorial House, Erie

FAYETTE
- Nemacolin Castle, Brownsville

FRANKLIN
- Little Africa, Mercersburg
- Caledonia State Park, Franklin
- John Brown's Headquarters, Chambersburg

LANCASTER
- Christiana Resistance Monument, Christiana
- Wright's Ferry Mansion, Columbia

LAWRENCE
- Neshannock United Presbyterian Church, New Castle
- White Homestead, New Castle

LYCOMING
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, Williamsport
- Thomas Lightfoot Inn
- House of Many Stairs, Pennsdale
- McCarty-Wertman House, Muncy
- Freedom Road Cemetary, Williamsport
- Medbury House, Smithport

MERCER
- Freedom Road Cemetery, Sandy Lake

MONTGOMERY
- First Baptist Church, Norristown
- Abolition Hall, Plymouth Meeting
- Linden Grove, Plymouth Meeting
- Maulsby House, Plymouth Meeting
- Mott Home Marker, La Mott

- Charles Kirk Homestead, Willow Grove
- Valley Forge Monument, Valley Forge

PHILADELPHIA
- Robert Purvis Home, Mt. Vernon Street
- William Still marker, South 12th Street
- Johnson House, Germantown Avenue
- William Whipper Home, Lombard Street
- Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Home, Bainbridge Street
- Campbell AME Church, Kinsey Street
- Mother Bethel AME Church, South Sixth Street
- Washington Square, Sixth to Seventh and Walnut to Locust Streets
- Liberty Bell, Market Street

SCHUYLKILL
- Gillingham's House, Pottsville

SUSQUEHANNA
- Galusha Grow Marker, Susquehanna

UNION
- Old Stable, Lewisburg

WASHINGTON
- LeMoyne House, Washington

YORK
- William C. Goodrige House, York

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE ESCAPE ROUTE MAPS

1. Northeast overview (source: W.H. Siebert, 1898)
2. Southeastern Pa. (source: R.C. Smedley, 1883)
3. Lancaster County (source: C.D. Spotts, 1966)
4. Delaware County (source: Delco Times, 1999)

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