UNDERGROUND RAILROAD RESOURCES IN THE UNITED STATES

THEME STUDY

September 2000

Eleutherian College Classroom and Chapel. Lancaster, Indiana

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register, History and Education

NPS Form 10-900-b
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form Is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete* the *Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

___New Submission _X_Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD RESOURCES IN THE UNITED STATES THEME STUDY

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical **area,** and chronological period for each.)

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN AMERICAN HISTORY

C. Form Prepared by

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organization National Historic Landmarks Survey, NRHE, National Park Service date September 1, 2000

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city or town Washington state District of Columbia zip code 20240

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Carol D. Shull — Sept. 5, 2000

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National **Register** Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et* seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT:

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The primary purpose of this context is to assist in the identification of places associated with the Underground Railroad that are eligible for National Historic Landmark designation and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1990, the United States Congress authorized the National Park Service to conduct a study of the resources available nationally for the interpretation of the Underground Railroad. A special resource study published in 1995 determined that there were sufficient resources available and suggested a variety of approaches for commemoration of the Underground Railroad. Operating under the 1990 legislation, the National Park Service has produced educational materials and technical support for researchers. An Underground Railroad Handbook was published in February 1997, followed by "Exploring a Common Past: Researching the Underground Railroad." This study provides historic context for the development of nominations for the Underground Railroad theme.

Identifying historic properties associated with the Underground Railroad is an extremely varied task. To help the researcher understand the various aspects of the Underground Railroad, this context is divided into sections that focus on a complex but related series of historical activities and geographic regions, referred to generally as the Underground Railroad. The term is capitalized to signal inclusiveness in that larger organizing concept. When used as a descriptive adjective or as a reference to some part of the concept, it is not capitalized.

This context is not exhaustive and it briefly reviews the history of slavery and of North American resistance to slavery, excluding Canada. It evaluates examples of structures, buildings, communities, regions and transportation routes related to fugitives from slavery. These examples do not encompass all the varieties of Underground Railroad activity that were ever enacted; no study could make that claim. However, this study provides a structure into which researchers may fit more information and evidence as it is developed. The report also describes aspects of antislavery activity and slave resistance which are precursors or marginal to the Underground Railroad story but which contribute to its emergence. This context study treats such events, often historically important in their own right, as connected but not central to the Underground Railroad story.

INTRODUCTION

The Underground Railroad refers to the effort -- sometimes spontaneous, sometimes highly organized -- to assist persons held in bondage in North America to escape from slavery. While most runaways began their journey unaided and many completed their self-emancipation without assistance, each decade in which slavery was legal in the United States saw an increase in the public perception of a secretive network and in the number of persons willing to give aid to the runaway. The period under consideration for this study is primarily the 1780s to 1865, with emphasis on the years from 1830 to 1865 when most antislavery advocates abandoned their hope for gradual emancipation and adopted immediate abolition of slavery as their goal. Although divided, the abolitionist movement was successful in expanding the informal network known as the Underground Railroad and in publicizing it.

The term "Underground Railroad" had no meaning to the generations before the first rails and engines of the 1820s, but the retrospective use of the term in this study is made so as to include incidents which have all the characteristics of Underground Railroad activity, but which occurred earlier. These activities foreshadowed and helped to shape the Underground Railroad. While the primary focus will be on the most active period of Underground Railroad activity, it is important to document related events which

contribute to an understanding of this nationally significant, geographically-widespread enterprise. Several aspects of the history of American slavery, as well as categories of sites, not directly related to the Underground Railroad are still central to an understanding of it. Earlier resistance and antislavery actions are the base on which the Underground Railroad was built. Resistance to lifetime servitude began with the first Africans forcibly brought to the Western hemisphere in the 1500s, and resistance continued until the last emancipations in North America. Without this continued resistance, there would have been no need for the extensive legal codes which upheld property rights in human beings or for the brutal intimidation which always existed just beneath the surface of this coercive social system.

Yet, for purposes of identifying historic properties related to the Underground Railroad, an important distinction must be made between the era of the Underground Railroad and those activities which are precursors or simply contemporary to it. Distinctions must be made in levels of significance and not every act of slave resistance or sign of antislavery activity can be included. Nor can every example of the experience of enslavement be connected to the Underground Railroad. But the most distinct and verifiable sites for each of these related events may be joined to a particular Underground Railroad story. Examples may include the town of Ripley, Ohio, in which several buildings and the Ohio River contribute to the story. In another example, the story of Delia Webster and Calvin Fairbarn, who went into Kentucky and brought out Lewis Hayden and his family, crosses state lines and involves farm sites, courthouses, jails, and trails. This story connects Kentucky with Ohio and with Massachusetts, where the Haydens settled. Here the concept of multiple property listings may be particularly useful because a variety of properties within a given area may better reproduce the texture of life, the social tensions, and the economic realities which gave rise to and supported the Underground Railroad.[1]

The origin of the term "Underground Railroad" cannot be precisely determined. What is known is that both those who aided escapees from slavery, and those who were outraged by loss of slave property, began to refer to runaways as part of an "Underground Railroad" network by the 1830s. The "Underground Railroad" described an activity that was locally organized with no real center and it sometimes existed rather openly in the North, while often just beneath the surface of daily life in the Upper South and certain Southern cities. The Underground Railroad, where it existed, offered local aid to runaway slaves assisting them from one point to another. Farther along, others would take the passenger into their transportation system until the final destination had been reached.[2]

The rapidity with which the term became commonly used did not mean that incidents of resistance to slavery increased significantly around 1830 or that more attempts were made to escape from bondage. It did mean that more white northerners were prepared to aid runaways and to give some assistance to the northern blacks who had always made it their business to help escapees from slavery. It was on January 1, 1831, that the first issue of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, was published. That event marks the traditional beginning of the era of abolitionist attack on the institution of slavery and of angry and defensive responses from the slaveholding South. The high visibility of the abolitionist attack has perhaps encouraged historians to overemphasize that part of the antislavery movement because the abolitionists left so many printed records.

Other aspects of the Underground Railroad, other than the abolitionist movement, also deserve attention. First, there were probably at least as many attempts at escape from slavery in the North America of the late 1600s and the 1700s, both individual and in groups, as in the 1800s when various forces, from the national Constitution to the local slave patrols, were all aligned to prevent escapes. Second, while primary attention is given to the drama of slave escapes to the free states of the North and to Canada,

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[1] Randolph Paul Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Stuart Seely Sprague, ed., *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

[2] Many sources have described this activity. See the Bibliographic Essay for suggestions on the assessment and use of such sources.

there was also a flow of runaways into Spanish Florida and into Spanish Mexico and the subsequent Mexican Republic. Although the numbers escaping southward and northward across the borders never threatened to destabilize slavery, there were serious consequences for American diplomacy and domestic politics. Indeed, American foreign policy in the antebellum era was often driven by the need to secure national borders and prevent slave escapes. A third factor is that the majority of assistance to runaways came from slaves and free blacks, and the greatest responsibility for providing shelter, financial support and direction to successful runaways came from the organized efforts of northern free blacks.

The importance of the Underground Railroad cannot be measured by the number of attempted or successful escapes from American slavery, but by the manner in which it consistently exposed the grim realities of slavery and -- more important -- refuted the claim that African Americans could not act or organize on their own. Throughout the American colonial era and until the early 1800s, slavery had most frequently been rationalized as a "necessary evil," perhaps even as benevolent in that it Christianized and civilized the African. But with the end of the slave trade and rise of the Cotton Kingdom, it became clear that another set of theories would have to be developed to justify the continuation of lifetime servitude. In order to promote slavery as a "positive good," proslavery advocates had to claim, against much evidence, that African Americans were better off in slavery and generally content with their bondage. Runaways refuted this claim by their actions.

The debate in Congress in 1819 and 1820 over whether Missouri should be admitted to the Union as a slave state or a free state made it clear to Northerners and Southerners that the issue of slavery was not going to resolve itself and that slavery was not going to simply evaporate in the American republic. In the 1820s and increasingly in the 1830s, slave-state philosophers began to define slavery as a positive good. They argued that Africans were not capable of caring for themselves, taking initiative, or organizing for the good of the community -- all of which were requirements for citizenship in a republic. The Underground Railroad -- from the first decision to run away through the actions of black-organized Vigilance Committees and churches to the economics of black communities -- was a constant reminder of African American initiative and ability. Its existence and functions showed how self-serving was the racist ideology that was not confined to the South but commonly believed in the North, as well.[3]

The Underground Railroad gave ample evidence of African American capabilities and gave expression to an African American world view. It provided an opportunity for sympathetic white Americans to play a role in resisting slavery. It also brought together, however uneasily at times, men and women of both races to begin to set aside assumptions about the other race and to work together on issues of mutual concern. At the most dramatic level, the Underground Railroad provided stories of guided escapes from the South, rescues of arrested fugitives in the North, complex communication systems, and individual acts of bravery and suffering. While most of the accounts of secret passageways, sliding wall panels, and hidden rooms will not be verified by historic evidence, there were indeed sufficient dramas to be interpreted and verified.

THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE EVOLUTION OF SLAVERY IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

The circumstances which gave rise to the Underground Railroad were based in the transportation of Africans to North America as part of the Atlantic slave trade. About 12 million Africans were transported across the Atlantic to the Western Hemisphere in the 400 years from 1450 to 1850. Of this number, only about five per cent were brought to British North America and, later, to the United States from Africa, most of them arriving between 1680 and 1810. A small number of Africans went first to the British West Indies and then to North America.[4]

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[3] The best overview remains George Fredrickson, *The Black Image In the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[4] Phillip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 18.

Africans were present while North and South America were explored and expropriated as European colonies (1500s-1700s), but their roles and status varied from Mexico to Brazil to the Carolinas and New Amsterdam.[5] Bonded labor, common both in Europe and Africa, declined in Europe while it became more important in Africa after trade with Europe was established. At the end of the fourteenth century Europeans, primarily the Portuguese and the Spanish, were exploring the West Coast of Africa, looking both for trade opportunities and trade routes to the East. In their interaction with African merchants they began to export small numbers of slaves to their European homelands. With the exploration and eventual settling of the New World by Europeans, however, the trade in African slaves increased rapidly. Initially, Europeans brought only small numbers of Africans to the New World, yet as the need for labor grew with increased agricultural, mining, mercantile, and other business interests, so too did the number of black slaves, the vast majority of whom were males. Brazil and the Caribbean had the largest number of imports, and for the longest period of time until the 1880s. Although most of the figures for the Atlantic slave trade system are imprecise, it is possible to estimate that Brazil received at least 4 million slaves and the islands of the Caribbean, colonized by the French, Dutch, English, Danish, and Spanish, as well as Spain's mainland possessions, received at least 5.5 million. The mainland United States as colonies and nation, imported about 450,000 over a 250-year period. Slavery in this country began, then, as one part of a long history of international trade in goods and people both in Europe and in Africa.[6]

Europeans divided the slave trade into three geographic regions -- Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and Angola. More than three-fifths of the slaves brought to the Chesapeake were from the Gold Coast or the Bight of Biafra. While many of the Sierra Leonians went to Carolina, they were outnumbered there by Angolans. Senegambians were prominent in both the Carolinas and Louisiana. The presence of these and other enslaved African groups in North America was due primarily to wars and thievery. Rivalries between ethnic and tribal groups, raids by North Africans and local soldiers, and piracy conducted up the many rivers of the African coast, provided the majority of captured Africans.[7]

Traditionally, the entry of Africans into British North America is dated from the 1619 sale of some 20 blacks from a Dutch ship in Virginia. Although there were undoubtedly other Africans in those regions which later became part of the United States, slavery as it developed in British North America and continued in the American republic, can be traced to what happened in the Chesapeake in the 1600s. For the first few decades, the status of Africans was uncertain. Some were treated as indentured servants and freed after a term of service, often fourteen years. Others were kept on in servitude because their labor was needed, and it was too tempting for aspiring planters not to take advantage of the vulnerable black laborers. By the 1640s, court decisions began to reflect a different standard for Africans than for white servants and to accept the concept of lifetime black servitude. In the 1660s, Virginia decreed that a child followed the status of its mother, thus making lifetime servitude inheritable. A series of court decisions from the 1660s forward locked slavery into place in the Chesapeake and its existence was not questioned in the later development of the Carolinas.[8] Georgia resisted briefly and then accepted the institution.

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[5] For a summary of these diverse experiences, see Brenda Stevenson, "From Bondage to Freedom: Slavery in America," in *Underground Railroad*, Handbook 156, Division of Publications (Washington, DC: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1998.)

[6] John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xv. See also Donald R. Wright, *African Americans in the Colonial Era: From African Origins Through the American Revolution* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harland Davidson, 1990).

[7] James Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 17-18. See also Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, *African History* (New York: Longman, 1991); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 62-85.

[8] Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 299-311; Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 26-54.

Slave law to the north of the Chesapeake did not differ significantly.[9]

Many blacks who arrived in the New World were familiar with bonded labor. Slavery in Africa, as elsewhere, was not a static institution. European trade rivalries and the European view of North and South America as a site for aggrandizing their power through mineral extraction and staple crop production caused a great escalation in the numbers of Africans enslaved and brought to the Americas. Trade rivalries also caused tremendous changes in the status and functions of the enslaved. The desire and, eventually, the need of West Africans to trade with Europeans in order to gain access to their weapons and other prized goods escalated their involvement in the slave trade to such an extent that they could no longer draw on the reserve of slaves that they traditionally had in their societies.[10]

While there was a general protocol in place in which representatives of trading companies negotiated with African rulers through middlemen, the actual methods of the traders varied greatly. As the trade became more lucrative with greater demand from the New World, more and more slaves were stolen through armed raids. The slave trade also had an immense impact on the developing economies of the New World and the changing economies of Western Europe. It was the foundation for European mercantilism and industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the labor force for colonial agriculture, and a prime force in the growth of the shipbuilding industry.[11]

By the time a body of law regarding slavery was put firmly into place, a number of free blacks who had escaped permanent bondage through indenture, lived throughout the colonies. They married -- other free blacks, slaves, Native Americans, occasionally European servant women -- and raised families. This, in addition to African sailors and free black arrivals from the West Indies, constituted the core of the free black class in the colonies.[12]

Lifetime bondage, or slavery, was firmly and legally established in the British North American colonies by the late 1600s and continued to exist in every colony in some form until the era of the American Revolution. The death rate was lower in tobacco and grain cultivation and natural increase began to offset deaths by 1700, about the time that slavery received its final legal sanctions. The period of greatest importation of slaves into the present-day United States was from approximately 1680 to the Revolutionary War (1776). There were a scattering of bondspeople in New England and, moving southward, the number of slaves increased from New York through Virginia, while a system of plantation slavery similar to that of the Caribbean developed in the eastern part of South Carolina and Georgia. In the Carolinas and Georgia importation began about 1720 and continued until the slave trade became illegal in 1808. There slaves were acquired through the low country ports of Charleston and Savannah or in the other major slave market, the Gulf Coast port of New Orleans. New Orleans, controlled by the French and the Spanish in this period, imported most heavily while the American colonials were at war and continued through the early 1800s as an import market for the rising Cotton Kingdom.[13]

While British North America received few slaves, it was deeply involved in the slave trade, which was dominated after the 1680s by the British Royal African Company. For much of the eighteenth century, Britain's prosperity was involved with the purchase, capture and export of slaves from western Africa to

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[9] 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, 1977), 5-12.

[10] Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 116-125.

[11] Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 247.

[12] For the origins of northern free blacks see James O. Horton and Lois Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, chaps. 1-2. For a Chesapeake example, see T. H. Breen and Steven Innis, *"Mynne Owne Ground:" Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[13] Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 83; Daniel C. Littlefield, "The Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina: A Profile," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 91 (1990): 68-99; Susan Westbury, "Slaves of Colonial Virginia: Where They Came From," *William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1985): 228-237.

the European colonies of the Western Hemisphere. Some colonial legislatures (Massachusetts, Virginia, and South Carolina) attempted to tax slave imports, fearing slave insurrection and hoping to encourage European immigration, but found their laws ignored by traders or overturned by royal representatives. By the mid-1700s, voices began to be raised against slavery in moral grounds. Primarily, these were the voices of religious societies. In England and British North America, the Society of Friends (Quakers) began to divest themselves of slaves in the 1750s.[14]

In many ways, the colonial era presented enslaved Africans with more opportunities to abscond than did the more settled and legally-restrictive American society of the nineteenth century. More runaways before the American Revolution than afterward may have tried, as they did in the Caribbean and South America, to form maroon societies. Large sections of all the colonies were uninhabited by Europeans, and Native Americans were sometimes, although not always, willing to assist fugitives from slavery. In addition, vast tracts of forests and swamps, not yet claimed and settled, offered deep cover for runaways and the colonies were just beginning to organize their legal and law enforcement systems to protect slaveholding. Colonial slaves had often recently arrived from Africa or the Caribbean and had no reason to believe that they could not escape from the system of slavery and start their own community. Since the northern states were not yet "free" states, their only recourse was to cross an international border, pass themselves as free in a new region, or live outside society.

Maroon societies (also marron or cimarron) were bands or communities of fugitive slaves who had succeeded in establishing a society of their own in some geographic area, usually difficult to penetrate, where they could not easily be surprised by soldiers, slave catchers, or their previous owners. Africans enslaved in Spanish New World territories were most likely to run away and form such communities. Maroon societies were of several degrees of stability. At the least stable end were the gangs of runaway men who wandered within a region, hiding together, and who sustained themselves by raids or by prevailing upon their friends and relatives for food. Other societies included both men and women and might have developed a trade relationship with outsiders. Some maroon societies felt themselves safe enough to plant crops and attempt at least a semi-permanent settlement. The threat of maroons emerging from their hiding places to merge with slaves in revolt was another concept that troubled slave owners.

But by the time of the American republic, such refuges were fewer. Further, the North American back country was already inhabited by Native Americans who sometimes accepted Africans into their communities, sometimes kept them in slavery, and sometimes returned them to their masters. Even the colonial era maroon societies were neither as large nor as long-lasting as those in the West Indies or Brazil. Maroon societies in North America were most likely to flourish on the borders between English/American and Spanish territories. Thus Florida and the Texas-Mexico border had several active communities, as did Louisiana, before its acquisition by the United States. The Great Dismal Swamp, Okefenokee, and other sites were also briefly home to bands of runaways, some of whom left after a period and others who planned to stay on and stay out of sight. Their success was modest but, given the constraints, admirable.[15]

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[14] Jordan, *Burden*, 113-116; Jean Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[15] Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) contained only one reference to maroons in North America. That article was a reprint of a well-known 1939 essay by Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States," which listed fifty such societies over time. Yet Peter Hinks in *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1997), 40-46, uses court records and current scholarship to describe maroon camps in eastern North Carolina and Virginia that flourished between the 1760s and the 1820s. But Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), and Kenneth Porter, "Negroes on the Southern Frontier, 1670-1763," *Journal of Negro History* 33 (January 1948): 53-78 both contend that, although maroon attempts were plentiful, they were not permitted to exist for very long.

Escapes into Spanish Florida were among the earliest successful attempts at freedom and community, beginning near the end of the 1600s and concluding only with Andrew Jackson's march into Florida to eradicate the "Negro forts." In 1738, the Spanish governor of Florida offered freedom to British colonial slaves who escaped to St. Augustine. While Spain had long been part of the international slave trade and had used slave labor throughout its colonies, that nation disputed British claims to Georgia and South Carolina and wanted to keep those colonies as disrupted as possible. Encouraging runaways was a good way to do it. After the edict, slaves ran away in groups and singly to Saint Augustine and nearby Florida villages. Georgia advised its citizens to keep a sharp lookout for runaways from South Carolina on their way to Florida and scout boats patrolled the water routes near the Georgia-Florida border. Many of the Florida villages consisted of the remnants of Southeastern Indian tribes, gathered together for survival, who became known as Seminoles.[16]

The southern colonies had much larger slave populations and began to develop the slave patrols and punitive legislation that came to characterize the slave south. All blacks were required to carry a pass or ticket if they left their plantation or work place. Punishments for runaway slaves were severe and included whipping, mutilation, branding with an "R," sale to the West Indies, and sometimes death. If a group of slaves ran away together, as was common in the colonial era, several of the group would be put to death upon recapture. Those who aided or encouraged runaways were also punished with fines, imprisonment and, occasionally, death. South Carolina fined anyone who apprehended a runaway and neglected to inflict a whipping.

The organization and function of southern militias was closely tied to preventing slave rebellions and runaways and slave patrols usually had a militia officer as their leader. Even during the American Revolution, scarce military resources had to be expended in patrolling roads, rivers, and seaports to prevent slaves from escaping to the British army and navy. From the beginning of American slavery, runaways were the most troublesome, expensive, and legally vexing aspect of that economic system. Colonial fugitives from slavery came from varied backgrounds and had a wide range of experiences. The following descriptions of eighteenth-century runaways and of a rumored insurrection, suggests some of the complexity of colonial slavery:

This rumor of insurrection came some fifty years after the actual Stono Rebellion and indicates how very long and lingering were the effects of armed slave resistance.

> Charleston, 8th August 1787
> Colonel Arnaldus Vanderhorst,
> Berkley County Militia
>
> Sir,
> Having received information that a party of runaway negro men, many of whom are armed, are become very troublesome and dangerous to the plantations in the vicinity of Stono, and it being represented that they are too numerous to be quelled by the usual parties of patrol, you will be pleased to order a command from your regiment of such part of the militia of the neighborhood as you may judge sufficient effectually to apprehend or disperse such slaves as fall within the above description.
> Thomas Pinckney[17]

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[16] Lathan Algerna Windley, *A Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina from 1730 through 1787*, in Graham Hodges, ed., *Studies in African American History and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1995), 27; Kenneth Porter, "Negroes on the Southern Frontier, 1670-1763," *Journal of Negro History* 53 (January 1948):53-78.

[17] Adele Stanton Edwards, ed., *The State Records of S.C. Privy Council: Journals of the Privy Council 1783-1789* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 203, quoted in Windley, *Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina*, 12.

BROUGHT to the WORKHOUSE, IN CHARLES-TOWN
May 14, 1754 A new negro man, speaks no English, a little scarified on the temples, with smooth skin and thick beard, has a white cloth jacket and breeches.[18]

***

STOLEN, Stray'd, or Run-away, on the 12th from Dr. John Finney in New-Castle, a Negro Woman, named Betty, aged about 18 years, of small Stature, round Face, has been about a Month in this country, speaks veryd little English, has had one Child; Had on, the Body of an old Gingham Gown, and an ozenbrigs Petticoat. She is supposed to have been taken from hence by an Oyster-Shallop, Benj. Taylor Master, bound for Philadelphia, and may be sold on some Part of the River.

Whoever brings her to the Subscriber in New-Castle, and discovers the Person who carried her off, shall have Forty Shillings Reward, and reasonable Charges, paid by
John Finney
New-Castle, Sept. 15, 1740 [19]

***

Kingstown, Queen Ann's County, September 10, 1759

RUN away the 8th of this Instant, a Negroe Man, named Caesar, he has both his Legs cut off, and walks on his Knees, may pretend that he was Cook of a Vessel, as he has been much used on board of Ships; he was seen by New-Castle on Saturday last. Whoever secures the said Negroe in any Goal or Work-house, shall receive Twenty Shillings Reward, paid by me, SARAH MASSEY.
N. B. He has been a Ferry man at Chester Town, Queen Ann's County, for many years.[20]

Throughout the colonial period and until 1819, slaves escaped from the lower south into East and West Florida. While the famous "Negro Fort," once the British Fort Gadsden, was taken by American troops in 1816, it was not until 1819 that the United States made a bold play to take all of East Florida. In that year, Congress attempted to put a stop to slave runaways and Indian raids across the Florida border by sending Andrew Jackson to make war on the encampments and communities of Africans and Native Americans. Jackson went farther and claimed all of Florida for the United States. Spain was not strong enough to reclaim Florida and the descendants of many fugitives moved on to Cuba or retreated into the swamps.

EARLY ANTISLAVERY

The early antislavery movement includes the early abolition societies (1780s-1812) which were present in almost every state, and the religious antislavery movement which began to be significant in the mid-1700s. It also includes free blacks who made political and practical economic efforts to encourage emancipations, to end the slave trade, and, ultimately, to abolish slavery in the new American Republic. The early antislavery movement and early resistance to slavery in the British colonies (1600s-1700s), are precursors of the Underground Railroad. An example of the latter would be African American war-

[18] Charleston, *South Carolina Gazette*, May 21-28, 1754, quoted in Windley, *Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina*, 123.

[19] Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 20.

[20] Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 47. Other sources for runaway advertisements include Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); the four-volume work by Lathan Algerna Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History From the 1730s to 1790* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983); Daniel Meaders, *Advertisements for Runaway Slaves in Virginia, 1801-1820* (New York: Garland, 1997); Freddie L. Parker, *Running for Freedom: Slave Runaways in North Carolina 1775-1840* (New York: Garland, 1993); *'Pretends to be Free:' Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994.)

related efforts to leave the United States during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, to sue for freedom on the basis of military service, and to organize slave rebellions as in the Stono Rebellion (1739), Gabriel's Conspiracy (1800), and that of Denmark Vesey (1823).[21] A context for early antislavery and resistance also encompasses examples of slave and free black life in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in order to understand the everyday experiences from which slaves became runaways.

There are several intertwined strands to the early stages of the North American antislavery movement. In the British North American colonies, sentiment against slavery developed slowly throughout the years between 1680 and 1770 when the number of Africans arriving in the colonies was at its highest and the importance of bonded labor to the colonial economy was growing. In the eighteenth century, the period of most intense slave trading and slave transportation to North America, antislavery activity focused on ending the slave trade. The ascendance of Enlightenment philosophy in mid-eighteenth century France, spreading rapidly to England and to England's colonies, emphasized the innate capacities of each person and the limitless progress available to humanity through scientific study and rational thought. It was, in this manifestation, frequently used as a rebuke to slaveholders and to nations involved in the slave trade because its central premise was that each human and each society was capable of progress, however defined. Enlightenment philosophy was important in the development of American Revolutionary theory and the subsequent rhetoric of "the rights of man."[22]

Another eighteenth-century strand, which also emphasized the dignity and decision-making capacity of each human, was the rise of evangelical religion. Beginning in the 1730s, a style of emotional preaching and a theology of direct and personal experience of God contributed to the waning power of state-sponsored denominations. The Great Awakenings, as these religious belief systems were styled, called into question the morality of slavery. The Society of Friends (Quakers) in England was the first religious denomination to question the morality of human bondage and they came slowly, over a period of several generations in the eighteenth century, to view slavery as incompatible with membership in the Friends. Quakers began to divest themselves of slaves in the 1750s and those who found they could not do it left the Society of Friends. By the nineteenth century, Southern Quakers had begun to move west to escape the culture of slavery. Both those Quakers who remained in the South and those who moved to the Midwestern states often took responsibility for aiding ex-slaves and acquired a deserved reputation for assistance to runaways.[23]

As the authority of the Church of England in the South and the Congregational (Puritan) Church in the North diminished, dispersed, and disappeared, breakaway or independent factions of Presbyterians and, more frequently Baptists, and Methodists in the 1780s and 1790s, attracted African American converts in the North and South. Although this did not mean true equality of condition in these denominations, it did create a moral language of antislavery and a philosophical underpinning for resistance.[24]

A third strand was the rise of benevolent societies in England and America, made possible by a rising standard of living which created a middle class with the time and money necessary to do good works. Ironically, much of that prosperity was based on slave labor. Benevolence was concerned with assisting the most powerless members of society, and among those, were persons held in bondage in England's

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[21] See, for example, Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 5th ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1983); Thomas J. Davis, "The New York Slave Conspiracy of 1741 as Black Protest," *Journal of Negro History* 56 (January 1971); Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

[22] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 16; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 47-49.

[23] Sydney James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[24] John B. Boles, ed., *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

colonies. Abolition societies in England sparked abolition societies in the new United States. For some three decades after the American Revolution, it appeared possible that slavery might gradually be ended, even though the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 had guaranteed the rights of slave property to slaveholders.[25]

When British North America severed ties with England, the slave trade between West Africa, the British West Indies, and North America was also officially severed, but colonial American merchant shipping was prepared to expand its role and replace the British. At the same time, in the Revolutionary Era, the public debate in favor of liberty from England strengthened arguments against the slave trade and human bondage. When legal codes were changed during the American Revolution, both the Continental Congresses and the individual states took the opportunity to condemn and restrict the slave trade. Reasons for condemning the slave trade varied. It was increasingly attacked as a moral evil by religious and benevolent societies; parts of the south feared slave insurrection if the numbers of Africans grew to be much greater than the white population; it appeared that the enslaved population could sustain itself and increase in numbers without significant importations. To end the slave trade, however, was not necessarily to favor an end to slavery – on this subject the colonies divided.

The American Revolution (1775-1783) and the subsequent adoption of the Constitution (1787) challenged slavery in at least two ways. First, the rhetoric and ideology of the American patriots especially as embodied in the Declaration of Independence, scorned slavery and affirmed human rights and dignity, a line of argument dangerous to the continued enslavement of Africans which was not lost upon them. Second, the Revolutionary battles themselves were fundamentally contradictory on the subject of slavery. Although nearly 5,000 African Americans ultimately served in the American Revolutionary forces, both the British and the American military were distinctly unenthusiastic about the prospect of African American soldiers at the beginning of the war, fearing an encouragement to slave insurrection. But military necessity prevailed and all states but South Carolina and Georgia eventually enlisted blacks. In addition to those who enlisted as soldiers or sailors, others served as cooks, guides, spies, laborers, and body servants. Slaves who served in the latter capacities were to be freed, although some were tricked out of their freedom.[26]

Although the British governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, offered freedom to slaves who joined the British Army, the result of that call to arms was less than what African Americans hoped for. Dunmore's Act of 1774 was more a political and military tactic than a humanitarian act. Some 800 African American men enlisted in an Ethiopian Regiment and 300 took part in a battle but when Dunmore and his forces left Virginia, the 2,000 African Americans who contrived to leave with them received little help from the British. Those who gave aid to or served with the British or ran to the British lines during the war, sometimes called "Black Loyalists," had varied fates. Some shipped out to the Maritime Provinces of Canada (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick) near the conclusion of the Revolution. A number who went to Canada went to Sierra Leone, some were claimed by Loyalist slaveholders while others were sold in the British West Indies, and yet others were abandoned to find their own fates. Many of the runaways found new homes and remained undetected.[27]

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[25] Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1780-1830," *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 603-625; Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," *American Historical Review* 90, nos. 2 and 3 (April/June 1985).

[26] See William Cooper Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855), and Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 10-13.

[27] Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975), 316; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro In the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); John Hope Franklin and Albert Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 70, 92; Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 42, 70-80. For an overview see Sylvia Frey, *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Since the Americans had argued for natural rights in the Declaration of Independence, there was some sentiment for ending the slave trade although less political will for ending it. Ultimately, the Constitution did not follow up on the implications for "liberty" offered in the Declaration of Independence. The Constitutional compromise of 1787 put an end to the slave trade by 1808, but the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 confirmed the rights of slaveholders to their property. Section 2, Article 4 of the Constitution referred to slavery without naming it when it said, "No person held to service or labour in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labour, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labour may be due."

After the American Revolution, Abolition Societies were formed in every part of the United States. The American antislavery movement was modeled on the English antislavery movement from the adoption of the Constitution (1787) until the 1820s. English reformers, led by Quakers, evangelicals and certain politicians, had organized in 1787 to abolish English participation in the international slave trade. The British reformers ended the slave trade by 1807 and ended slavery by 1833, with compensation to owners. The Americans followed the British example of advocating gradual and compensated abolition of slavery. But it was the activities of American free blacks and the resistance to slavery of American slaves that provided antislavery with its most tireless workers and its best reason for persisting.

American antislavery ultimately differed from the English experience in that it had one great strength and one great difficulty not found in England. Its strength lay in the fact the American Revolution supplied a ready made set of legal arguments against slavery. Human bondage denied the very rights of man for which the Revolution had been fought. This contradiction was felt very keenly for almost two generations after the Revolution and was as important as the belief that slavery violated God's law. The difficulty was that slavery was legal in the United States and much of the new nation's economy depended on slave labor. The early societies could not overcome the indifference of much of the public and the success of proslavery forces in Congressional debates. Although they met yearly from 1794 to 1806 and experienced some success in promoting emancipation legislation in the North and laws to make manumission easier in the South, they lost membership and purpose as the price of slaves rose.[28]

The American Revolution did provide for a significant growth in the free black community. Not only were some slaves freed for their service to the American forces, but many more were manumitted when Southern state legislatures made emancipation easier for masters and when northern legislatures began a process of gradual emancipation for their states. The era from the Revolution to the War of 1812, was the period of greatest opportunity to end a slavery which was neither entirely pervasive nor yet an economic imperative. A reaction to these and related efforts to encourage emancipation set in even before the War of 1812, perhaps because the price of slaves increased as cotton production proved profitable on the Southern frontier.[29]

The sectional rift in Congress over whether slavery should be extended into the territories divided North and South as their economies developed in apparently different directions. How deep the cultural differences were is still not certain, but it did become clear to all Americans that slavery would not simply fade away through individual emancipations and local legislation. Southern states passed laws which required newly-emancipated blacks to leave the state. Southern whites were uneasy with the presence of free blacks among a large slave population, believing that if slaves could not see free blacks, they could not imagine them. Still, even with restrictions on manumissions, the free black population grew nationally through natural increase and, in the South, some slaves were able to earn money and purchase their freedom.

[28] See David Brion Davis, *Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
[29] Gary Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1990), 6.

Especially in urban areas, slaves picked up work for which they earned cash. Laborers might sell newspapers or sweep floors in a factory at night. Those who swept the floors in a tobacco factory were permitted to use the bits and pieces of tobacco their broom found to make a plug of tobacco. Liberally sprinkled with licorice to cover the dusty taste such plugs sold well. Enslaved artisans, such as blacksmiths, plasterers, or barbers, could work their free time for pay. Few Southerners attempted to keep slaves out of the cash economy because their work was greatly needed.[30]

In some parts of the north, the end of legal slaveholding came with the adoption of new state constitutions. Court challenges to slavery in 1780s Massachusetts brought an ambiguous end to bondage by judicial interpretation of the state Bill of Rights accompanying the adoption of a new state constitution in 1783. The Vermont constitution of 1777 specifically outlawed slavery while in New Hampshire an assumption that the 1783 Constitution and Bill of Rights freed slaves was maintained in the law, although some persons remained in slavery through at least the 1790s.[31]

Laws for the gradual abolition of slavery were passed by the state legislatures in Pennsylvania in the 1780s, in Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1784, and in New York in 1799. Connecticut adopted a gradual abolition law in 1784 and, in 1797, repealed the entire colonial slave code. When Connecticut enacted total abolition in 1848, there were still a few aged slaves, born before the first gradual emancipation act. Gradual abolition could take a long time; it could mean that infants and children served to age thirty or that old persons remained in bondage if it appeared that they would have to be supported by the state. New York was the first state to pass a law for the total abolition of slavery. In 1817, New York adopted an amendment to its original act of gradual emancipation and freed all blacks born before July 4, 1799, as of July 4, 1827. It provided for the retroactive and uncompensated emancipation of approximately ten thousand slaves who had not been emancipated by the earlier scheme of gradual emancipation. Newport, Rhode Island's prosperity was tied to slave trade shipping and its citizens generally opposed antislavery. Their influence on the colonial and Revolutionary legislatures gave advocates of abolition, who were primarily Quakers, difficulty. Public sentiment was sufficient as the Revolution ended in 1783 to pass a gradual abolition plan that compensated slaveholders and did not significantly interfere with the slave trade.

Not all northern states were quick to abolish slavery. New Jersey did not adopt an abolition act until 1846. At that time there were 700 slaves in the state, half over fifty-five years old. An apprenticeship system, designed to make masters pay for the upkeep of aged slaves, also kept blacks in involuntary servitude in New Jersey. In the 1860 census there were still eighteen. They were either liberated by death or through the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865 which freed all those remaining in slavery.[32]

The War of 1812 saw black enlistment in the American navy and two free-black companies in the famous Battle of New Orleans. Again, thousands of slaves escaped to the British lines, but the British made little military use of them. Perhaps the most important outcome of the War of 1812, relative to runaways, was the occupation by African Americans and Native Americans of a "Negro Fort" at Prospect Bluff in Florida. Some of those who sought sanctuary in Florida had fought for the British in the War of 1812 and, when the British left, occupied the former Fort Gadsden. It was a visible base from which to harass slave holders and it did not last long. In July 1816, U.S. troops destroyed the fort and killed or enslaved the inhabitants.[33]

In addition to the debate in the northern states over an end to slavery, the Confederation Congress in 1787

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[30] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

[31] Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 117; James Horton and Lois Horton, *In Hope of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 71-72.

[32] Zilversmit, *First Emancipation,* 201-202, 213, 221-222; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 72-75.

[33] Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 62-65.

passed the Northwest Ordinance which prohibited the introduction of slaves into the territory west of the Ohio River which had once been claimed by Virginia. This area, which became the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, was permanently free. The belief that slavery was a moral evil and the hope, held widely in the north and south during the early Republic that somehow the slavery issue might resolve itself as the American economy changed and as slaveholders were persuaded of the evils of slavery, disappeared after the bitter Congressional fight over the admission of Missouri to the Union as a slave state in 1820. It was, as Thomas Jefferson claimed, "a firebell in the night."[34]

Jefferson had heard the firebell twenty years earlier when as President of the United States he learned of the details of a slave insurrection in his native Virginia. In the summer of 1800, a young man named Gabriel, owned by Thomas Prosser, Jr., was frequently seen in the city of Richmond, the capital of Virginia, and the surrounding countryside, talking to fellow slaves after church services, at taverns and Sunday barbeques, at a blacksmith's forge or where the fishermen clustered along the James River. As an artisan, a blacksmith, he had considerable freedom of movement and few whites who saw him troubled their minds with thoughts of Gabriel except, perhaps, to remember the stir when he bit off part of a white man's ear in a fight the year before.

Yet on an August Sunday, after a violent thunderstorm on Saturday night, the citizens of Richmond began to hear rumors of a slave insurrection which had been halted at the last possible moment. Virginia Governor James Monroe received reports that Gabriel, his brother, Solomon, and numerous other young slave men and free blacks had organized a wide-ranging conspiracy and planned a revolt to take over the city of Richmond and free the slaves.

Gabriel planned to mount his own revolution for the freedom of enslaved Africans. He expected to negotiate with whites and even to end the revolution peacefully, if white Richmonders would recognize black claims. That unlikely premise was never to be tested. Gabriel's plot was disclosed by two slaves to their master at the same time that the swollen creeks outside Richmond on Saturday night halted his advance toward the city. Over the next few days, most of the conspirators were arrested, although Gabriel stayed hidden on a commercial vessel in the James River for ten days, apparently protected by its white captain until betrayed by a slave on board.

The trials of the conspirators revealed their view of slavery. One described a piece of silk he intended to purchase on which to inscribe "death or Liberty" and noted that they planned to kill all whites except "Quakers, Methodists, and French people." While the conspirators saw their actions as an extension of the Age of Revolution, white Virginians saw the nightmare of slave insurrection, recently acted out in Haiti, now at their doorstep. The response of Virginia was to hang many including Gabriel, and transport others to the West Indies for sale. Throughout the trials Gabriel divulged nothing. Earlier he had reportedly said that if the white people agreed to their freedom, then they would hoist a white flag and he would dine and drink with the merchants of the city on the day when it should be agreed to.[35]

Jefferson and his fellow Virginia revolutionaries were deeply and permanently disturbed by Gabriel's rebellion. The fear of insurrection now hung over the South even as the North ended slavery. The results of this division would be seen after 1820.

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[34] Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity." *Journal of the Early Republic* 6 (Winter 1986): 343-370.

[35] Testimony of Ben Woolfolk and of Prosser's Ben at trial of Prosser's Gabriel, Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Negro Insurrection, Executive Papers, James Monroe, September 1800, Box 114, Virginia State Library, Richmond. This account of events is drawn from Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800-1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN AMERICAN HISTORY 1820-1860

OVERVIEW: THE QUESTION OF NUMBERS, ROUTES, LIKELY RUNAWAYS

It is difficult to determine the number of attempted escapes from slavery each year. Most historians, calculating through various systems, feel that one thousand successful escapees per year is not an exaggeration and that the figure may be calculated to be as high as 1,500. This does not count those who were captured before they reached free land or those who hid out for a time in southern swamps and mountains. Nor does it take into account those runaways who were seeking family still enslaved in the South or attempting to negotiate better conditions from the master. These latter persons seldom escaped to a life of freedom, but satisfied more immediate needs. Some runaways passed as free in Southern cities and could not be counted as having found "free land."

Runaways came from all conditions, ages, and of both sexes but were more likely to be young males (18-35) who did not yet have a wife and who lived in a state with a border crossing to free land. Frequently, they worked in towns and cities and were familiar with the passage of ships on the docks, the times of coaches, and the flat boats that carried goods to and from the interior. The most common Underground Railroad route was likely to be an established route between one town and another with the fugitive in disguise or hiding under the cargo of a wagon, a flat boat, or a ship. Disguise was more necessary for travel in coaches and railroad trains.

Many runaways traveled alone and didn't seek aid until they believed themselves to be near or beyond a border to free land. If helped in the south, they were likely to be aided by other slaves and by free blacks. The Southern states developed an elaborate network of surveillance, chase and capture of runaways. It was important to avoid slave patrols, local law officers, suspicious farmers, hostile dogs, even bloodhounds, by not traveling on a known route or calling attention to oneself. Southern jails were full of blacks picked up on suspicion of being runaways and the jailers expected a reward when the "master" (who may or may not have been one) picked them up.

Those who attempted to reach the North became more aware of some organized assistance from black and white abolitionists and other sympathizers as the decades passed. Especially after 1830, when black and white abolitionists began to despair of moral suasion, there followed a commitment to abolitionism, the formation of predominantly-black vigilance committees, and support for what came to be called the "Underground Railroad."[36]

Many scholars and researchers have estimated that about 100,000 persons successfully escaped slavery between 1790 and 1860. Advertisements for runaway slaves and descriptions of those picked up by the police often indicated whether the fugitive was trying to reach freedom or to stay, hidden, in the area. Examples of those suspected of staying in the region included Mandeville, a seventeen year-old with a limp, who "has lately been seen in Manchester [Virginia], and I have reason to believe has been secreted by his grandmother, old Critty, who is well known in that place" and Gerrard, a twenty year-old man who "has always lived near the Alexandria Ferry, on the Maryland side, and as his Parents are now living there, it is expected he is lurking about the Town of Alexandria or the City of Washington."[37]

The years between the end of the American Revolution (1783), and the end of the Civil War (1865), are the years in which the United States was a slave-holding independent nation. If the frequent claim of 100,000 successful runaways prior to the Civil War is valid, then that means that, at a minimum, the eighty years between the Revolution and the Civil War produced approximately 1,200 successful runaways per year. We may be sure that the numbers were not the same each year as individual opportunity varied at all times. The secrecy which necessarily surrounded slave runaways means that we

[36] Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*. vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 37.
[37] Daniel Meaders, *Advertisements for Runaway Slaves in Virginia, 1801-1820* (New York: Garland, 1997), 37.

lack evidence of many escapes which for various reasons, went unrecorded in the North or the South. While census estimates indicate an average of 1,000 successful runaways per year, it is reasonable, given the secretive nature of the enterprise, to increase that number by half to 1,500. This number is in harmony with other scholarly estimates of 1,500 persons running to freedom during the late antebellum years.[38]

As an example of how the number of runaways has been assessed, here is one scholar's view:

> "Relatively few [slaves] escaped permanently. . . The federal census of 1850 recorded the escapes to free territory of only 1,010 slaves. In 1860, the number was 803. They came principally from the border states. An organization of Quakers and antislavery people in the border states and in the North aided some slaves to escape to Canada; however, their assistance has been vastly exaggerated in the legend of the Underground Railroad. The more valuable aid given to escaping slaves was by free Negroes and fellow slaves... They hid the fugitives in the daytime and gave directions to them."[39]

Although it is not clear whether the percentage of slave escapes, based on a rising slave population, changed much from decade to decade, it was more difficult to elude patrols and slave catchers in the settled eastern United States after 1820. The Underground Railroad gradually became a more elaborate system as a response to the fact that slavery was by then illegal above the Mason-Dixon Line and above 36 degrees/30 minutes in the western territories. The lines were more clearly drawn between slaveholding and non-slaveholding territory and the direction for fugitives was clearer.

THE CHURCHES AND THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The new American nation was predominantly composed of Protestant denominations. The evangelical revivals of the 1780s and 1790s converted thousands of black and white Americans to the Methodist and Baptist denominations. Evangelicals saw themselves as a people apart and rejected fancy dress, ornamental speech, and worldly amusements. They valued repentance and grace. The more established Protestant sects, such as the Presbyterians, Episcopal (Church of England) and Congregational Churches found it necessary to compete with evangelicalism by adopting more emotional sermons and a more personalized religion of the heart.

For a brief period in the 1780s and 1790s, Baptist and Methodist conferences declared themselves to be antislavery. In this period, a number of slaves were freed by their masters for motives which appeared to mix revolutionary principles of liberty with religious principles. But, by the early nineteenth century, both groups had retreated from their positions and their yearly conferences made the ownership of slaves an issue of individual conscience. Soon a divergence over slavery began between Northern and Southern churches of the same denomination. In the 1840s, denominations began to divide into separate Northern and Southern branches. Southern theologians began to develop a proslavery argument while Northern churches often, but not always, became at least nominally antislavery.[40]

The first African American churches in North America emerged in the 1750s, two on plantations in Virginia and Georgia and one in Williamsburg, Virginia. Black preachers and exhorters were not uncommon among the "brothers" and "sisters" of the early congregations that had both black and white

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[38] Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, rev. ed. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 32.

[39] Clement Eaton, *Growth of Southern Civilization (*New York: Harper, 1961), 73.

[40] Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979), 3-17, 19-20, 48-49, 86-88; Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xiv, xv, 14, 16, 68-70; John Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

members, but white leadership began to prevail by the early nineteenth century. Black Christians believed in a very present God who was acting in their lives and would watch over them, as He had watched over the ancient Israelites in bondage in Egypt. Black religion also centered more on collective celebration than did white religion. Communal dances, often called "ring shouts," camp meetings, revivals, the secretive brush arbor meetings, and the more public general conferences, all helped to develop a sense of African American identity and destiny well-suited to aid runaways from slavery.[41]

In the North, the growth of separate black churches was abetted by the less-than-equal status endured by black members. The most important move away from integrated religious services happened when Richard Allen and other blacks left the segregated seating of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1792 to found Mother Bethel, the first African Methodist Episcopal Church and the forerunner of many independent black churches in the Northern states. The independent black churches in the north became the center of abolitionist and Underground Railroad activity.[42]

The black church was usually the political and social center of any black community, and its ministers, at least in the North, were both political and spiritual leaders. In the South, it was more difficult for the free blacks and slaves who formed the black churches to escape white surveillance. Southern laws prohibited blacks from gathering for any purpose and forbade preaching without a white presence or, often, an appointed white minister for the urban black churches. Despite these restrictions, southern urban churches, such as Charleston, Richmond, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., were well-organized to aid their black members through burial societies, fraternal orders, women's organizations and other groups. Occasionally southern black churches found themselves, accidentally or purposely, aiding a fugitive, but this was an activity that had to be undertaken with extreme caution.[43]

In the antebellum decades, the northern black churches aided runaways by providing food, clothing, shelter and information. Escapees from slavery sought out black churches if they wanted to stay and seek employment in a northern city. They sought out the churches if they needed concealment and a form of sanctuary before moving on. And they sought out the churches when they were in need. Black churches were the best-organized black institution to aid fugitives and did the majority of the day-to-day assistance. Despite the surveillance of suspicious whites, black churches in the north and south managed to stay in touch with each other. They exchanged members, wrote letters of recommendation, and sometimes passed along news of escaped members and their methods of escape.[44]

CROSSING INTERNATIONAL BORDERS: COLONIES AND FUGITIVES

African Americans who took part in the colonization schemes to Africa and Haiti were seldom fugitive slaves. They were free blacks or manumitted slaves freed to embark for Liberia, or they were those who cast their lot with the British and went first to Canada. From Canada, African Americans embarked to Sierra Leone in the 1790s and to Haiti in the 1820s. Canada and Mexico were more likely to be the desired cross-border destinations for fugitives, and Canada especially received many. Michael Wayne, using the manuscript census, has estimated 20,000 African Americans, primarily in western Ontario, in

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[41] Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), 143-147, 163-167, 307-308; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 68-80; Sobel, *Trabelin' On*, 3-17, 19-20, 48-49, 79-90, 86-88; Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The `Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.)

[42] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 137-140.

[43] Gregg Kimball and Marie Tyler-McGraw, *In Bondage and Freedom* (Richmond, VA: Valentine Museum, 1988), 35-44. See also Charles V. Hamilton, *The Black Preacher in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1972) and David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

[44] Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 1981), 120.

the decade before the Civil War.[45]

When the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour in America was established in the Hall of Congress near Christmas, 1816, it was looked upon with suspicion by most free blacks. It was the fear that African colonization might become federal policy that motivated free blacks to search for white allies and encouraged blacks to hold conventions at which they began to organize nationally and denounce colonization. Most free blacks rejected the colony in Liberia which the American Colonization Society founded in 1821.

Still, there were African Americans who were attracted to Liberia as a place where they could establish their own government, develop trade and commerce, and send missionaries. In the first decade of its existence, the 1820s, Liberia received about three thousand African Americans who were predominantly free and traveling in family groups. After the early 1830s, more of the emigrants to Liberia were manumitted slaves, still in family groups, but often freed to be sent to Liberia. By the time of the Civil War, over 13,000 African Americans had immigrated to Liberia. In 1847, Liberia became a republic and operated under a constitution which both modeled the American Constitution and mocked it for its treatment of black Americans.[46]
Unlike other emigration from the United States, Liberia brought up strong emotions among those who defended it and those who attacked it. David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens*, strongly opposed African colonization and called it "a plan got up, by a gang of slaveholders to select the free people of colour from among the slaves, that our more miserable brethren may be better secured in ignorance and wretchedness, to work their farms and dig their mines, and thus go on enriching the Christians with their blood and groans. What our brethren could have been thinking about, who have left their native land and home and gone away to Africa, I am unable to say."[47] Bishop Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church contended, "This land which we have watered with our *tears* and our *blood*, is now our *mother country*, and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds and the gospel is free."[48]

Lott Cary, a slave who had earned enough money to buy his liberty and had then taken his family to Liberia, wrote from Liberia in response to such arguments. Referring to Bishop Allen's pronouncement from Philadelphia, Cary asks:

> "What is the condition of the people of color in that city? O! I don't allude to the Reverend Richard Allen ...or any of those one of a thousand upon whom fortune has smild. -But to that numerous hosts of chimney sweepers -- wood sawyers and cart drawers who stand in the streets from morning until evening and durst not return to their homes, lest they find Grim death waiting for them with all the horrors of Starvation and the resistless influence of the Frigid Zone. I would ask every candid thinking man how this class of people can be worsted by emegrating to the West Indias, or to the western coast of Africa."[49]

Fugitives from slavery who left the territorial boundaries of the United States for Canada or Mexico often did so from port cities or towns, and houses along international borders. While the western territories of the mid-nineteenth-century United States had fewer dramatic escapes and much less of an Underground Railroad presence, the escapes from slavery in such territories as Kansas and Texas had major diplomatic

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[45] 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," *Histoire Social/Social History* 28/56 (November 1995): 465-481.

[46] Svend E. Holsoe and Bernard L. Herman, *A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk Architecture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 3-5.

[47] Herbert Aptheker, ed., "*One Continual Cry:" David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), 121.

[48] Ibid., 123.

[49] John Saillant, ed., "Circular Addressed to the Colored Brethren and Friends in America: An Unpublished Essay by Lott Cary, Sent from Liberia to Virginia, 1827," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 495-496.

implications for the nation. The questions of slavery in the territories and slavery in the Mexican province of Texas, divided the nation.

Before 1836, the Mexican border with the United States was Louisiana, Arkansas territory, and the Indian lands of Oklahoma. As one of Spain's New World colonies, slavery was legally protected in Mexico. Still, there was little slavery in the underpopulated province of Texas until, at almost the same time that Mexicans rose in revolt against Spanish domination (1819), American slaveholders moved into Texas and began to carve out plantations with slave labor. The newly-independent Mexicans wanted Texas to be settled, but they did not want American slavery to be a permanent part of their new nation. The Mexican legislature agreed in 1827 that, after the adoption of its constitution, no one would be born a slave on Mexican soil. American efforts to get around this by registering their slaves as indentured servants ultimately failed. This tension over slavery was a primary cause for American Texans to seek independence from Mexico and establish the Republic of Texas (1836-1848).[50]

Benjamin Lundy, the antislavery agent who managed to visit so many slave-based societies in the United States, traveled in Texas between 1830 and 1835 and concluded that Texas independence was:

> "a settled design, among the slaveholders of the country (with land speculators and slave traders), to wrest the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic, in order to re-establish the SYSTEM of SLAVERY; to open a vast and profitable SLAVE-MARKET therein; and, ultimately, to annex it to the United States."[51]

Although the chief cotton-growing and slave-holding section of the Republic of Texas was in East Texas, some slaves brought into the region from Arkansas, Missouri, Alabama, or Tennessee still managed to leave Texas bondage for Mexican freedom. From the 1830s through the Civil War, Texans complained of slave escapes and of the existence of communities of slaves and Indians just across the border in Mexico. The editor of the San Antonio *Ledger* complained in 1852 that the area across the Rio Grande "has long been regarded by the Texas slave as his El Dorado for accumulation, his utopia for political rights, and his Paradise for happiness."[52] As many as five thousand slaves may have crossed the southwestern border in the three decades between 1836 and 1865. In addition, a small but steady number of bondsmen attempted escape on vessels using the Gulf of Mexico. Some runaways sought out an accommodating Indian tribe or lived for long periods in a swamp or thicket, emerging only to acquire supplies. Occasionally, runaways headed not for Mexico but for their former homes where their families were.[53]

Fugitives had to avoid slave patrols and Texas Rangers, but could often expect assistance from the small Mexican communities in Southwest Texas. After they crossed the Rio Grande border, there were settlements of fugitive slaves, free blacks, and Indians among whom they might live. Benjamin Lundy's travel account describes in some detail these border towns and some of the African Americans who had settled in them.[54] The Mexican government believed that runaways weakened slavery and that these border communities helped prevent further American expansion into Mexico, and they refused to agree to a treaty for the extradition of slaves.

There are reported examples of Indian slaveholders permitted to enter Mexico, with their slaves. The

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[50] Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

[51] Benjamin Lundy, *The War in Texas: A Review of Facts and Circumstances Showing that this Contest is a Crusade . . . to Re-establish, Extend, and Perpetuate the System of Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia, Printed for publishers by Merrihew and Gunn, 1837), in Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery*.

[52] Clarksville (TX) *Northern Standard,* December 25, 1852, quoted in Campbell, *Empire*, 180.

[53] Campbell, *Empire*, 180-181.

[54] For the travel journal of an abolitionist who went to Mexico, Canada, and Haiti seeking the best accommodations for free blacks, see Benjamin Earle, ed., *Life, Travels and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy*, rev. ed. (New York: Arno, 1969).

Seminole chief, Wildcat, on a long pilgrimage from Florida to Oklahoma to Coahuila and Zaragossa, entered Mexico in 1849 with Seminoles, slaves, and free blacks. The circumstances under which Africans lived with Native Americans varied greatly over time and place. Ex-slave Henry Bibb expressed a common, but not universal, sentiment when he said he believed the Indian form of slavery to be less harsh. "And I found this difference between negro slavery among the Indians, and the same thing among the white slaveholders of the South. The Indians allow their slaves enough to eat and wear. They have no overseers to whip nor drive them. If a slave offends his master, he sometimes, in the heat of passion, undertakes to chastise him; but it is as often the case as otherwise, that the slave gets the better of the fight and even flogs his master; for which there is no law to punish him; but when the fight is over that is the last of it. So far as religious instruction is concerned, they have it on terms of equality, the bond and the free; they have no respect of persons, they have neither slave laws nor negro pews. Neither do they separate husbands and wives, nor parents and children. All things considered, if I must be a slave, I had by far, rather be a slave to an Indian, than to a white man, from the experience I have had with both."[55]

The apparently natural limits to the Cotton Kingdom, assistance from indigenous Mexicans and Indians, the proximity of sea-going vessels, and the relative ease with which slaves might slip into Mexico made some observers hopeful that slavery might not maintain its grip on Texas. Frederick Law Olmsted noted that the long border with Mexico "will go far to prevent this from becoming a great enslaved planting country."[56] Nevertheless, Texas, which declared itself a slave-holding republic in 1836, continued to import slaves and to identify with the interests of the slaveholding South through secession and the Civil War.

The hard-traveling Benjamin Lundy, an antislavery Quaker who began as a colonizationist and became an abolitionist, also visited Canada to observe conditions for free blacks and fugitives from slavery and wrote:

> "During the latter part of 1829, and the first part of 1830, a colony of several thousand coloured people, mostly from Ohio, was established in Upper Canada, the immediate occasion being the enforcement, in Ohio, of an old law, which was intended to restrain the settlement of emancipated slaves in that State. It appears . . . that this event excited a strong feeling in Canada, at that time, and the House of Assembly of that Province passed resolutions expressive of its aversion to the settlement, and requested the Governor to apply to the British Parliament, for the future prohibition of such emigration. The application proved unsuccessful, and Canada remained open to coloured settlers."[57]

The first influx of blacks in flight from American slavery began in 1783 when 3500 "Black Loyalists" were granted land in the Maritime Provinces. Although free, they experienced rejection from many Canadians and had difficulty in farming. Some 1,100 left for the newly-formed British colony of Sierra Leone in 1791. Another 3,000 refugees from the Chesapeake area made their way to Canada with British forces during the War of 1812. Again, racial exclusion and lack of opportunity made some seek a new home in Trinidad. At approximately the same time, African Americans began to investigate Haiti as a site for colonization. Encouraged by the Haitian government, several thousand emigrants relocated there in the 1820s. But clashes, cultural and political, between the Americans and the Haitians meant that many people returned. An emigration scheme in the 1850s met the same fate.[58]

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[55] Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb: An American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York, By author, 1849) in Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' on Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper Books, 1969), 141. See also Kenneth Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), and Ronnie C. Tyler, "Fugitive Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 57 (1972): 1-12.

[56] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas; or, a Saddletrip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York, 1857) quoted in Campbell, *Empire*, 64.

[57] Earle, *Life of Lundy*, 240.

[58] Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

In the era of the Underground Railroad, most fugitives from slavery settled in the area known as Canada West, not far from the American border and near towns such as Toronto, Windsor, Niagara and St. Catherine's. This was an era of utopian experiments in town planning in North America and several were attempted in Canada for African Americans. These included Wilberforce (1829-1836), Dawn (1843-1868), Elgin (1850-1873) and the Refugee Home Society, established near Amherstberg (1850s-1876). Recent research has shown that many slave refugees did not settle in planned communities, or even in the larger towns, but were spread thinly throughout villages and farming regions.[59]

SLAVE REVOLTS AND THE ABOLITIONIST ERA

"Abolitionist" had different meanings at different times in American history. When state societies, such as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and the Virginia Abolition Society, were formed in the 1780s, their purpose was to abolish slavery through public legislative action and private manumission. Yet they imagined that emancipation leading to the abolition of slavery would be gradual, perhaps taking a generation. Abolitionist societies faded and antislavery lost energy in the early 1800s, but it was revived by Congressional political debates on the future of the American territories and by the voices and actions of both free and enslaved blacks, especially in their response to the American Colonization Society in the 1820s.

It is both customary and convenient to date abolitionism from the first issue of William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, published in Boston on January 1, 1831. Garrison began as a gradual emancipationist, sympathetic to African colonization, but was persuaded by black friends to "immediatism" which meant the immediate and uncompensated emancipation of all slaves. Beginning in the early 1830s, this became the new definition of abolitionism.

In the same year that Garrison began his newspaper, an event occurred which electrified the south and made the southern reaction to abolitionism even more hostile and suspicious than what would have been inevitable. The fear of slave revolts hung over the slaveholding sections of the United States, especially where the black population was equal to or more numerous than the white population and that fear controlled much of daily life in those regions. Slave patrols and armed militia stopped blacks and demanded passes. Free blacks had to carry their papers with them at most times. In the colonial era and through the Revolutionary age, many whites were not surprised by runaways or conspiracies. They expected slaves to revolt if they were given the opportunity and they tried to limit the opportunities. Later, in the 19th century, the comforting belief grew among whites that enslaved blacks would not resist their condition if not encouraged to do so. Southern whites then passed laws to prevent enslaved blacks from learning to read and write or to hear black preachers without a white present.

Despite the persistent fear of rebellion in the American South and historic evidence for several dozen conspiracies, only a few slave rebellions reached the point of enactment. For example, in 1712 slaves and Indians began an insurrection in New York City setting fires and murdering whites; in 1739 slaves led the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina; in 1811 slaves rebelled on a Louisiana sugar plantation; and in 1831 Nat Turner's revolt occurred in Virginia. However, most were betrayed while they were still plots. Typically, slaves fashioned what weapons they could from tools made into swords and scythes, and acquired a few guns. Thus armed, they went from household to household scattering and murdering whites, until a larger and better-armed force of militia or other military force caught up to them.[60]

Nat Turner's Revolt followed this pattern and was the most destructive of all three. On Sunday evening,

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[59] Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Peter C. Ripley, et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers* vol. 2, *Canada* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

[60] Harding, *There is a River*, 34-35; Thomas J. Davis, "The New York Slave Conspiracy of 1741 as Black Protest," *Journal of Negro History* 56 (January 1971).

August 21, 1831, Turner and five other slaves began a rebellion that started with the murder of Turner's master's family. As they traveled through the farm neighborhoods of Southampton County, Virginia, they grew in numbers to nearly sixty and left behind at least 57 whites -- men, women, and children -- dead. After several days, Turner's band was hunted down and destroyed, although Nat escaped and hid for some weeks before being found.

In his confession, dictated to Thomas Gray, Turner said that his revolt was not the result of harsh treatment, but was divine retribution for the many injustices which whites had committed on blacks. Although the Governor of Virginia quickly blamed "Yankees" in general and the Garrisonian abolitionists in particular, black preachers, and soft-hearted women who taught blacks to read the Bible, he also admitted that there was no way to truly prevent slave revolts. There were only two alternatives. One was to emancipate all the slaves and the other was to exert more control over their actions in an effort to quash all independent thought and action. Virginia, and the South, chose the option of maintaining slavery and attempting to control and justify it.[61]

Nat Turner's rebellion showed the North the level of anger among slaves, showed the South its vulnerability and marked the beginning of a period in which slave escapes and rebellions received financial and legal support from sympathetic northerners. A well-known example occurred in 1839. In the heat and darkness of a June night, several hundred captured Africans spilled out onto the shores of Cuba from a Portuguese slave ship. There, hurried transactions took place and small groups of Africans were hastened away to other ships. Fifty-three of the captives were forced onto the *Amistad*. They had been bought by two Spaniards and were being transported to a nearby plantation.

When the slave trade was outlawed by Britain and the United States in 1808, it diminished but it did not end. By 1820, it simply became more secretive and developed sleek ships for rapid transport across the Atlantic. An illegal but profitable business such as this attracted pirates and adventurers from all nations who docked their cargo most frequently in Cuba for transport in smaller numbers to other sites. The British Navy patrolled the Caribbean waters and the African coast almost alone until the 1840s when the United States Navy entered the Atlantic in search of slave vessels. Even so, American courts were known to be lenient on pirates. It was in this environment that the mutiny on the *Amistad* took place, a few days after leaving the Cuban beach. The Africans freed themselves from their irons and, led by Singbe Pieh, or Joseph Cinque, demanded that the Spaniards who had purchased them sail back to Africa. The Spaniards, however, cruised up the American coast until forced to anchor and seek supplies - they were captured by an American ship off Long Island and towed to New London, Connecticut.

Their trial in the Connecticut courts attracted national attention. The Spaniards claimed that the Africans were their legal property and should be tried for murder. The Africans won support from American abolitionists who raised funds for their defense and sympathy from much of the American public. Their case was tried in January 1840 in a U.S. District Court which ruled that the Africans had been illegally captured and sold and thus had a right to rebel. On the other hand, the judge determined that a slave to the ship's Captain had to be returned to Cuba, thus upholding the institution of slavery.

The U.S. Government was not prepared for this verdict. President Martin Van Buren had argued for the Africans to be returned to Spanish territory. A ship was waiting to return them to Cuba before an appeal was possible but it was the U.S. Government that was forced to appeal. While awaiting trial, the captives were taught by members of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, in Farmington, Connecticut, and many were housed in a building raised by Austin Williams in Farmington. Both of these buildings are now National Historic Landmarks. Some months later, John Quincy Adams defended the Africans before the Supreme Court. Despite a preponderance of Southerners on the Court, that body upheld the lower

[61] Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). Henry Irving Tragle, ed., *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831; A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971) is the best collection of documents concerning the Nat Turner insurrection.

court ruling. The Africans were freed and money was raised to return them to Africa. Antonio, the ship captain's slave, was spirited away to Africa by abolitionists. In November 1841 the remaining thirty-five Africans left the port of New York for Sierra Leone. The *Amistad* mutiny had demonstrated again the resistance of Africans to slavery and the deep divisions in American society.[62]

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN OPERATION

It has often been noted that the Underground Railroad was neither "underground" nor a "railroad." In its period of greatest activity, from 1830 to 1861, its activities encompassed individual decisions to flee from American slavery, individual acts of support or betrayal, and loosely-organized networks of assistance. The farther north one moved the more apparent and public the aid to fugitives became. The closer to the slave states, the more clandestine was the activity. "Helping the fugitive" was a subject that fascinated Americans. Many people who did not consider themselves abolitionists aided fugitives from spontaneous impulse, perhaps thinking of the Biblical pronouncement that aid to the "least of these" was aid to the divine. No maps with arrows pointing out trails, no favored river or sea routes could encompass the individual and unpredictable acts of assistance. Nor do such routes factor in betrayals or exhaustion. Indeed, the fact that there were no predetermined trails was the chief reason for much success. No trail could have remained secret for very long.[63]

While occasional stories were recounted of people who had walked from Texas, Mississippi, or Alabama to Iowa, Indiana, or Ohio, most of the fugitives came from the Upper South and were young men in good health. Most of those located east of the Appalachian Mountains tended to go directly north by land or water to Pennsylvania, New York, and the Boston area. Those on the other side of the mountains had to cross the Ohio River to leave Virginia, Kentucky, or Tennessee. Slaves from Arkansas and Texas might cross the contested areas of Missouri and Kansas to bear east for aid in Indiana or Illinois. This schematic is suggestive of the routes taken by fugitives, but does not encompass all the possibilities.

While routes will generally remain unclear, it is useful to check the descriptions of escape methods found in William Still's *The Underground Railroad*[64] in which fugitives who met with him in Philadelphia related how they arrived there.[65] His extensive research notebooks are available at the Ohio Historical Society and Houghton Library, Harvard University. Another tactic is to use the compiled accounts of runaway slave notices edited and published in book form. These compilations are far from complete, and reading the advertisements for runaway slaves published in southern newspapers, especially Upper South newspapers, would aid research for a particular area above the Mason-Dixon Line. Quite often, the masters of fugitive slaves knew with some accuracy the direction in which runaways were headed and described their likely means of escape in the advertisement. Boatmen were very frequently cautioned in those advertisements against aiding runaways and many slaves did, indeed, escape by water.[66] The memoirs of men such as Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, black abolitionists once held in bondage, as well as women such as Harriet Jacobs who escaped slavery usually describe their life after slavery and the role they played in the Underground Railroad.

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[62] Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 22-26, 29-31, 80-95, 132-33, 188-194.

[63] See Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (1961; repr., Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), for a discussion of the logical inconsistencies in those parts of the legend which speak of hundreds of fugitives using the same trails and hiding places again and again.

[64] Still, *Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno, 1968; first published Philadelphia, 1872).

[65] For the Underground Railroad accounts of aged white abolitionists or their children, see Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1898).

[66] Under the title *Studies in African American History and Culture*, Garland Publishing Company is issuing a series of books which are compilations of slave runaway advertisements. See previous citations on these useful works. See also David Blight, ed., *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Bedford Books for St. Martin's, 1993).

It is an artificial distinction to separate northern aid to fugitives from southern aid and assistance. Of necessity, the two stories will always overlap because information flowed both ways. Black churches on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line were involved and most southern and northern black benevolent and self-improvement associations participated in at least passing information. While middle-class blacks did fund-raising and organizational work, working-class blacks were more likely to take part in rescues or to hide fugitives.

THE NORTH: ANTISLAVERY SOCIETIES AND VIGILANCE COMMITTEES

The age of active and organized antislavery societies began in the early 1830s. In 1832, the New England Anti-Slavery Society was formed and, within five years, it had several hundred local chapters primarily in Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio. In New York, Lewis and Arthur Tappan dominated the society and in Ohio, Theodore Dwight Weld was a charismatic and confrontational leader. In late 1833, black abolitionists and the man they had converted from African colonizationism, William Lloyd Garrison, formed the American Anti-Slavery Society which had, as associate members, interracial female antislavery societies in Philadelphia and Boston. This Society also grew quickly and had almost a quarter of a million members by 1838.

The very diversity of the American Anti-slavery Society made it somewhat suspect among more respectable and conventionally religious antislavery advocates. Some members were as radical in their thinking about other structures of society as they were about the institution of slavery. Some, like Parker Pillsbury and Abby Kelley and her husband, Stephen S. Foster, were disruptive and confrontational in their practice of moral suasion for abolition. The American Anti-Slavery Society also contained Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who did not accept women's "appointed sphere" and lectured to audiences of mixed men and women.[67] Strains developed between those who sought an end to slavery through political tactics and those who wanted to expand the issue to other forms of rights, including women=s rights. This Society divided at its 1840 convention when a woman, Abby Kelley, was elected to a committee and those who conceived of the Society as a more focused political pressure group, using ballots, petitions, and postal campaigns, left. Most of these people affiliated with the newly-organized American and Foreign Antislavery Society which, in turn, supported the newly-formed Liberty Party which first ran candidates in 1840.

Garrison's followers retained control of the much-reduced American Anti-Slavery Society and, seeing the deep involvement of the federal government in slavery from the Constitution onward, advocated the dissolution of the Union as the only means of withdrawing Northern support from slavery and forcing emancipation. Most of the Garrisonians were pacifists who rejected all violent means of ending slavery. They were as suspicious of organized religion as they were of government and they explored utopian communities and women's rights for the next two decades. They were "non-resisters" who did not participate in politics, not even to vote under what they believed to be a fatally-flawed constitution.

Religiously motivated abolitionists constituted a much larger group and were organized loosely into the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society from 1840 until the mid-1850s. Political abolitionists were closely aligned with the church-based group and were themselves divided into three regional factions. The most radical of these political abolitionists, who urged political action against slavery, was the faction

[67] For overviews of black and white women's abolitionist activity, see "The Woman Question," in Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 39-77; and "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions Among Free Blacks," in James O. Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 98-120. See also Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists, A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

organized around Gerrit Smith in upstate New York. They argued that the United States Constitution, properly interpreted, prohibited slavery in the states and that the federal government had the power to abolish slavery in the South. Another political faction, centered in Cincinnati, was part of the Liberty Party and then the Free Soil Party, both third-party movements designed to force the major parties to end slavery. The third political group was Boston-area abolitionists who could not support Garrison. Most of the political abolitionists found their way into the new Republican Party, organized in 1854.[68]

Black abolitionists, who had sought white allies, sometimes felt that they were kept on the margins of the movement they had sustained and promoted for many years. In addition, black and white abolitionists differed over tactics and they divided over issues of concrete and practical change through politics and direct action. These divisions did not run neatly along racial lines, but white abolitionists had, more frequently, come to abolitionism through benevolence and saw antislavery as part of a larger human reform movement, while blacks saw the fight for an end to slavery as the first priority.

Increasingly, free blacks had their own meetings and read newspapers published by African Americans, such as Samuel Cornish's *Colored American* and *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. The argument over which set of abolitionist tactics was more productive sometimes obscures the fact that the abolitionist movement, with all its divisions, was extremely effective. It did much to bring the nation to a confrontation over slavery within thirty years.[69]

Not all abolitionists favored encouraging fugitive slaves. Some believed that fugitives would always be a minor issue in the greater struggle for emancipation of slavery. They disapproved of money raised for escaped slaves and believed the money might better go to political action. Still, even those who were not enthusiastic about the Underground Railroad were almost always willing to help when they encountered a fugitive. This impulse to help was heightened by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. Now white abolitionists and the white population in general saw runaways struggle to escape police and slave catchers. Due to this climate more turned to aiding runaways.

In the meantime, those who developed vigilance committees to prevent the kidnapping of northern free blacks (and the re-enslavement of successful runaways) learned to turn the Fugitive Slave Law to their own end by widely disseminating the stories of fugitive slaves and the Underground Railroad. Certain fugitive stories, those of Box Brown, William and Ellen Craft, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass, among others, became nationally famous. Free blacks played the most central role in aid to fugitive bondspeople and in the protection of free blacks likely to be kidnapped and sold in the South. Vigilance committees were organized in most northern cities, the first in New York City in 1835, by both black and white abolitionists. The majority of vigilance committees were dominated by African Americans who supplied fugitives with lodging, clothing, and small sums of money. They assisted runaways in establishing a new home, finding work, and perhaps connecting with family members.

In 1837, Philadelphia abolitionists of both races organized a vigilance committee, and a Female Vigilant Association was convened the next year. The relationship between the two was very close. Black officers of the Vigilance Committee were James McCrummell, president, Jacob C. White, secretary, and James Needham, treasurer. Two of the Female Association's four officers -- Elizabeth White and Sarah McCrummell -- were spouses of the men. After an anti-black riot in Philadelphia in 1842, the vigilance committee slowly lost central direction and it was reorganized in 1852 as the General vigilance committee. This group devoted itself to support of the Underground Railroad and elected William Still as its chairman. Under his active leadership, Philadelphia became a mecca for fugitive slaves and many

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[68] James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 88-98; Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 7, 52, 142-43, 180-81, 145.

[69] Ripley, *Witness for Freedom*, 11-17. Frederick Douglass was the most famous of the antebellum black newspaper editors, but he was far from the only one. Black newspapers included the *Colored American*, *Freedom's Journal*, the *North Star, Frederick Douglass's Paper*, and the *Weekly Advocate*.

famous cases, such as that of "Box" Brown and William and Ellen Craft, passed through his office.

David Ruggles was the energetic secretary of the New York Committee of Vigilance for five years, meeting ships at the dock to look for runaways or those still enslaved, and the corresponding secretary of the New York State Vigilance Committee was Charles B. Ray, a black publisher. Prominent in the state of New York were John W. Jones in Elmira, New York; David and Philip Roderick in Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Stephen Myers in Albany; Frederick Douglass in Rochester; William Wells Brown in Buffalo; Lewis Hayden, Peter Howard, and Robert Morris in Boston; and J. W. Loguen in Syracuse.[70]

Still's "Autograph Manuscript Journal of Fugitive Slaves Who Passed Through Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, Philadelphia, December 25, 1852-February 22, 1857" (the original is in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania) was the core document for his 1872 book. To it he added notes on oral narratives, letters to him from the field, and contemporary pamphlets. His records indicate that the committee assisted about 100 fugitives a year in the 1850s, the majority of them young men from Virginia and Maryland.

The Boston Vigilance Committee was founded in late 1842 as a result of the failed escape of slave John Torrence who was a stowaway from New Bern, North Carolina, and was not permitted to debark in Boston. Most of Boston's leading black and white abolitionists were on the committee. The records of the committee indicate that many black women and black workers, who were not committee members, aided escapees and were reimbursed for their expenses. The avowed commitment of the vigilance committee, influenced by the Garrisonians, to use only "legal, peaceful, and Christian methods and none other" came hard up against the Supreme Court decision in *Prigg vs. Pennsylvania* (1842) that the free states could not legislate to deprive a slaveowner of his property. This invalidated the North's Personal Liberty Laws and, in Boston, caused blacks to form the New England Freedom Association with the goal of continuing to aid fugitives, despite some loss of legal status.

In that same year, George Latimer, a slave in Norfolk, escaped to Boston with his family. His owner, James B. Gray, followed him and had him jailed. The entire state, and especially Boston, was in an uproar over Latimer and the implications of the *Prigg* decision. While Latimer's freedom was purchased, a more far-reaching effect was the passage of a Massachusetts Personal Liberty Law in 1843 which set the state at odds with the United States Supreme Court and drew the lines between north and south ever tighter.

Nonresistance in Boston grew weaker, as a philosophy, when the Fugitive Slave Law went into effect. Shadrach Minkins, a runaway from Norfolk to Boston, was arrested and then rescued from a Boston courtroom. In 1854, an unsuccessful attempt to rescue fugitive Anthony Burns from a court hearing left both those willing to fight and the nonresisters frustrated. Garrisonians moved closer to disunionism, burning the Fugitive Slave Law, the Burns court decision, and the U.S. Constitution on the Fourth of July, 1854. In 1851, blacks in Christiana, Pennsylvania, shot to death a federal Marshall who was attempting to seize a suspected runaway.[71]

Many smaller towns in Pennsylvania held free black communities. It is virtually impossible to trace with any precision the routes that runaway slaves took overland to reach free states in the northeast. Legend and tradition, while insufficient evidence in of themselves, can often be signposts to suggest where digging for further information may be most profitable. Legend holds that Columbia, Pennsylvania, a town settled by free blacks from Virginia and located twenty miles north of the Maryland border on the east bank of the Susquehanna River, was a prime source of aid to runaway slaves. Christiana and York,

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[70] Foner, *History of Black Americans*, 481.

[71] Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 155-159; Jonathan Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, Sept. 11, 1851* (New York: Thomas Cromwell, 1974).

Pennsylvania, which were located relatively close to the Maryland border, were renowned as transit points for fugitives. William C. Goodridge, a black barber in York, was reputed to have sent many fugitives on to William Still. Lewisburg, Pennsylvania was another legendary site. Other approaches to Philadelphia were described as: crossing the Susquehanna above Havre de Grace, Maryland and northeast to Phoenixville; from Baltimore to West Chester and Phoenixville; and through Delaware to Philadelphia. Leaving Philadelphia, a frequently used passage to Canada was reputed to have been from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, by foot or canal boat to Williamsport, Canton, and Alba, Pennsylvania, then through Elmira, Watkins Glen, Canandaigua, Rochester, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls, New York, then to St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada. Fugitives often traveled by the local railroads, such as the Williamsport and Elmira or the Northern Central.[72]

Black abolitionists in these and other Pennsylvania and New York towns included David and Philip Rodrick in Williamsport, John W. Jones in Elmira, New York, Reverend Henry Highland Garnett in Troy, and Frederick Douglass in Rochester. William Wells Brown moved to Buffalo in 1834 and began to aid runaways crossing the Great Lakes to Canada. Because he worked on lake steamers, he was able to aid fugitives waiting for passage from Cleveland and Detroit, as well as Buffalo.[73] Of the regular participation of these men in the Underground Railroad there can be no doubt, and yet there are still others.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN THE SOUTH

The Underground Railroad in the South was extremely cautious and careful, but it existed. It existed in the port cities of the Atlantic Coast and in the Appalachian mountains of the southern interior. It existed among certain church denominations -- black Baptist, Quaker -- and, as has been noted, it existed informally where the American South met borders with Mexico or Florida before its forced purchase by the United States.

As might be expected, and as slaveholders and southern newspaper editors did expect, most of the aid to runaways in the south was given by free blacks and slaves. When the successful runaway Anthony Burns was kidnapped in Boston and returned to Richmond, he kept writing materials hidden while he was in jail. Six times he wrapped a letter around a rock and threw it out the jail window when he saw a black man passing. Every time the letter was mailed and reached its destination.[74] This was an example of the unplanned aid to fugitives which made the Underground Railroad both hard to define and hard to control.

There were also some southern whites who aided fugitive slaves. Their activities are much more shrouded in darkness than those of the white northerners who came south and assisted fugitives. As early as the 1790s, there are accounts of whites who encouraged slave revolts in Virginia and the slave, Gabriel, who planned a wide conspiracy in Virginia in 1800, hid out for ten days on the river vessel of a white man and was betrayed by a black boatman.[75] Such activity, in the south, brought severe punishment and even death. Particularly in the Upper South states, persons such as Thomas Garrett of Delaware worked with Harriet Tubman and others in Underground Railroad activities.[76] The New Castle, Delaware, court house

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[72] Stewart, *History of Black Americans*, 482.

[73] White abolitionist families in Rochester reportedly included the Posts, Blosses, and Porters. Foner, *History of Black Americans*, 485. See Carol M. Hunter, *To Set the Captives Free: Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen and the Struggle for Freedom in Central New York, 1835-1872* (New York: Garland, 1993).

[74] Charles Emery Stevens, *Anthony Burns: A History* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 163-164.

[75] James Sidbury, "Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800," *Journal of Southern History* 63/3 (August 1997): 531-552; Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 104-107.

[76] Priscilla Thompson, "Harriet Tubman, Thomas Garrett, and the Underground Railroad," *Delaware History* 22 (September 1986): 1-21.

where Garrett was brought to trial is on the National Register. Sarah and Angelina Grimke left South Carolina for Philadelphia because of their antislavery views. There, they participated in the Underground Railroad.

> "Elizabeth Barnes, who worked for a ship captain at Portsmouth, Virginia, hid slaves on vessels sailing for Boston and New Bedford. New Yorkers Edward Smith and Isaac Gansey of the schooner *Robert Centre* were charged by Virginia Governor Thomas W. Gilmer with having abducted slave Isaac, and $300 was offered for their delivery to the jailer at Norfolk."[77]

The examples of northern abolitionists who went south and then, either impulsively or with calculation, encouraged and abetted runaways, received more public notice than did the work of white southerners. "In the summer of 1844, abolitionist Jonathan Walker, a Harwick, Massachusetts, sea captain, carpenter, and mechanic, took four fugitive slaves aboard his ship in Pensacola, Florida, with the intention of transporting them to freedom in the Bahamas." The ship was intercepted on the Florida Gulf Coast and Walker captured and taken to Key West, then Pensacola where he was indicted for enticing and stealing slaves. He was branded with the letters "S.S." for slave stealer, fined, imprisoned and even pilloried for an hour.[78]

Charles Turner Torrey, a Massachusetts Congregational minister, was an example of an abolitionist who broke with Garrison over the "woman question," but who found himself reconciled to both when Garrison publicized his imprisonment in Baltimore. Torrey was among the founders of the Boston Vigilance Committee in 1841, and in 1843 moved to Baltimore to enter business and to aid fugitives. Two years later he was arrested and sentenced to six years hard labor. After slightly more than a year in prison, Torrey died there of tuberculosis. Even if he had been released, the state of Virginia stood ready to extradite him for aiding the escape of John Webb and his two children from Winchester, Virginia. Emily Webb, the wife, was a free woman of color and the daughter of a white man named Carr. She was attempting to purchase the freedom of her family when she learned they were to be sold south, prompting her to ask for Torrey's help.[79]

Another well-known example of abolitionist activity in the South was the case of the ship the *Pearl*, which attempted to leave Washington City in April 1848, with seventy-seven slaves who were to leave the ship as free persons when it docked in New York. Betrayed by an offended black man, the *Pearl* was seized and its captain, Daniel Drayton, and owner, Sayres, were arrested and tried in Washington. The trial lasted six weeks in the summer of 1848 and Drayton was sentenced to prison while Sayres paid a fine of $10,000. Drayton, whose release was gained in April 1853 by black Boston lawyer Robert Morris after serving four years, committed suicide in New Bedford in 1857. Leonard Grimes, born to free parents in Leesburg, Virginia, became a hackman in Washington, D.C., and part of a large group of African Americans both free and fugitive, who had grown up in the South and were intimately acquainted with its geography and many of its people. These residents of Washington were well positioned to aid runaways -- and they did so. Grimes was apprehended by the local authorities on one of his trips to Virginia while attempting to transport a free black man and his slave family out of the state. He served two years in the Virginia penitentiary. After his release, he moved north and became the minister of the Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston where he and his congregation continued to aid fugitives.

The most famous African American on the eastern seaboard for daring rescues was Harriet Tubman, once Araminta Ross. Born about 1820 to Benjamin Ross and Harriet Green, slaves in Dorchester County, Maryland, she was one of eleven children born to the couple. At the age of five she was hired out as a

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[77] Foner, *History of Black Americans,* 487. Accounts of court cases, such as Helen Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery* (1927) often give details of escape attempts.

[78] Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 343.

[79] Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South 1831-1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 68, 74.

domestic servant and at thirteen, was struck in the head with a lead weight when she intervened between her owner and an escaping slave. For the rest of her life she suffered from sudden blackouts.

In her early twenties (1844), she married a free black man, John Tubman, who lived in a neighboring plantation. After the death of her master in 1847 she was in danger of being sold away from her spouse and her extended family. This uncertain position was often the precipitating cause of running away, and Harriet Tubman escaped north to Philadelphia in 1849 without her husband who did not want to join her. Two years later she returned to Maryland for him but he had remarried.

Tubman's escape came just before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 which made it easier for slaveholders to recapture fugitives or to hire "slavecatchers" to do it for them. Tubman became active in the Underground Railroad through her alliance with Philadelphia's abolitionists and the city's black vigilance committee. Tubman's contribution was as unique, straightforward and yet as complex as her life. Disguising herself and often carrying a rifle, Tubman returned to the South approximately fifteen times to guide groups of runaways, many of them her relatives. She returned to Baltimore in December 1850 for her sister and her sister's two children after the sister's free black husband had ferried them from Cambridge, Maryland, to Baltimore. Even after Maryland plantation owners offered a bounty for her capture, she continued to venture into Maryland. She was more cautious at the other end of the trek toward freedom and settled in Canada with others she had aided. She felt it was safe to leave her aged parents in Auburn, New York. Tubman worked frequently with Thomas Garrett, a Quaker businessman in Wilmington, Delaware, who in turn, worked with the Pennsylvania State Antislavery Society and the Philadelphia Antislavery Society.

When the last Southern state left the Union in 1861, Tubman returned to the United States and served the Union Army as a scout, spy, and nurse in the South. Later she supported her parents by farming and she remarried to a Civil War veteran. She received a little money from a book published in 1869, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, written for her and published by her old abolitionist friends, but never received a pension for her Civil War services. Tubman supported women's suffrage and understood that the end of slavery was only one step toward citizenship. In her own life, she did not limit her antislavery activities to those considered acceptable for women and in taking on dangerous rescue attempts, she sent a message that black women should not simply aspire to be nineteenth-century ladies once free. In addition to her membership in women's organizations, she worked in her local community to establish schools and a home for the aged. In 1903, she gave twenty-five acres to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to build the Harriet Tubman Home for Indigent and Aged Negroes. At her death in 1913, at the age of 93, the National Association of Colored Women paid for her funeral and tombstone.

Tubman was a legend among African Americans even before the Civil War and her fame was justified. Quite possibly, she was the best known African American woman of the nineteenth century, and her reluctance to talk about her role in the Underground Railroad only added to the aura that surrounded her. Although her name was widely recognized among all Americans, it was the oral tradition of the African American community that kept many details alive until researchers sought out her story.[80]

THE TRANSMONTANE REGION FROM THE APPALACHIANS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

Attention to the celebrated abolitionists of the North and the successful runaways from the southeastern states should not keep attention from the equally active antislavery and Underground Railroad activities

[80] Sojourner Truth is often paired with Tubman, but her life was both more complex and was less tied to the Underground Railroad. See Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: Norton, 1996). Truth was an active abolitionist but her work was only marginally connected to the Underground Railroad. The value of this excellent biography for the Underground Railroad study lies in the thoughtful manner in which Painter explores Truth as a product of the needs and projections of different audiences over generations. This includes her own self-fashioning for her own persuasive purposes in the mid-nineteenth century.

in the region across the Appalachian Mountains. The Ohio River from Pittsburgh to the Mississippi River was a vast border crossing and many states were involved. Western Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri supplied runaways who sought to reach Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. Then, perhaps, they proceeded to Michigan, Wisconsin, or to Ontario, Canada. Kansas, the scene of pitched battles between proslavery and antislavery forces, was almost a separate category.

Kentucky provided some of the most dramatic escapes and attempts at escape, including several accounts that were credited with inspiring Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly,* especially the story of Eliza crossing the frozen Ohio River. (See the page 3 reference to recent books about Delia Webster, Calvin Fairbank, and John P. Parker operating in the same area). Kentucky had for some time an active abolitionist press and outspoken antislavery advocates. One scholar has estimated that approximately 300 slaves per year escaped from Kentucky, based on claims for stolen slave property. This does not count those who were retrieved by slave catchers and returned to the state.[81]

Levi Coffin, celebrated as the "president of the Underground Railroad," left North Carolina and settled in Newport, Indiana, in 1826, where he noted that "fugitives often passed through that place and generally stopped among the colored people." Coffin later continued his activities in Cincinnati and James G. Birney, while in Cincinnati, observed that: "such matters are almost uniformly managed by the colored people. I know nothing of them generally till they are past."[82]

The town of Ripley, Ohio, once nearly the rival of Cincinnati in prosperity was at least the equal of Cincinnati in Underground Railroad activity. The most active and prominent persons giving aid to fugitives were John Parker and John Rankin and they were assisted by various other families in the community, although by no means was this an antislavery town. In Cincinnati, Levi Coffin was a diligent assister of runaways.[83] The town of Oberlin, with Oberlin College as its abolitionist center, was the site of a famous rescue of a recaptured fugitive and was legitimately well-known as a haven for Underground Railroad activities.[84]

CONTRABANDS, SOLDIERS AND EMANCIPATION

The decade of the 1850s was a dispiriting time for African Americans seeking freedom through the law or through a more personal form of self-liberation -- running away. After the Mexican American War (1848), events compounded upon themselves. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 strengthened the original Act of 1793 and made it legal for slaveholders to pursue runaways into states where slavery was illegal. As a result, professional slave catchers seized black men and women, often on the street or at their work place, and hastened them south after giving evidence that this person was indeed a fugitive slave to a local justice of the peace or court. Such evidence as the unsavory slave catchers had was often flimsy or false and while the South won the legal victory, the Abolitionist cause won a larger victory when Northerners saw blacks struggling to escape from their captors. Many Northerners acquired a new understanding of the slave condition and a greater sympathy for the campaign to end slavery in the United States.

Still, the national government seemed to reflect the Southern view throughout the decade, partly through fear of Southern defection from the Union and partly from the central role of Southern politicians in national politics. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act revived the concept of "popular sovereignty,"

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[81] See Lowell H. Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978) for a list of slave memoirs with Kentucky origins and for biographies of antislavery Kentuckians; also see Steven Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South* (New York: Hill and Wang: 1998). See Harrison, *Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 86, for estimate of escapes.

[82] Foner, *History of Black America*, 480.

[83] Stuart Seely Sprague, *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Randolph Paul Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).

[84] Nat Brandt, *The Town That Started the Civil War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

meaning that settlers in those territories were free to determine their form of government. Free soil and abolitionist settlers were drawn to Kansas leading to a state of guerilla warfare with proslavery settlers. Kansas became known as bleeding Kansas and John Brown received his first national attention.

In 1857, Supreme Court Justice Roger B. Taney declared in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that blacks had no rights which the white man was bound to observe. This meant that the status of free blacks was determined by the individual states and the federal government could not guarantee otherwise. John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry was a desperate attempt to inspire slaves to rebellion because all other avenues to national manumission seemed closed.

As the nation approached the Civil War, there was a free black population of substance in every state. In the North, many were active in antislavery, African American churches, and in self-help societies. Even southern free blacks were organized into churches and societies, although their public presentation on all issues was extremely careful not to offend. The existence of this class of people raised every question about liberty and citizenship that the U.S. government in the period hoped fervently to ignore.[85]

In this atmosphere, the Civil War began as a war to save the Union from the ever-expanding contradictions inherent in a nation "half slave, half free." But no sooner had Union troops appeared in the Border States, on the islands off the Atlantic Coast, and in the lower Mississippi Valley, that thousands of blacks took the opportunity of liberating themselves by absconding to the Yankee camps. An initial impulse to send them back to their masters was soon squelched. The runaways became "contraband," or confiscated property of war. Many of them quickly found work within the Union lines and members of their families began to join them. At the same time, Northern blacks who sought to form companies and join the Army were initially rebuffed.

The Confederacy was also quick to see the advantages of non-enlisted black labor. Free blacks were conscripted to dig fortifications for the southern army and to labor on roads and in mines. Slaves accompanied their masters to army camp and acted as cooks, grooms, and personal attendants. Early in the war, slaveholders hired out their slaves to the army but when slaves availed themselves of the chance to change sides, the same slaveholders and others decided to send their slaves to interior plantations far away from the battles.

This enormous upheaval and movement of the black population within the South created unprecedented opportunities for self-liberation which took place on an unprecedented scale even before the federal government acknowledged the reality. In July 1862, after the disastrous Peninsular Campaign, President Lincoln issued the Second Confiscation Act stating that the Union could "employ . . . persons of African descent . . . for the suppression of the rebellion." Five regiments of black infantry were formed in the Union-held Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia (August 1862). The entry of African American units into the Union Army and the encampment of thousands of "contrabands" in and near the Union Army constituted a de facto emancipation even before the Emancipation Proclamation was announced after the battle of Antietam in October 1862, or went into effect on the first of January 1863.

After that date, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island began to recruit free black men from all over the North who congregated in Readville, Massachusetts, where they became part of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Colored Regiment. This unit proved itself in a deadly assault on Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina, on July 1863. But this celebrated group was only a small part of the total number of almost 200,000 African Americans who served in the Civil War. Of these forces, approximately 37,000 came from the northern free states, 42,000 came from the border slaveholding states of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky with half of those being from Kentucky. Tennessee provided 20,000 black soldiers, Louisiana 24,000, Mississippi 18,000, while the other states of

[85] Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

the Confederacy provided 40,000.[86]

The war to save the Union inevitably became the war to free the slaves, not just to secure African Americans soldiers, weaken the Confederacy, and acquire the approval of Europe, especially Britain, but also because African Americans themselves used every opportunity to demonstrate that once slavery's chain was cracked, it would never be repaired.

[86] Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5-17; Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 238-242.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

EVALUATING AND DOCUMENTING PROPERTIES UNDER THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD THEME STUDY

PROPERTY TYPES

Properties considered under the Underground Railroad Theme Study are ones associated with some aspect of the Underground Railroad between the American Revolution and the Civil War, with emphasis on the period between the formal organization of the abolitionist movement in 1820 and the end of the Civil War. They include the following property types:

1. "Stations" on the Underground Railroad: These are buildings, structures, or sites where fugitives were harbored and their use as such has been documented. Stations are entire buildings or structures, not individual rooms or parts of larger structures.

2. Properties associated with prominent persons: These include abolitionists who were actively involved in harboring fugitives or aiding them in other ways. All abolitionists did not consent to aiding fugitives, and one should not assume that all abolitionists were active in the Underground Railroad. This property type may also include properties importantly associated with known runaways, for example, places where runaways made their home after escaping slavery.

3. Slave rebellion sites: Organized slave rebellions are considered important precursors to the Underground Railroad as early slave resistance illuminates aspects of slave life from which those who participated sought to escape.

4. Properties associated with legal challenges to slavery: These will most often be courthouses. However, they may also include places where slaves or those who aided fugitives resided or were detained awaiting trial.

5. Properties associated with documented slave escapes: These include plantations from which slaves successfully escaped and that were later documented in slave narratives or other writings. Like slave rebellion sites, an examination of plantation life lends context to the conditions from which slaves were fleeing. Runaway ads alone are not sufficient for identifying these properties -- sources must be able to document what the life of a slave at that particular site was like.

6. Properties associated with documented fugitive rescues: These may include homes of individuals who were primary figures in rescues, as well as the locations at which fugitives were rescued from authorities, and places where they were harbored.

7. Churches associated with congregations active in the Underground Railroad: Although slaves were probably not often harbored in churches, church congregations often provided monetary or other assistance to fugitives. Evidence of these acts may be documented in church records.

8. Maroon communities: Before the spread of the abolition movement, small groups of runaways were sometimes successful in forming small settlements of their own. Because these maroon communities were semi-permanent at best, few resources associated with them are extant making them difficult to document.

9. Archeological sites: Any property that is associated with the Underground Railroad where archeological study has been undertaken may be eligible for information potential. In other cases, archeological investigation may help to define the boundary of a property or provide informational gaps found in more traditional sources of documentation.

10. Others: Properties related to the Underground Railroad in some other way may include, for example: resources associated with William Still or Wilbur Siebert, two early historians of the Underground Railroad, or a building that served as the headquarters of an abolitionist newspaper that was sympathetic to aiding runaways.

Transportation routes have not been included as a property type for several reasons. Chief among these is that while the general direction of fugitives from slavery can be traced, the specific route followed by each individual or group of runaways was unique. Another important factor is that the actual flight from slavery left no physical imprint on the landscape by which a route may be defined. While it may be possible to document a train station where fugitives were known to have boarded or a road where they were known to have traveled, these transportation-related resources, especially those still in use, are by their nature dynamic and have often suffered a considerable loss of integrity.

DOCUMENTING UNDERGROUND RAILROAD PROPERTIES

While it is true that many aspects of the Underground Railroad were clandestine in nature and, as such were never recorded in writing, there are numerous sources of information that offer insight into the operation of the Underground Railroad and can be used to document a property. The NPS publication *Exploring A Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad* (see bibliography) provides detailed information on various documentary sources and the kinds of information they are likely to contain. This booklet, which is the basis for the information provided below, is available upon request from National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Historical Documentation Programs, 1849 C Street NW (2280), Washington, DC, 20240.

When researching a subject that is essentially comprised of legend, keep in mind that all information, especially those accounts that were produced many years after the events that they recount occurred, should be corroborated. The researcher must also always be mindful of the biases of the person keeping the record, and the social, historical, or political context in which he or she is writing. With this in mind, consult the following sources for information:

PRIMARY SOURCES

Oral Tradition: Oral tradition is often cited as the only "proof" of a property's use in the Underground Railroad. It can contain references to names, dates, location, and events, which should always be corroborated by other kinds of evidence. Oral tradition, however, is often the starting point of Underground Railroad research.

Autobiography and Memoir: Between the years 1820 and 1860, many escaped slaves worked with abolitionists to publish accounts of their escape from slavery. While these were often edited or enhanced by abolitionists for political reasons, the validity of the facts contained within them may be cross-referenced with other primary source material. In the late nineteenth century, elderly abolitionists or their families published accounts commemorating the efforts of abolitionists who aided fugitives. While these accounts also have their limitations, they often contain accurate accounts of the antebellum lives of the abolitionists in question.

Local Histories: Local histories range from professional public relations pieces to promote tourism, to straight accounts of local organizations or businesses. Because primary source material is rarely cited in these accounts, they should be used as a starting point to locating primary source materials.

County and Township Records: These will include property ownership deeds, household probate inventories, bills of sale for slaves, emancipation and manumission registers, slave registers for tax purposes, local and regional maps, legal documents, court records, and insurance records.

City Directories, Almanacs, and Gazetteers: These records are vital in locating individuals and their place of business or residence in the years between the federal censuses.

Calendars: Contemporary calendars are useful in verifying dates mentioned in other accounts.

Images and Photographs: While few photographs directly relate to the Underground Railroad, some artists' renderings of Underground Railroad subjects were widely distributed. Again, caution must be exercised in using images produced long after the fact, as they are likely conjectural.

Foreign Documents: Fugitives sometimes settled in foreign territories. Canadian sources may be especially useful in this regard.

Records of Anti-Slavery Societies, Vigilance Committees, Benevolent Groups, and Churches: These documents are useful for establishing historical context and locating names, dates, and events. Organized abolition societies often published minutes of meetings, annual reports, and propaganda materials that may include reference to fugitives aided by members.

Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals: These sources document daily living conditions, historical events, people and places, and serve as a gauge to popular opinion. Abolitionist papers often published reports about fugitive slaves, successful and failed escape attempts, and information about legal statutes affecting slavery and fugitive slaves.

Legal Documents and Court Records: Because many who fled slavery were captured and returned to slavery, court records provide invaluable information about slaves who attempted escapes and those who aided them. Legal papers also include descriptions of buildings and properties and specialized maps recorded for real estate transactions or disputes.

Manuscript collections: Personal and family manuscript collections may include correspondence, diaries, newspaper clippings, record books, photographs, and ephemera from the period.

Maps: Maps show territorial, state, and local boundaries; natural features, distances between locations, and transportation routes. They can be used to check accounts of escape routes. The Sanborn Company produced a series of fire insurance maps for towns throughout the nation from the mid-1800s until 1950. These provide information about property ownership, building materials and dimensions, and neighborhood characteristics.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Scholarly Sources: Books, articles, theses, dissertations, and unpublished manuscripts provide necessary context when examining the historical significance of any property. This document contains an overview of scholarship on the Underground Railroad.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

No single "station" on the Underground Railroad can be considered the most significant one in its community, state, or nation. Because historians can only estimate at best how many fugitives passed through any station, an attempt to determine the stations that assisted the most fugitives is not possible. A property that sheltered one runaway who became, for example, the subject of a nationally-publicized court case might meet the test of national significance, while a property that commonly sheltered fugitives may not. And while many abolitionists had widespread local and regional impact, few can be considered nationally significant for their Underground Railroad related activities. Underground Railroad properties will in most cases be eligible for National Historic Landmark designation under Criterion 1, and sometimes under Criterion 2 and Criterion 6. Underground Railroad properties may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places primarily under Criteria A, B, and D, although they may also be eligible under Criterion C for other reasons. The requirement for each are discussed below.

National Historic Landmarks Criterion 1

A property may be eligible under NHL Criterion 1 if it retains high integrity and relates to the Underground Railroad in one of two ways:

1) A property may be connected with a nationally-significant event, such as a slave rescue, court case, or slave insurrection. Not all rescues, court cases or insurrections had national impact. The ones that did were ones that had a documented effect in terms of the interpretation, repeal, or passage of legislation affecting the rights and movements of slaves, fugitives, and those who owned or aided them. The property must have a direct and meaningful documented association with the event and must be evaluated in context with any other extant resources associated with the same event.

2) A property may be importantly representative of a broad pattern of events in some meaningful national context. While, as mentioned above, no one Underground Railroad Station can be said to possess the most significance of any in the nation, several have been designated for their national importance in a representative context (see examples in section H). These are properties that vividly represent, through a combination of extant resources possessing high integrity and solid documentation, the contribution of a particular social, political, or ideological group to the functioning of the Underground Railroad. While properties that outstandingly represent some other aspect of the Underground Railroad -- such as the property that represents the environment from which slaves were fleeing, or one that represents how or where a slave would have been concealed -- may be eligible for National Register designation on the state or local level, it is highly unlikely that any exist that would qualify for National Historic Landmark designation. This is because the circumstances in which slaves were concealed and from which they escaped varied widely, and no single site can be said to be representative in this regard. Like properties relating to a significant event, all representative properties must also be evaluated in context with other extant properties that may have the same representative value.

National Historic Landmarks Criterion 2

There are few national figures of the Underground Railroad. Particular exceptions are individuals like Frederick Douglass -- perhaps America's most famous runaway, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown – America's most infamous abolitionist, Gerrit Smith, and Harriet Tubman. Properties eligible for National Historic Landmark designation under Criterion 2 for these individuals must have a significant association with the individual and his or her Underground Railroad activity. This means that not every place that Harriet Tubman visited or spoke at is nationally significant for association with her, likewise the home where Frederick Douglass first established his new life as a free man has more national significance in terms of the Underground Railroad than the resort home he built in the late years of his life. A discussion of the national prominence of an individual is not an argument that the property meets the criterion.

Documentation of the Underground Railroad activities of the person must be connected to the property itself. Again, comparative analysis with other extant properties relating to the individual is necessary.

National Historic Landmarks Criterion 6
Archeological investigation can also be used to positively identify the use, construction date, location, or boundaries of resources eligible under National Historic Landmark Criteria 1 or 2, or National Register Criteria A or B. For example, it may positively identify the location of outbuildings that were an integral part of a complex, or define the historic boundaries of a property. National Historic Landmark Criterion 6, however, can only be claimed for a site at which archeological data affect theories concerning American History to a major degree. Additional guidance about archeological resources associated with the Underground Railroad currently is under development through a series of cooperative multiple property documentation projects. The objectives for these projects include collection and analysis of archeological data that are useful to evaluate site significance, preparation of model multiple property documents that can serve as guides, and development of definitions for the appropriate range of archeological site types.

National Register Criterion A

In order to be eligible under National Register Criterion A, a property must retain integrity from the historic period and be associated with some event, or represent some broad aspect of the working of the Underground Railroad locally, statewide, or regionally. Properties must possess a documentable association with the Underground Railroad.

National Register Criterion B

The success of the Underground Railroad depended largely on local "conductors" who assisted fugitives in a variety of ways. Leaders of local abolition societies -- and often entire leading families, ministers, and free blacks were often important players locally, regionally, and statewide in the Underground Railroad. Properties associated with these individuals and their Underground Railroad activity may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B.

National Register Criterion D

These resources are eligible for listing in the National Register when they are examined and evaluated in terms of a specific research design. Used in conjunction with other types of sources, data from archeological investigation can lead to a broader understanding of the Underground Railroad, its related phenomena, and its operation.

In order for a property to be eligible for National Historic Landmark designation or inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under the Underground Railroad Theme Study, its period of significance must fall between the American Revolution and the end of the Civil War, and, for National Historic Landmark designation, it retains high integrity and meets one or more of the National Historic Landmarks Criteria as discussed above. For National Register listing, it must meet one or more of the National Register Criteria as discussed above and retain integrity from the period of significance. A discussion of integrity follows.

Integrity
Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The evaluation of integrity is somewhat of a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. The National Historic Landmarks and National Register criteria recognize seven aspects or qualities that define integrity including: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

For National historic Landmark designation, a property must possess these aspects to a high degree and the property must retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic significance. For National Register listing, a property must possess several, and usually most, of these aspects.

The essential physical features are those features that define both *why* a property is significant (criteria and themes) and *when* it was significant (periods of significance). They are features without which a property can no longer be identified as, for instance, a nineteenth century farm or church building.

To assess integrity one must 1) define the essential physical features that must be present to a high degree for a property to represent its significance; 2) determine whether the essential physical features are apparent enough to convey the property's significance; and 3) compare the property with similar properties in the nationally significant theme.

A property that is significant for association with the Underground Railroad should have integrity of setting and location and retain the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s) for which the property is being nominated. If the historic building associated with the event, pattern, or person no longer exists, the property probably has lost its historic integrity.

For properties to be considered under National Historic Landmarks Criterion 6 or National Register Criterion D, integrity is based upon the property's professionally demonstrated intactness of archeological deposits and features. These are important for identifying whether a site has the potential to yield data that may address nationally significant research questions.

Properties being considered under National Historic Landmark Criteria 1 and 2 or National Register Criteria A or B must not only retain essential physical features but the features must be visible enough to convey their significance and historic identity. This means that even if a property is physically intact, its significant features should not be concealed under modern construction. Archeological properties by nature may not require visible features to convey their significance.

G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

While Underground Railroad activity occurred in a majority of states and territories as they existed at the end of the Civil War, not all existing states and U.S. territories -- notably those in the West, Alaska, and Hawaii-- have been home to Underground Railroad activity. While Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands both have their own history of slavery, escape and rebellion, these events occurred long before 1820, the beginning of the Underground Railroad as defined in this study. As such, properties related to slavery and escape in these territories should be viewed as precursors to the Underground Railroad in the United States. While fugitives crossed international borders into Canada and Mexico, the scope of this study is limited to the United States.

H. SUMMARY OF SURVEY AND IDENTIFICATION METHODS

METHODOLOGY FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK EVALUATION

Twelve National Historic Landmarks have been designated under the Underground Railroad theme study as of August 6, 1998. The following section lists these properties and explains how they were selected.

The properties chosen for study as potential National Historic Landmarks began with the identification at the state level of all known properties relating to the Underground Railroad. A list of properties was compiled, starting with those that were already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This list was augmented by information provided by State Historic Preservation Offices and other interested parties in response to a letter from National Park Service staff asking them to identify Underground Railroad related properties in thirty four states where Underground Railroad activity was conducted.

Information documenting the property's role in the Underground Railroad was collected. More than 100 site visits were made to properties that had a minimum level of documentation. Properties that were determined to have sufficient supporting documentation were considered further. Properties chosen for consideration for National Historic Landmark study were ones that had both high integrity and that were either associated with nationally significant figures connected with the Underground Railroad or that were importantly representative in some national context. The properties thus far designated under this theme study are:

Levi Coffin House, Fountain City, Wayne Co., Indiana

Built in 1827, this house was owned by Levi Coffin (1789-1877), a Quaker Abolitionist. Coffin has been termed the "president" of the Underground Railroad movement. It is believed that Coffin and his wife Catherine helped more than 2,000 fugitive slaves escape to freedom, using this house as a principle depot. After the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, Coffin worked to aid freedman. He also participated in the international anti-slavery movement by attending events such as the International Anti-Slavery Conference in Paris in 1867. Coffins experiences as an active member of the Underground Railroad movement is documented in the posthumous book entitled, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin.*

Eleutherian College Classroom and Chapel Building, Lancaster, Indiana

Constructed between 1854 and 1856, this building is the only surviving building with integrity associated with one of the first colleges west of the Allegheny Mountains to promote college-level equal educational experiences prior to the Civil War. Families affiliated with the Neil's Creek Abolitionist Baptist Church were responsible for the founding and administration of Eleutherian College and were involved in the clandestine activities of the Underground Railroad. As a hotbed of abolitionism, Lancaster was well-known as a stopping point for slaves seeking refuge on their way to freedom.

John Rankin House, Ripley, Ohio

This was the home of Presbyterian minister John Rankin, who is reputed to have been one of Ohio's first and most active "conductors" on the Underground Railroad. In addition, he wrote *Letters on American Slavery*, first published in book form in 1826, and among the first clearly articulated antislavery views printed west of the Appalachians, which became standard reading for abolitionists all over the United States. From 1822 to 1865, Rankin, along with his wife and children, assisted hundreds of escaped slaves in their trek to freedom.

John P. Parker House, Ripley, Ohio

A former slave, John Parker's unflagging and oftentimes heroic efforts to rescue escaped slaves from the "borderlands" along the Ohio River underscores the major role played by African-Americans not only as slaves and fugitives, but also as rescuers on the Underground Railroad. Parker was not an outspoken

abolitionist and appears never to have joined or participated in the antislavery societies. However, he repeatedly secreted himself back into slave territory to assist escaped slaves and to lead them to safety across the Ohio River.

F. Julius Le Moyne House, Washington, Pennsylvania

This house was the residence of Dr. F. Julius LeMoyne from 1827 until his death in 1879. LeMoyne joined the anti-slavery movement in 1834 at the point when it was becoming increasingly popularized and politicized among the white middle class across the country. In his activism and philosophy LeMoyne represents the mainstream of anti-slavery activity in the United States before 1850. His philosophy of legitimate activism distinct from his willingness to abet fugitive slaves illuminates the variation of personal conscience at work on Americans as they struggled with the issues of political authority, human rights, and personal property in the debate over slavery.

Rokeby, Ferrisburgh, Vermont

Key to Rokeby's historic significance is its extensive and rare contemporary documentation. Family letters not only validate Rokeby as a stop, they add to our knowledge, correcting and sharpening our understanding of the Underground Railroad and providing insight into how "the legend outgrew the reality." No other known Underground Railroad site matches Rokeby for this combination of documentation and completeness, and historic integrity of site and collections.

Johnson House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia was a center of the nineteenth-century American movement to abolish slavery, and the Johnson House is one of the key sites of that movement. The Johnson House is a representative station on the Underground Railroad and the Johnsons among the leading abolitionist families of their generation. Working closely with black and white abolitionists and assisting fugitive slaves and freedmen on their journeys to freedom, the Johnson family was typical of the conscience reformers who participated in the Underground Railroad.

John Brown Farm and Gravesite, Lake Placid, New York

The John Brown Farm is significant for its association with and as a commemorative memorial to the famous and controversial abolitionist John Brown. It was from this farm that Brown set forth to Harpers Ferry with his plan to end slavery through armed confrontation, and here where his body was returned for burial following his execution for treason and murder in 1859. The very early efforts to preserve the site as a memorial to Brown and his fallen followers speaks to the intensity with which Brown's crusade gripped the American consciousness in the years before the Civil War. The continued memorial efforts at the site for more than a century after his death illustrate the heroic status he garnered.

NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES:

Dr. Nathan Thomas House, Schoolcraft, Michigan

Dr. Nathan Thomas settled in the predominantly Quaker town of Schoolcraft in 1833 and became an influential abolitionist leader and successful Underground Railroad conductor. His house was a major stop on the highly organized Michigan Underground Railroad system. His wife, Pamela Brown, provides much of the history of their activity as abolitionists through her memoirs. Her journal accounts for an estimated 1,000-1,500 fugitive slaves the couple aided to freedom. Dr. Thomas was also an active participant in local, state and federal abolition movements. He petitioned to Congress against the admittance of Texas as a slave state and set up a Michigan antislavery newspaper. The Thomas' both publicly and privately acted to end the institution of slavery while gaining respect and leadership in their community.

Gerrit Smith Estate and Land Office, Peterboro, New York

Gerrit Smith was a wealthy businessman who dedicated a great deal of time, money, and personal safety

to the effort of the Underground Railroad. Smith first became involved in the antislavery movement when he volunteered his Peterboro estate for a controversial abolitionist meeting. In 1836, he became the president of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. He called for abolitionists to defy the law and help fugitive slaves escape into freedom. Smith did this by allowing his estate to be a stop along the Underground Railroad. In addition, he sold cheap plots of land to poor African Americans, many of whom he had helped escape into freedom. Smith's estate, currently registered a National Historical Site, is currently up for review to be designated as a National Historic Landmark.

Todd House, Tabor, Iowa

Iowa's proximity to the slave state, Missouri, promoted a great deal of fugitive slave traffic to the state. One of the most significant hubs of this traffic came through the Todd House, home of Congregational Minister John Todd in Tabor, Iowa. Tabor quickly became an anti-slavery stronghold, with the Todd House existing at the apex of the movement. The infamous abolitionist, John Brown, would often pass through Tabor, many times utilizing the Todd House. Todd's influence was mostly felt in his ability to influence many other Tabor residents and ministers, creating a popular call for an end to slavery.

I. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A REVIEW OF PUBLISHED SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad story rests on an understanding of American slavery and antislavery in which slave resistance is assumed. The scholarly literature of the last thirty or more years has documented that resistance and also established the nature and importance of a sense of community among slaves and free blacks. While thrilling tales of escapes and secret signs often dominate the Underground Railroad story, the story primarily reveals the extent to which enslaved African Americans could and did carry out their own plans for escape and, when possible, joined forces with white antislavery advocates.

Many American historians writing in the 1890s and early 1900s characterized the slave system as benign and the slaves as docile and content. To accomplish this characterization, they had to minimize the importance of fugitives from slavery who were featured in popular works of history and fiction at the time. There was a popular audience then, as now, for tales of hair-breadth escapes and secret tunnels, and many such books and articles were inspired by local narratives. Local sources included oral histories, memoirs, newspaper articles, and other memorabilia of the Underground Railroad, primarily collected by those sympathetic to abolitionism. The most extensive collected primary sources of that era, as noted in the text, are found in Wilbur Siebert, *The Underground Railway from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1898) and William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno Press, 1968; Philadelphia, 1872). Siebert gathered documents and reminiscences from aged abolitionists or their descendants in the 1890s. Still, an active participant in the Philadelphia Underground Railroad, he used his notes, correspondence, and memory after the Civil War to attempt to reconstruct each narrative for publication.

Whatever the level of veracity in these legends, they did assume the cruelty and inhumanity of slavery and the desire of fugitives to escape. Among many trained historians of the period, the tendency was to minimize the activities of fugitives. U. B. Phillips' book, *American Negro Slavery* (New York: D. Appleton, 1918) was the culmination of this tendency and it dominated the field for decades. Philips portrayed escape from bondage as insignificant to the history of slavery. It was not until the 1950s that historians reviewed the evidence and came to conclusions which interpreted slavery and the slave quite differently. In doing so, they used the previously underutilized work of African American scholars such as Benjamin Quarles, W. E. B. DuBois, and Carter G. Woodson, and of white historians such as Herbert Aptheker. Much of this early research appeared in the *Journal of Negro History* which began publication in 1916 under the editorship of Carter G. Woodson and often provided a venue for the publication of excellent scholarship on African American life in the decades before 1970 when the official American history journals were almost closed to that topic.

A selective list of some of the best of the older studies includes Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (1949; repr., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962); Aileen Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Whitney Cross, *The Burned Over District* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); Lewis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960); Benjamin Quarles, *Allies For Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge this Land With Blood* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970).

Works by Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Vintage Press, 1956) and Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) saw slavery as harsh, and, in Elkins' case, as robbing the enslaved of a sense of self. These two books sparked a generation of research beginning in the 1960s, which examined every aspect of the system of slavery and generally concluded that slavery, although deeply damaging to the African American, did not destroy the possibility of independent thought and action.

Recent useful collections of slave narratives, letters, speeches, editorials and newspaper accounts include Peter C. Ripley, et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 5 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985-93); John Blassingame, *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); and Charles Blockson, *The Underground Railroad* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987); William Andrews, *To Tell A Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986). The best examination of evidence done thus far in order to separate the myth from the reality of the Underground Railroad is Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (1961; repr., Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996). His first and last chapters are an account of exaggerated and romanticized texts and newspaper accounts and they are worth checking to avoid reliance on dubious and unsubstantiated texts. Gara notes that the antislavery movement was divided over aid to fugitive slaves, that free blacks and slaves provided most assistance to fugitives, and that many of the underground activities were at least partly aboveground, as was the case with the northern Vigilance Committees. He may underestimate the organized activity of black abolitionists as suggested in Marion Wilson Starling, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1988).

The list of ex-slave memoirs is long indeed and there is, as yet, no compilation that claims to be comprehensive. Nor is there a list that would tell researchers from where the memorialists escaped or their destinations. Frederick Douglass wrote three autobiographies but the most vivid may be *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845). For his work as an abolitionist, see *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881, rev. ed., 1892). Another escaped slave who became an abolitionist was William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown: A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Antislavery Office, 1848).

Since Gara's book was written, the 1930s WPA oral histories of slavery and the fugitive slave memoirs of the late antebellum era (1830-1860) have been finecombed for references to runaways and the Underground Railroad. While the abolitionists were the primary publishers of slave narratives, about one-half of the six thousand slave narratives were preserved by five other sources of publication: the court record, the popular or sensational journal, the church record, the independent printer, and the Federal Writers' Project (WPA), mentioned above. These collections are described in Marion Wilson Starling, *The Slave Narrative* (cited above). Most of the thousands of Federal Writers' Project oral interviews are collected in George Rawick, general editor, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1977). Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) are concerned with what can be read between the lines of various slave narratives and offer useful examples of interpretation. In addition, R. J. M. Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers: Biographical Essays in Nineteenth-Century Afro-American History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), and Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' on Ole Massa* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969) note which fugitive memoirs were written by the fugitive, which were told to an editor or amanuensis, which were edited much later, which were entirely false, and which were changed substantially between one edition and the other.

An excellent place to begin the history of antislavery in North America is Merton Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge, 1990). Overviews of the

abolitionists may be found in James Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* and Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

The best summary of the philosophical development of antislavery in the western tradition is David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Thomas Haskell makes the argument that benevolent movements, such as abolitionism, and the growth of a middle class society are linked in "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," *American Historical Review* 90, nos. 3-4 (April and June, 1985).

The religious debate over slavery is usually cited as beginning in the mid-eighteenth century with the Society of Friends (Quakers) in England and America who grew to view slavery as an evil. Although they were not the only religious group to struggle against slavery, they became the best known. For an account of their spiritual journey see Jean Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) and Hugh Barbour, et al., *Quaker Crosscurrents: Three Hundred Years of Friends in the New York Yearly Meeting* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995). Roger Bruns, ed., *Am I Not a Man and a Brother? The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America* (New York: Chelsea House, 1977) contains a collection of the primary documents condemning colonial slavery from the Germantown Friends' *Protest Against Slavery* (1688) to the debate at the Constitutional Convention (1787).

The religious debate over slavery caused denominational divisions and the development of biblical arguments for and against slavery. The rise of evangelical Protestantism at the same time as Enlightenment-based arguments for American independence and liberty are explored in such books as Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for The Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982). Three excellent books on the development of a black theology and cosmos rooted in both Christianity and slavery are Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979); and Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). Denominational histories of American Protestantism recount the development of their theology over slavery and note the point in history at which they split into southern and northern sects over that issue. For an overview, see Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) and Samuel S. Hill, Jr., *The South and the North in American Religion* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

Useful overviews of the changing interpretations of slavery and of black life in the south include John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1983) and Peter Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989). John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), argues that slaves were able to overcome many of the obstacles that were designed to keep them separate from each other and dependent on the masters, as does Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976). The creation and persistence of an African-American cultural identity is discussed in Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977), and Thomas Weber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865*. For the operation of the Underground Railroad in the North see Chapter 3, "Links to Bondage," in James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African-American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

An excellent primary source is the multi-volume study entitled *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, edited by Helen T. Catterall (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1926-29). Catteral has abstracted all the court cases concerning slavery until 1866 and related cases until 1875. Many of these cases concern fugitive slaves and her abstract permits the reader to find and read the entire

case. Since her work, other scholars have abstracted other aspects of the law and the slave codes. These are an excellent source for local research.

Slave insurrection or revolt was never successful in the United States and was often betrayed before it began. Herbert Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1943), is often criticized for his tendency to accept all evidence for slave revolt, but is massively comprehensive. Useful studies of organized rebellion include Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), a biography of Nat Turner; and Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974). *David Walker's Appeal*, an angry and eloquent indictment of slavery by a black man whose writing influenced northern antislavery and prompted southern reaction, is available in several edited editions: Herbert Aptheker, ed., *"One Continual Cry: David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829-1830): Its Setting & Its Meaning* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), and in the same year, Charles Wiltse, ed., *David Walker, Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965).

During the Civil War, thousands of slaves left their homes for the Union lines. These "contraband," as they came to be known, sought work with the Union Army or attempted to pass through the lines to freedom on the other side. Their story may be found in Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie Rowland, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-67*, series II, *The Black Military Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

The local historian attempting to research the Underground Railroad in a particular region will find much useful information and a context for research in Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press for AASLH, 1986) and David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (repr., Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996). Beth Savage, ed., *African American Historic Places* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996) contains many examples of African American sites and a set of essays which place them in context.

Excellent work is being done currently and researchers should be aware of such books as Randolph Paul Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), and Stuart Seely Sprague, ed., *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad* (New York: Norton, 1996), and Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990). Some of the best recent work on related topics includes John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Roy E. Finkenbine, Michael F. Hembree, and Donald Yacovone, eds., *Witness for Freedom: African-American Voices on Race, Slavery, and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989); Peter Calcine, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horn, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Ronald Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Peter Ripley, et al., *Witness for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

The following National Park Service publications contain information on the Underground Railroad and how to apply the National Register and National Historic Landmark criteria for evaluation when preparing nominations

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National Park Service. *Underground Railroad*, Special Resource Study. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, September, 1995.

National Register, History and Education, National Park Service. *Exploring A Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998.

National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, rev., 1997.

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