

TAKING A STAND FOR Freedom

A Driving Tour of the Underground Railroad in Champaign, Logan and Union Counties



Introduction

A federal judge's wife slips money and a warning to a man working in her garden. A prosperous land owner and hauler does not just carry hay in his wagons, but people desperately trying to make their way to freedom. A poor well-digger devotes his time to helping wayfarers on their journey. Ordinary farmers form a mob when federal marshals attempt to arrest a man who has found shelter in their town. A group of college students on a break from studying form a "hunting party" and spirit away a group of thirteen.

These Underground Railroad operators came from every walk of life, participants in one of the greatest acts of civil disobedience in American history. They risked jail time and heavy fines to take a stand, motivated by the feeling that slavery was wrong.

The Underground Railroad was neither an actual railroad, nor was it underground. It was a hidden movement where freedom seekers, escaping enslavement, made their way north assisted by the efforts of courageous citizens along the way. Ohio was a prominent state on the Underground Railroad, and known safe routes to freedom are in all areas of the state. The area of this tour, Champaign, Logan, and Union Counties, formed an important hub of routes and activity in West Central Ohio. Hundreds, if not thousands, of freedom seekers passed through this area on their journey.

We invite you to spend some time following in their footsteps.

Excited to get started? First there are a few things you should know.

1 The tour is color coded by county for your logistical ease.

 **UNION COUNTY**

 **LOGAN COUNTY**

 **CHAMPAIGN COUNTY**

Look for this symbol, and green color.

2 **OFF THE Beaten Path** | 

If you want to explore more, we have included stops "Off the Beaten Path." These are sites off the route of the tour, which have a lot of Underground Railroad history. If you have time, discover these hidden historical sites.

3 Because assisting freedom seekers was illegal, those involved left almost no record of their activities. Routes remained secret and changed over time to protect freedom seekers. This makes it challenging, but not impossible, to find and verify sites. Preservation has been difficult; many sites have been torn down or are now private residences.

Please respect the property and the privacy of the current owners while on this driving tour.

4 Looking for places to stop along the way? Visit these websites to find a bite to eat, refresh with a delicious beverage, or shop during your journey.

Champaign County

(Urbana, Mechanicsburg, Route 559)
www.champaignohio.com

Logan County


(Bellefontaine, West Liberty)
www.logancountyohio.com


Union County

(Marysville)
www.unioncounty.org

The Map

ROUTE OPTIONS

 Complete tour route, which begins in **Mechanicsburg** and travels up **State Route 559**, to **Marysville**, **Bellefontaine**, **Northwood**, **West Liberty** and ending in **Urbana**.

 Off the Beaten Path Optional Stops

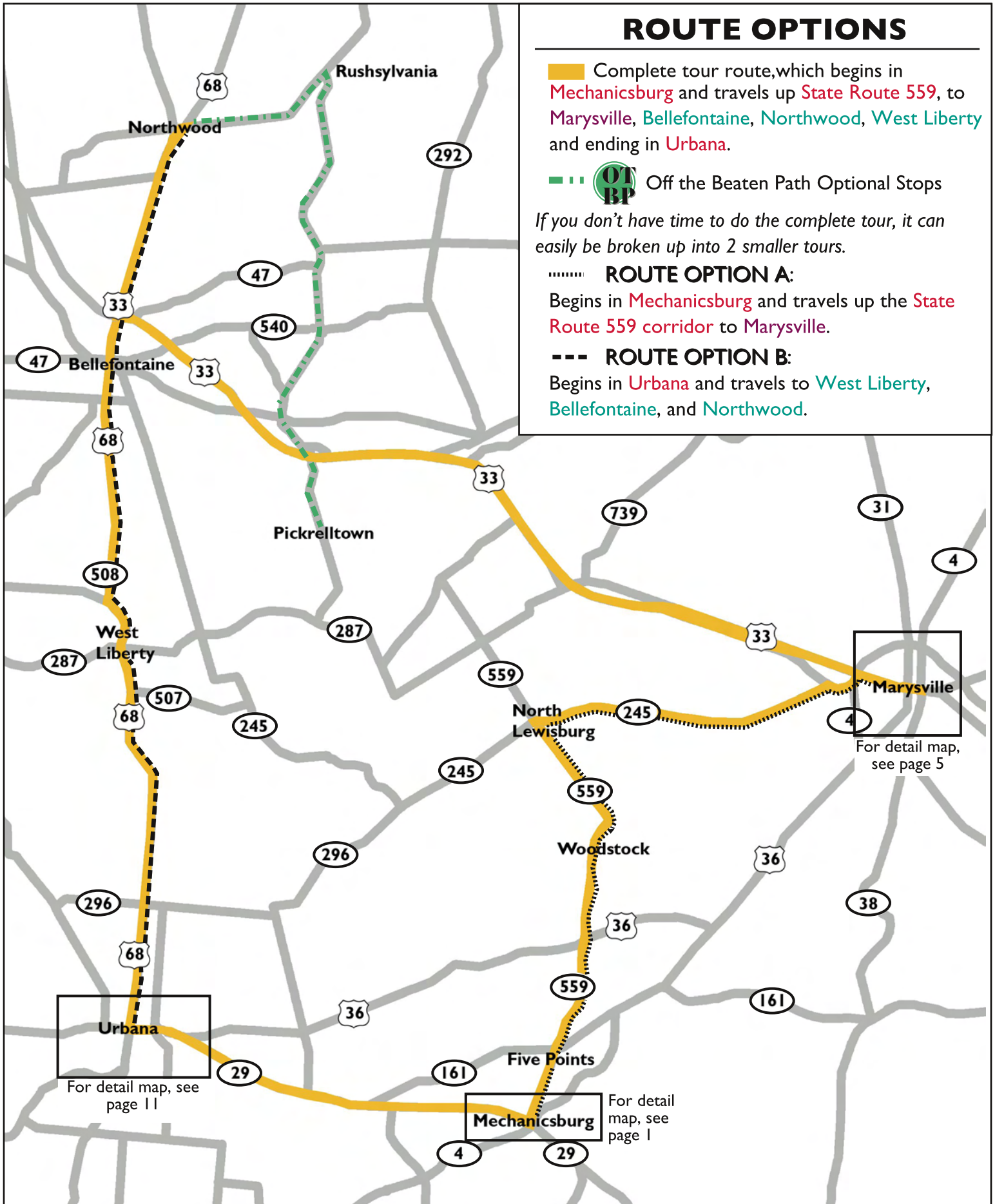
If you don't have time to do the complete tour, it can easily be broken up into 2 smaller tours.

..... ROUTE OPTION A:

Begins in **Mechanicsburg** and travels up the **State Route 559 corridor** to **Marysville**.

--- ROUTE OPTION B:

Begins in **Urbana** and travels to **West Liberty**, **Bellefontaine**, and **Northwood**.



Mechanicsburg

“A Black Abolitionist Hole”*

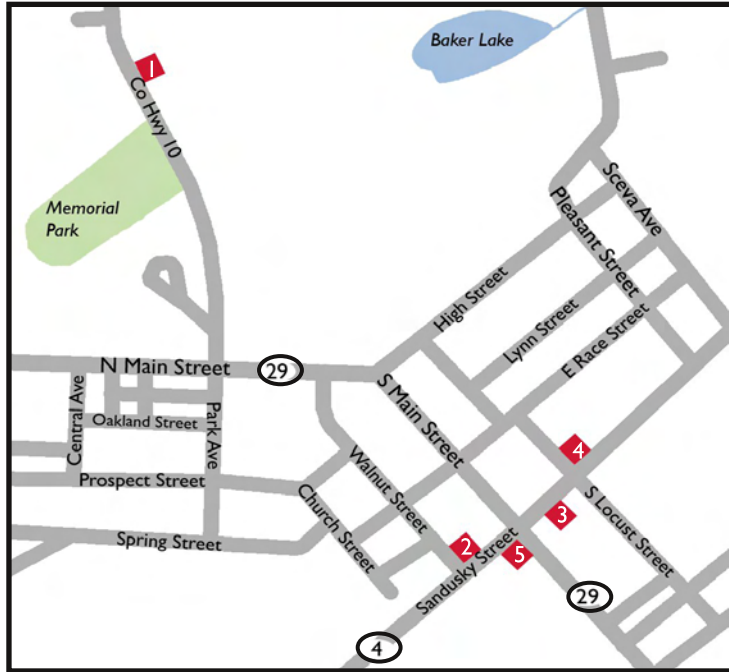


INTERSECTION
of 3 routes



Strategically
IMPORTANT
stop

Reportedly **2,500 SLAVES**
passed through



1 DAVID RUTAN HOME 3792 County Road 10

David Rutan was a member of the Abolition Party in Mechanicsburg. He hid freedom seekers in his home, and at least some of them were brought by the famous abolitionist Levi Coffin. Rutan was also involved in the Addison White case. The original house has been torn down.

2 JACOB WARE HOME 30 West Sandusky Street



Jacob Ware first became an abolitionist in 1833 after seeing a slave auction in Mississippi. He is credited with bringing the Underground Railroad to Mechanicsburg and recruited Udney Hyde as a conductor. The original house is gone, but the house standing today was built on top of the basement “catacombs” in which Ware hid freedom seekers.

UDNEY HYDE



Udney Hyde was Mechanicsburg’s best known Underground Railroad operator, who said he was **“breaking the laws of man but keeping the laws of God.”** **

Born in 1807
in Vermont.

Moves to Mechanicsburg
in 1851 and recruited by
Jacob Ware to work as
an operator.

Safely conducts a
woman past her
master by dressing
her in his wife's
clothes.

Inhabits house on School
Street, in African
American section of
town.



Moves to cabin outside
of town in 1857.

During the Addison
White case, Hyde
went into hiding in a
nearby swamp, to
avoid authorities.

Allegedly
helped

513

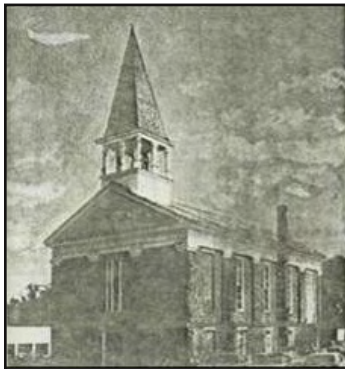
freedom seekers
during his time as
a conductor.

* Quote from Wilbur Siebert *Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroads*, (1955).

** Quote from “trouble don’t last: Underground Railroad in Champaign County.” Local History Collection, Mechanicsburg Public Library, Mechanicsburg, OH.

3 SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH

36 East Sandusky Street



This is an important site in Mechanicsburg's African American history. Mechanicsburg's First Methodist Church was built in 1858. In 1894 the African American Second Baptist Church purchased the building. Rev. Elmer Curry opened the Curry Institute, modeled after the Tuskegee Institute, in this building in 1897. It later moved to Urbana.

4 LEVI RATHBUN HOME SITE

Northeast Corner of East Sandusky and Locust Streets

Levi Rathbun hid freedom seekers on the top floor of the house that used to stand here. On one of his visits, a neighbor boy who delivered food to the house was surprised to find no "potatoes,



cabbages, or the usual contents of a cellar - but Negroes!" * In 1845, Rathbun and 10 other men petitioned Congress to abolish slavery in Washington D.C., Florida, and Texas. The house was demolished in the early 1990s.

ADDISON WHITE case

Addison White's owner's attempt to force him back into slavery made Mechanicsburg famous nation-wide.



Addison White
Addison White Historical Marker
1 S. Main Street, Mechanicsburg
(Map #5)



1822

Addison White was born into slavery to Daniel White in Kentucky.

MAY

1857

White worked for six months, earning money to send for his family, when...

FEDERAL MARSHALS TRACKED HIM DOWN.

When three marshals and five slave catchers approached Udney Hyde's cabin, a firefight ensued. White and Hyde confronted the marshals and a gang of men from Mechanicsburg, stopped the marshals from taking White and quickly hid him in a safe place.

NOVEMBER
1857

Conflicting legal cases followed, which resulted in an out-of-court settlement.

\$950

was paid by the men of Mechanicsburg to free Addison White from his former owner.

1856

White escaped, and arrived in Mechanicsburg, where Udney Hyde hired him to work on his farm.

6 Days Later

The Marshals returned to find both White and Hyde in hiding.

They arrested several neighbors under the Fugitive Slave Act and quickly traveled south towards the Ohio River. The men were freed from the Marshals in Springfield when a mob overtook them, and put the federal marshals in jail.

White later served in the 54th Massachusetts regiment during the Civil War. He lived in Mechanicsburg with his wife Amanda until his death in 1885.



Check-out Addison White's and his wife Amanda's graves at
MAPLE GROVE CEMETERY 5549 Mechanicsburg Catawba Road
Bear right at the Cemetery entrance and turn left at the next drive. Graves will be just to your left, slightly down the hill.

Route 559 Corridor

Ohio State Route 559 follows one well-traveled route freedom seekers would have taken out of Mechanicsburg on their way North.



Five Points

ALEXANDER DOTY HOME SITE
Intersection of Rt 161, Rt 559 and Bullard Rutan Rd.



Alexander Doty often took in freedom seekers from Mechanicsburg. He hid Udney Hyde in his home while federal marshals were looking for him during the Addison White case. The house has since been torn down.

Lazy Man's Rest

ANSON PEARL HOWARD HOME
92 South State Route 559

Anson Pearl Howard bought this property in 1855 and built this original house which he named "Lazy Man's Rest." He hid as many as 10 freedom seekers at a time in the house's cellar vault. During the Civil War, Howard represented Champaign County in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate.



Woodstock

JOHN A. MACDONALD HOUSE
221 South Main Street

John "Johnnie" MacDonald was another operator on the Underground Railroad in Woodstock. He hid freedom seekers in his house.



J.D. CRANSTON HOME
3277 State Route 559

J.D. Cranston was also an Underground Railroad operator in Woodstock.



WOODSTOCK CEMETERY

10898 Urbana Woodstock Pike

The known Underground Railroad operators in Woodstock are buried here, including Anson Pearl Howard, John MacDonald, and J.D. Cranston. Be sure to also find the grave of Oliver Colwell, a Civil War Congressional Medal of Honor recipient for capturing a flag in action at Nashville, TN in 1864.



North Lewisburg

FRIENDS' CEMETERY

161 Winder Street



Thomas Winder and his family are buried in this small cemetery. A Quaker, Winder hid freedom seekers in his farm house. The cemetery is on the grounds of the Equality Church, which Winder founded. The building is now a branch of the Champaign County Library.



EDWARD YOUNG HOME

299 North Sycamore Street

Edward Young, along with his father-in-law Thomas Winder and numerous other family members, were operators. Young hosted anti-slavery meetings on his property, though this provoked some animosity within the North Lewisburg community. This is the original house.



The Role of Religion

Many operators on the Underground Railroad were moved to help freedom seekers on their journey because of their religious beliefs. They attacked slavery as morally wrong because they believed God created all people equally.

The most famous of these religious groups are the Quakers, whose beliefs were strongly anti-slavery. Quakers were the first group to attack slavery and individual Quakers were banned from owning slaves. Quaker families like the Winders, Youngs, and Pickrells in Logan County helped freedom seekers on their journey without much wide recognition. A Presbyterian sect, the Reformed Presbyterians or Covenanters were as anti-slavery as the Quakers. This was the group who founded Geneva College in Northwood and made it a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad. Congregationalists were also active operators on the Underground Railroad, including a very strong community in Marysville.

Not all people were anti-slavery, even if they were religious, and in many places, animosity formed over this topic.

Some denominations, especially the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists, split in two over the issue of slavery, forming a North-South divide in the national churches. This sometimes resulted in at least two different churches of the same denomination in the same town. In North Lewisburg, for instance, Edward Young encountered angry townspeople when he held an anti-slavery meeting in his home. He said that the "rowdies from town [would come] with drums and literally drowned us out so that we couldn't hear." *

* "Interview with Edward C. Young," August 9, 1894, Wilbur H. Siebert Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

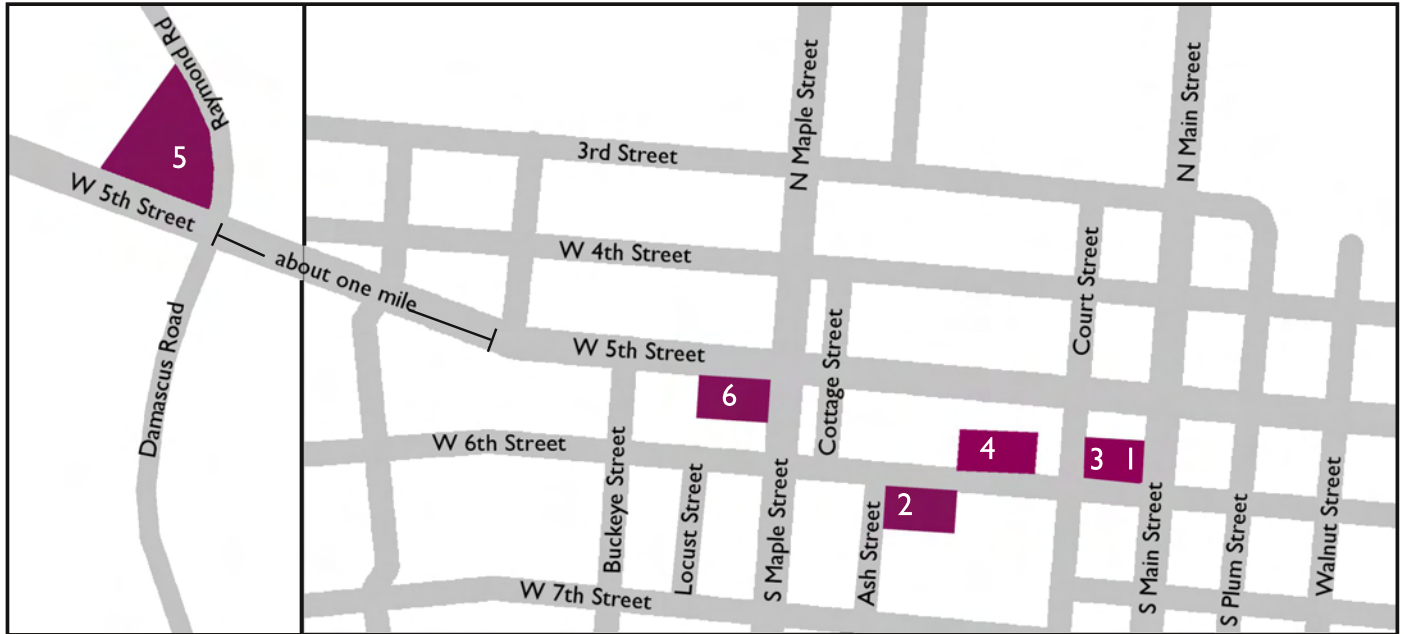
Marysville

1830s **BEGAN** operating stations



CENTER
for Underground Railroad
activity in Union County

Intersection of **3 ROUTES**



Find the Cyprian Lee Historical Marker, at the east corner of the Cyprian Lee House property.



1 CYPRIAN LEE HOME 118 West Sixth Street



Cyprian Lee, an anti-slavery man, owned this house, which is the oldest brick house in Marysville. It is the only surviving original Underground Railroad structure in the city.

2 SAMUEL CHERRY HOME SITE 261 West Sixth Street

Cherry brought the Underground Railroad to Marysville and managed activity there. He lived in a one story brick house that has three large basement rooms where freedom seekers hid. It was said that Cherry hid more wayfarers at his home than any other operator in Union County. Cherry's house was torn down in 1893.

3 NEW SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 124 West Sixth Street



Samuel Cherry, Marysville's most renowned operator, served as a deacon in the New School Presbyterian Church, later called the Congregational Church. Unfortunately, like many operators, not all of Cherry's attempts to help freedom seekers escape were successful. While trying to take a man, woman, and child on to the next stop, the group was captured, and only the child made it successfully to Oberlin and freedom.

4 UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

246 West Sixth Street

Learn more about Union County's history, including a restored log cabin and house museum. Open Wednesday 12:30 p.m. -3:30p.m. and 1st and 3rd Sundays 2 p.m. -4 p.m. or by special appointment (call 937-644-0568).

6 KINNEY BARN SITE

423 West Fifth Street



Dr. Stephen F. Kinney built the barn on this property in 1845 and used it as a hiding place for freedom seekers. The barn was moved in 1912 and later torn down.

5 OAKDALE CEMETERY

1290 West Fifth Street



Burial place of many known operators, including Joe Mayo (unmarked), Samuel A. Cherry (unmarked), and

Asa Caryl



Section D,
Row 6

Cyprian Lee



Section D,
Row 7

George Cherry



Section D,
Row 3

Edward Powers



Section D,
Row 6

William Lee



Sec. C
East Point

UNCLE JOE MAYO

An ardent worker on the Underground Railroad, Joe Mayo acted as the primary conductor for Marysville.

Joe generally didn't hide wayfarers, but fed and piloted them on to New Dover.

Year Mayo moved to Marysville as a free person of color

1848

Number of freedom seekers allegedly assisted

250

25

Number of years worked as principle well-digger for city

200

dollar bribe once turned down. Joe attracted attention from slave hunters but always escaped detection.

Other operators communicated with Joe through signals and codes:

"Joe, I have **TWO BLACK STEERS** and **A BROWN HEIFER** at my house. I wish you would come and drive them to town for me" *



Female Freedom Seeker



Male Freedom Seeker



Child Freedom Seeker

I have **TWO EWES** and **A CALF** in my barn. Would you come and bring them to town tomorrow?



If you have time, visit

JOE MAYO'S CABIN SITE | 1105 West Fifth Street

The cabin was torn down and is now the site of the Village Square Apartment Complex.

* From "Uncle Joe Mayo," Marysville Tribune (July 1, 1969).



Pickrelltown

WESTLAKE CEMETERY

5301 County Road 28

This cemetery is in the unincorporated community of Pickrelltown, founded by the Quaker Henry Pickrell and his family, who are buried in this cemetery. Henry built a house with 4 hiding places in the walls and cellar. Mahlon Pickrell, Henry's son, could hide up to 20 freedom seekers in multiple hiding places in his house as well. One of them was a secret attic over the kitchen. Nicholas Pickrell was the first sheriff of Logan County and alerted the rest of the family when federal marshals were in the area.



Northwood

“Every house was a haven for wayfarers”*

1837 John B. Johnson
BEGINS
school.

1848 College
FOUNDED

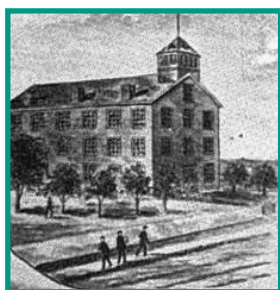
1880 College
MOVED
to Pennsylvania

1890s Town
DECLINED



Home to GENEVA COLLEGE

Affiliated with the **Covenanter** church, who were staunchly **anti-slavery** and deeply involved in the Underground Railroad

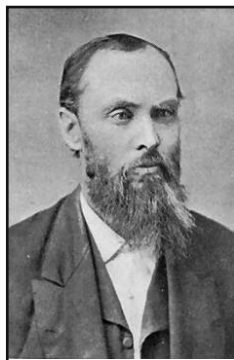


Students and teachers took an **active role** in **operating** the station.

Students disguised as armed **"hunting" parties** escorted freedom seekers to the next station.

Main building at Geneva College.

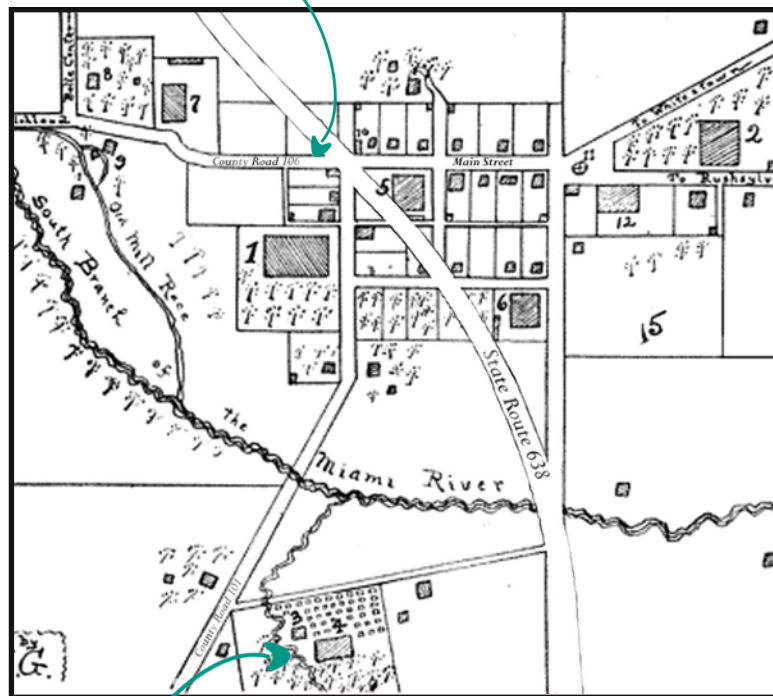
Once a group of students led thirteen freedom seekers, who were being closely pursued, to Sandusky. J.S.T. Milligan, a faculty member, met the group near Lake Erie, and ensured passage for them on a steamboat to Canada. He then accompanied the group on their voyage.



GENEVA COLLEGE MARKER

Corner of Main St and St Rt 638

This stone monument marks the former location of Geneva College.



Map based on original of Geneva College and Northwood, ca. 1908**

William
Patterson



John Trumbull



John B.
Johnston



NORTHWOOD CEMETERY

1142 Township Highway 109

Many of Northwood's Underground Railroad operators and leading citizens are buried in this cemetery, including:

J. M. Forsythe



Isaac Patterson



*Quote from Wilbur Siebert *The Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroad* (1955)

** Map from William Glasgow, *The Geneva Book* (1908).

Bellefontaine



Logan County
SEAT



INTERSECTION
of five routes

Station
BUSIEST
in the **1840s**

LOGAN COUNTY MUSEUM AND ORR MANSION

521 East Columbus Avenue

The Logan County Museum and Orr Mansion has an entire exhibit room devoted to the Underground Railroad in Logan County. The centerpiece of the room is a set of bedroom furniture belonging to Obediah and Sarah Williams, that freedom seekers slept in while on their journey. Another object of note is a ladder belonging to Isaac Patterson that freedom seekers used to get in and out of the cave they hid in on Patterson's farm. You can also learn more about many other Logan County Underground Railroad operators, some of whom can be found elsewhere on this tour.



*The museum is open
Wednesday and Friday
through Sunday from
1- 4 p.m. from May 1-
October 31 and Friday
through Sunday from
1- 4 p.m. November 1-
April 30.*

ISAAC PATTERSON

Issac Patterson was an early settler in Northwood, an abolitionist, and an elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

His farm had a large cave, about eight feet in diameter, where he could hide freedom seekers. A ladder took occupants down at least 20 feet into the ground, and then a passageway went east.

This cave was considered quite safe and fairly comfortable for freedom seekers who would stay for as long as two to three weeks at a time until the hunt for them was over.

Freedom seekers used the code word "Boston" to gain access to the cave.



Rushsylvania

EQUALITY CEMETERY

Intersection of County Rd 50, Township Hwy 137, and County Rd 12

William Stephenson, a Rushsylvania Underground Railroad operator is buried in this cemetery. Like the Pickrells, Stephenson was a Quaker. Stephenson's home was often the next stop for freedom seekers leaving the Pickrells. His home was located east of town, and Stephenson hid freedom seekers throughout his property. They hid in his attic, his cellar, underneath a bridge, and in a cave that was on his farm.



West Liberty



Situated on the
COUNTY LINE

1840s Station
ACTIVE



Ideally
LOCATED
between 2 other hubs

PIATT CASTLES

10051 Township Road 47

The Piatt Castles were built by Donn and Abram Sanders Piatt, the sons of Elizabeth Piatt, who legend says was an Underground Railroad operator. Elizabeth and her husband Benjamin built a log house after the family moved from Cincinnati to their new farm in the 1820s. Although the house still stands, it is no longer open to the public. Elizabeth is said to have placed a flag in a cast iron mannequin outside the home when it was safe for her to hide freedom seekers. When her husband, a federal judge who had to uphold the law, was home the flag disappeared. Judge Piatt is said to have known about his wife's Underground Railroad activities and to have sent a rider a day ahead to warn her of his arrival. Visit the Castles to learn more about the Piatt family, including their involvement in the anti-slavery movement and the Civil War. *The Castles are open daily from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. during the summer and on weekends from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the fall and spring. Call (937) 465-2821 or visit piattcastles.org for updated information.*



Fact or Fiction

For historians, the Underground Railroad is one of the hardest subjects for which to find historical sources. At the time, operators and freedom seekers needed to keep their activities as secret as possible. It was not safe to talk about, let alone write down, what they were doing.

This means records from the time are few and far between, and a lot of Underground Railroad knowledge has been passed down from person to person. Like any tale, Underground Railroad stories could change each time they were told; thus legends grew. Not all the stories are true, but this does not mean that none of them are.

It can be very hard to find the "truth" of an Underground Railroad story.

The Piatts are a good example of this kind of dilemma. The story of Elizabeth Piatt's activities as an Underground Railroad operator is a family story that has been passed down and spread. However, there are no written records from the time period to verify it, so historians need to think critically about it. What we do know from written records is that Elizabeth was an abolitionist. Her obituary tells how she gave work to a freedom seeker and then gave him money and told him to run when she found out that her dinner guest was the man's owner. There are also written accounts, however, that Benjamin wanted to send freedom seekers, who had belonged to his family in Kentucky, back into slavery. This was after the freedom seekers were apprehended, when they mistakenly got off the train in West Liberty. Like much of Underground Railroad History, the facts and the stories are conflicting.

Piatt Castles is involved in ongoing research on the role of their family members in the anti-slavery movement. Visit the Castles to find out more. . . .

Urbana

1837



J. Brand
BEGINS
station

1841



Mayor
BANISHES
blacks from Urbana

1850s



HEIGHT
of station activity

Late 1850s



route becomes
UNSAFE



1 OAKDALE CEMETERY

319 Patrick Ave

Peter Byrd, a well-known and wealthy African American operator, is buried in this cemetery in Section 3, Lot 19. Byrd worked as a hauler and used the cover of his business to help freedom seekers on their journey (See bottom of page).

3 CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

809 East Lawn Avenue

Visit to learn about other great stories in Champaign County's history. *The Champaign County Historical Society Museum is open on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and the first Sunday of the month from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m., groups by appointment.*

2 JOSEPH BRAND HOME

132 West Reynolds Street



Joseph Brand was the son of slave holders from Kentucky but became an Underground Railroad operator. He began helping freedom seekers as early as 1837 when he lived on a farm on Buck Creek. In 1850, he moved to Urbana and this house. Brand played a role in the Addison White Case (see Mechanicsburg sidebar) and later served three terms as mayor of the city.

AFRICAN AMERICAN OPERATORS

Many historians' recent work on the Underground Railroad has shown that its success depended as much on African American operators as on white ones. In fact, freedom seekers would often go to African American communities or to individuals first on their routes to freedom.

PETER BYRD

Peter Byrd, a prominent African American Urbana citizen who worked with freedom seekers, exemplifies this idea.



Born in North Carolina as a free man in 1809



Moved to Ohio in the 1830s and married Martha Newsome



Worked as a hauler and became a wealthy man



Byrd's work proved to be a perfect cover for Underground Railroad activities



Transported freedom seekers using his own team and wagon

In addition to working as an Underground Railroad operator, Byrd also served on the Board of Trustees for the Urbana Colored School, which was founded in 1853. He died in Urbana on September 20, 1893.

Looking to find out more?

Check out these books:

- Wilbur Siebert. *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom and The Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroads.*
- Tom Calarco, et. al. *Places of the Underground Railroad: A Geographical Guide.*
- James F. Caccamo. *Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad.*

Visit these locations:

- Mechanicsburg Public Library
60 South Main Street, Mechanicsburg
- Marysville Public Library
231 South Plum Street, Marysville
- Champaign County Library
1060 Scuito Streetm Urbana
- Logan County Museum and Orr Mansion
521 East Columbus Ave, Bellefontaine

This tour was researched, compiled, written, and designed by Callie McCune and Amy Rohmiller. Its production was made possible by the Ohio History Service AmeriCorps program.



Piqua Public Library

PHOTO CREDITS

All photos, except for the following, were taken or produced for the purpose of this tour.

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- Addison White (Page 2): Mechanicsburg Public Library, Champaign County Library
- Udney Hyde Revolver (Page 2): Champaign County Library
- Anson P. Howard Home (Page 3): Wilson Collection, Mechanicsburg Public Library
- Kinney Barn (Page 5): "The Slave Barn of Dr. Kinney" Marysville Tribune (July 1, 1969).
- Joe Mayo (Page 6): "Uncle Joe Mayo" Marysville Tribune (July 1, 1969).
- Geneva College Logo (Page 7): William Glasgow, *The Geneva Book* (Philadelphia: Westbrook Publishing Co., 1908), 2.
- Main College Building Print (Page 7): William Glasgow, *The Geneva Book* (Philadelphia: Westbrook Publishing Co., 1908), 35.

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