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## Along the Mason-Dixon Line

by  
**Henry Robert Burke**

The Underground Railroad Era in Ohio lasted from 1800-1863. During that time, Washington County, Ohio bordered Wood County "western" Virginia, along the Ohio River boundary between the North and the South. The Ohio River was - The Mason-Dixon Line!

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### The Mason-Dixon Line.

During the Underground Railroad Era of United States history roughly (1800-1865), the Mason-Dixon Line was the political and ideological boundary between the "Northern Free States" from the "Southern Slavocracy States". The Mason-Dixon Line was originally established in 1667, to settle a disputed boundary between the two English colonies; Maryland and Pennsylvania. The line derived its name from the two British astronomers, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, who completed the survey.

Initially the Mason-Dixon Line had nothing at all to do with the issue of slavery, as slavery was then a legal practice in Pennsylvania just as slavery was a legal practice in all the English colonies of North America. Pennsylvania didn't completely abolish slavery until after the American Revolution around 1783.

Between 1780-1820 the Mason Dixon Line graduall became the political boundary between the "free" states of the North and the "slave" states of the South. In 1820, during debates in the U.S. Congress over the Missouri Compromise, the term Mason-Dixon Line was first used to describe the boundary. From that time forward, the Mason-Dixon Line included the boundary that extended between (Pennsylvania and the slave states of Maryland and Virginia); west to, and down along the Ohio River all the way to Cairo Illinois. The Mason-Dixon Line formed the northern boundary of slavocracy between the states of (Ohio and Virginia), (Ohio and Kentucky), ( Indiana and Kentucky), and (Kentucky and Illinois). The Mason-Dixon Line was in effect, the "front line" in the long war between slave owners of the South and the Underground Railroad of the North!

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### Stations on Washington County, Ohio Underground Railroad, and Slave Plantations in Wood County, Virginia.

Note (Insert Map: stations jpg.)

As early as 1776, the settlers of western Virginia had petitioned the second Continental Congress in Philadelphia for a separate government. It became increasingly clear during the early 1800s that, whereas eastern Virginia shared the social and economic interests of the South, the western part of the state--because of both geography and ethnic heritage--had more in common with the North. Still slavery was a part of the culture in "western" Virginia

Compared to other places in the South, the slave population in western Virginia counties was always sparse. Slaves in western Virginia were mostly concentrated along large streams and rivers where soil conditions favored plantation agriculture. There were also slaves used in minning and other industrial pursuits. In the Mid-Ohio River Valley, slaves worked on plantations and farms located near or on the Ohio River furnish the buld of this research. Because of this particular geographical location, slavery in Wood County, Virginia was closely observed and some of the conditions surrounding slavery were documented by newspapers in Mareitta, the county seat of Washington County, Ohio.

It is evident that the familiarity with slavery, acquired by early settlers in Washington County, Ohio, began the practice of encouraging and assisting fugitive slaves to escape from slavery in western Virginia. Based on this practice, by 1810, settlers in Ohio with anti-slavery views, rapidly established a cooperative relay/referral system that extended from the Ohio River all the way across Ohio to Lake Erie. From this beginning, the organization of the Underground Railroad was pretty well established by



1820, but state wide popular support for the UR was not achieved until after 1840.

Today the fact that slavery was once a part of the culture along the Upper and Middle reaches of the Ohio River is often overlooked. This is an important point for history scholars, because when the state of West Virginia has no history of slavery per se. The history of slavery in this region occurred before 1863 when West Virginia was still part of Virginia.

All over the Ohio, the Underground Railroad became a vast system of safe houses, called Stations, and travel routes called trails, and Northern abolitionists called Conductors, to help fugitives slaves from the South reach freedom in Canada. This is the history of the Underground Railroad in the Mid-Ohio River Valley, a point along the Ohio River for fugitive slaves from "western" Virginia to begin their trip across Ohio to Canada.

From 1619 through the end of the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783), slavery was a legal institution in all the English Colonies of North America, but the number of slaves was much greater in the southern colonies where large scale plantation type agricultural prevailed in the warmer climate. These plantations required a large dependable force of agricultural laborers to operate. Slavery thus became the foundation of the plantation agricultural system. In turn, the plantation system of agriculture became the foundation of the Southern Culture from the 17th through the middle of the 18th Centuries.

From the time that Africans were first enslaved in the English Colonies of North America, they had resisted, but for most slaves, resistance was futile under the discriminatory colonial laws which legitimized slavery. The foundation of slavery in North America was rooted in the European custom of indenture. Indenture was a type of legal contract whereby a free person could be bound to serve the owner of the contract for a maxim number of years, usually seven. When their obligatory term had fulfilled, the servant was released from indenture, and allowed to pursue his fortunes as a free citizen. Indenture servants proved to be expensive laborer, and indentured had many rights under English Common Law.

It had soon become apparent to tobacco planters in the Tidewater Region around Jamestown, Virginia, that they needed more control of their agricultural laborer force. To accomplish this, the planters imported Africans and created an artificial social class of slaves, based solely on skin color. In order to justify the perpetuation of slavery, the rich tobacco tycoons had to portray Africans as people with less than human qualities. Of course under the controlled conditions of slavery, this was very easy to accomplish, since those Africans that were unfortunate enough to become slaves in America, naturally had no knowledge of the English language, no knowledge of English Common Law and no knowledge of English culture. In America, only people with black skin could be held as slaves, and black skin readily identified a slaves, making it easier to control the slave population.

To keep African slaves ignorant, colonial slave laws were enacted to prevent Africans from becoming educated in European customs. The central goal of the slave owning class was to keep slaves in perpetual ignorance, so they would not have the means to resist. Every aspect of a slave's existence was controlled to the smallest detail, from a slave's birth until his/her death. The purpose behind slavery was to get the maximum amount labor for the minimum amount of expense; and no resistance.

There was nothing subtle about the conditions that maintained the institution of slavery. As far as the slaves was concerned, a very real threat of violence hung over the slave culture like an omnipresent fog. Slaves were punished for the smallest infraction of the rules. Rebellious slaves were severely beaten and tortured to death, while other slaves were forced to witness the punishment to discourage further resistance. The fear of slaves reprisal weighed so heavily upon the conscience of slave owners, they became their own victims to the brutal slave culture.

Nearly all slave owners were white people, but not all white people were slave owners, in fact the great majority of the white population in North America were never slave owners. Never-the less slave owners were the powerful political and social class of their time. As a consequence of being a minority, the slave owning class had to expend a great of effort to gain and hold the support of the non-slave owning class of whites in case of a slave rebellion. This of course was accomplished by inventing and perpetuating the myth of racial superiority, without giving away the profits of the slave's labor.



## A Hint of Freedom.

From the earliest days of the African slave trade in the 16th Century, there were some Europeans, especially those with clergy backgrounds, that recognized the inherent evils and not so subtle brutality of slavery. This did not necessarily mean that they loved Africans per se, it simply meant that they recognized the obvious fact that African people are human beings, and according to the principles of the Christian religion, no human being deserved to be treated like a draft animal. It was from this concept that the Abolitionist Movement would later spawn, but still it took centuries for the Anti-slavery Movement to gain enough support to be effective. By 1760, the Abolitionist Movement had spread over most of Europe where it gained enough support to end slavery in most European countries, by the beginning of the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783).

Many people in the former English Colonies of North America, including the slaves, expected that slavery in the new United States would be abolished very soon after the Revolutionary War had been concluded in 1783. In fact, during the dark days of that war, General George Washington had decreed that any slave who fought for American Independence would be freed. Consequently, Northern States individually began implementing various methods for emancipating the slaves in those states as early as 1780. Some states adopted immediate emancipation plans, while other states adopted plans with a more gradual approach to emancipation.

As the laws for emancipating slaves were temporarily relaxed in the euphoria of freedom that gripped the new Nation right after the war, even in some Southern States, particularly Virginia, some slaves were emancipated. Then the Southern States as a group began to reject the idea of abolishing slavery. After Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793, slavery in the Southern States became even more entrenched than it had been under the English Colonial system. Many of the slaves in the South, that had been promised freedom, especially those that had served in the Revolution were not freed as expected.

Many of the slaves that had served with the American Continental Army had gained valuable knowledge while fighting in the Revolution. After betrayal of the promise, many slaves in the South began to run away to Northern States that had abolished slavery, where they thought they would be "free". During the years 1783 through 1793, fugitive slaves could find some measure of sanctuary in some northern states, particularly Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Connecticut where gradual emancipation plans were well into effect. But slave owners in the South pushed legislation and created the Federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1793.

Events that occurred between 1793 and 1808 greatly propelled the creation of an organized Underground Railroad in the Northern States. Before 1793, fugitive slaves probably were not fleeing to Canada on the Underground Railroad as has been often suggested by some historians. There was no organized Underground Railroad, and the first province in Canada to abolish slavery, Upper Canada (Ontario), did not do so until 1793. Never the less, fugitive slaves from Virginia and Maryland ran away in droves during the years 1783 through 1793. A relatively few abolitionists in northern states, mostly Quakers, particularly in Pennsylvania, did help some fugitive slaves try to get a new start in life. However after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, slave owners had the legal right to go into Northern States, search for, apprehend and return their fugitive slaves to the South. The Fugitive Slave Law may have prevented the development of an organized Underground Railroad, had not Ontario, which bordered some of the Northern States, particularly Ohio, countered that law by abolishing slavery within its own borders the same year. Thus Canada conveniently provided a safe haven for fugitive slaves to take refuge outside of the jurisdiction of the United States Government and its laws.

The other event of 1793 that had a major impact on the growth and perpetuation of slavery was Eli Whitney invention of the cotton gin. The cotton gin, which could separate cotton seed from the cotton fiber fifty times faster than human hands could. The gin provided for the potential growth of cotton production in the "cotton belt", but the law banning the African Slave Trade across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States, passed in 1808 cut off the primary source for new slaves. While slavery may well have been abolished or at least greatly diminished, especially in Maryland and Virginia, the monetary increase



in the value of slaves caused by the banning of the African Slave Trade, led many Virginia and Maryland slave owners to sell off their slaves, when they otherwise may have emancipated many of them. Thousands of Maryland and Virginia slaves were sold to the developing cotton and sugar cane plantations of the Deep South. All of these developments linked together produced the conditions in the United States, that soon influenced some radical abolitionists to take matters in hand, and create the active resistance to slavery, that became known as the Underground Railroad. So technically speaking, the conditions that inspired Ohio's Underground Railroad were set in 1793. It took from 1793-1830 for Ohio's Underground Railroad to gain enough support to begin showing an economic impact on slave owners. During the interim, abolitionists in Ohio concentrated their energies on encouraging slaves to run away to Canada and helping them get there.

During the early 1830s, around the time the American Anti-Slavery Society was being formalized, the Underground Railroad acquired its name. Nationwide the Underground Railroad probably had a few thousand active white supporters, but let's remember that almost every black person in the United States, free of slave, was anti-slavery. Black and white anti-slavery protesters, located across the North, used their homes and farms as Underground Railroad Stations to protect fugitive slaves as they were relayed across Ohio to Lake Erie.

Many prominent abolitionists were Christian ministers deeply involved with a religious organization. The white ministers addressed the evils of slavery to their congregations on moral grounds, and black ministers in the African Methodist Churches provided the abolitionists leadership for the black community. Abolitionists working on the Underground Railroad acted contrary to the Fugitive Slave Laws and were thus subject to prosecution if caught. Underground Railroad operatives had to exercise extreme caution for the safety not only for the fugitive slaves, but also for themselves. The Fugitive Slave Law imposed fines and imprisonment for violations, but did not obligate citizens living in Northern free states and territories to help apprehend or return fugitive slaves to their owners in the South. Slave owners or their agents, bounty hunters, had to carry this out with their own resources. Many northern white people took no stance either way. Some, especially new European immigrants felt that slavery had nothing to do with them, until in time, they realized the fact that were competing with slave labor in the labor market.

For instance, why would a manager pay for labor, when he could get slaves to do the work; and there was more to the equation! The very nature of the slave system also kept the labor wage rate low by creating a surplus of unemployed whites. If a white worker complained about wages, another one was waiting to take the job. As European immigrants in the North became familiar with the inhumanity of slavery, and economic conditions caused by the slave system, they took up the abolitionist banner. This was especially true in Ohio. By 1840, many of the European settlers in Ohio had settled on farms and in small villages across the state, thus creating the ideal configuration for the Underground Railroad Stations which relayed the fugitive slaves across the state.

The Underground Railroad referral system that first crossed the sparsely settled lands of Ohio, over time became extremely well organized as the population of the state rapidly expanded. When fugitive slaves crossed the Ohio River from the South, they were quickly and efficiently guided away from the river to Underground Railroad Stations located ten to fifteen miles north. This relaying of fugitive slaves, continued from Station to Station, all the way to Lake Erie! The common wisdom was: the further and faster a fugitive slave got away from the Ohio River, the better his chance to reach Canada. At several communities near Lake Erie, most notably Oberlin, Cleveland and Sandusky, passage across the lake by boat was arranged.

Regular railroad terminology was adopted as code for the various parts of the Underground Railroad. Fugitive slaves were called "Passengers". The network of routes were called "Lines". The safe houses where fugitive slaves were hidden, sheltered, fed and clothed were called "Stations". Abolitionists towns and villages in Ohio were called "Terminals". Local people who guided fugitive slaves from station to station, usually located at 15 mile intervals were called "Conductors", and so on. For instance the Underground Railroad even had "Agents" who traveled into the South in the guise of



salesmen or what ever, in order to give slaves vital information about escaping and getting to the Underground Railroad across the Ohio River.

The cultures on both sides of the Ohio River developed simultaneously beginning during the middle 1780s, but for the first fifty years or so, the two cultures developed in somewhat different directions. The culture in "western" Virginia had inherited the slavocracy from the South, while the settlers in Ohio began to develop a culture based on labor for "pay". The determining factors for the establishment and operation of the Underground Railroad in the Mid-Ohio River Valley, were a matter of geography, politics and religion!

For all practical purposes, the ground work that enabled the Underground Railroad north of the Ohio River to organize and function, came when Manasseh authored Article 6, in the Ordinance of 1787, of the United States Constitution, which excluded slavery from the Northwest Territory. In 1785, a group of New England ex-Revolutionary War officers, led by General Rufus Putnam, formed the Ohio Land Company in order to purchase a large tract of land in the Northwest Territory, and sell that land to other American settlers. The first settlement was at Marietta, in Washington County, (Ohio). The people involved with the Ohio Land Company greatly influenced the anti-slavery attitudes of later settlers in Ohio, which became a state in 1803, and we shall see how the anti-slavery attitude eventually dominated in the other states formed in the Northwest Territory .

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### **Manasseh Cutler**

**Inset picture (Cutler1 jpg.)**

Manasseh Cutler was born in Killingly, Conn., May 3, 1742 and died in Hamilton, Mass., July 28, 1823. He worked on his father's farm and prepared for college under Rev. Aaron Brown, before entering Yale, from which he graduated with honor in 1765. The following year he married Mary Balch of Dedham, Mass.. After studying law, he was admitted to practice in Massachusetts courts in 1767. The next year he was licensed to preach at Hamlet parish, (then a part of Ipswich and afterwards part of Hamilton). During the American Revolutionary War, he served as chaplain in Col. Ebenezer Francis's 11th Massachusetts Regiment.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, Manasseh Cutler returned to preaching at Hamlet parish and soon began to study medicine. He was then able to attend to both the spiritual and physical welfare of his congregation. Notwithstanding the many duties of his active life, he continued his habits of study and found time for research astronomy, meteorology, botany and kindred sciences. He was the first to scientifically examine the flora of New England, and over 359 species were examined by him and classified according to the Linnaean system. As a scientist, he was second only to Benjamin Franklin.

When the association of Revolutionary officers was organized for the purpose of locating and settling on bounty lands in the West (Northwest Territory), Dr. Cutler took an active interest in the movement. He was one of five officers appointed to draft a plan for the planned "Ohio Company". In 1787 he was appointed by the directors of the Ohio Company as its agent to make the purchase of lands upon the Muskingum (river in Ohio). During this period he met and became friends with Ben Franklin since their tastes and pursuits were very similar.

While Dr. Cutler's mission to Congress was to purchase land for the Ohio Company, the purchase was very much dependent upon the form of government that the territory adopted. He therefore became engaged in the writing of certain provision for the Northwest Ordinance that was before the U.S. Congress, concerning the nature of the government of the Northwest Territory. He was successful in uniting the discordant political elements and made possible the enacting of (Article 6) in the Northwest Ordinance which forbade slavery in the Northwest Territory.

In December, 1787, the first company of men under General Rufus Putnam, left Ipswich Connecticut and set out for the Muskingum, arriving at Marietta, Washington County, (Ohio) on April 7, 1788. **Insert picture (Ipswich jpg.)**

The following year, Dr. Cutler started a twenty-nine day, 750 mile journey in his sulky, to visit the new



settlement. He arrived in Marietta on August 19th, 1789. Dr. Cutler was present at the opening of the first court in the Northwest Territory and marveled at the ancient Indian earthworks in the vicinity of Marietta. After a short visit with his son Jervis, he returned to New England. For a while he contemplated removing with his family to the new settlement, but finally judged that it would require too much sacrifice, and he abandoned the project.

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### **Judge Ephriam Cutler and the Underground Railroad Station at Constitution.**

Insert picture (Cutler2 jpg.)

Dr. Manasseh Cutler's eldest son, Ephriam Cutler, was born April 13, 1767. He was brought up in Killingly Connecticut by his grandfather Hezekiah Cutler. He left Killingly, Connecticut on June 15, 1795 with three shares of stock in the Ohio Company lands, and arrived at Marietta, (Ohio) on September 18, 1795. Sadly, two of his young children died on the trip. In 1799 he moved from Marietta to Waterford in Washington County. In Waterford, he engaged for a short while in the mercantile business, then in May of 1799 Ephriam moved to an 1800 acre farm on Federal creek, where he erected a mill. Shortly thereafter Ephriam Cutler was appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas and Justice of the Peace, by the Northwest Territorial Governor, Arthur St. Clair. He was also appointed a member of the Northwest Territorial Legislature and in 1802 he became Washington County's delegate to the Ohio Statehood Constitutional Convention. His anti-slavery contribution at the Ohio Statehood Convention was his introduction of the section to the Ohio Constitution that excluded slavery in this state. From this we can see that the Cutlers, Mannaseh and his son Ephriam played a big role in Ohio becoming a free state, which laid the track for Ohio's Underground Railroad.

When Ohio became a state in 1803, Washington County already had a small but vocal population of anti-slavery advocates. As evidenced by events which occurred in 1793; the invention of the "cotton gin" and the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, and the Upper Providence of Canada abolishing its slavery, anti-slavery advocates realized that slavery in the United States was never going to end by negotiated emancipation. During the time period 1806-1810, Judge Ephriam Cutler informally began to enlist support from abolitionists across Ohio. With his extensive contacts among Quakers and other anti-slavery advocates throughout Ohio, they established assistance for fugitive slaves crossing the Ohio River to avoid being apprehended under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793.

In 1806, Judge Ephriam Cutler established his family at a new home on the north bank of the Ohio River six miles below Marietta at a community that became Constitution. His home also became a staging area for fugitive slaves from across the Ohio River in Virginia. Subsequently Judge Ephriam Cutler's Underground Railroad Station at Constitution became the model for all the other Underground Railroad Stations that quickly located on the north side of the Ohio River. In Ohio an informal system of referring fugitive slaves northward to friendly havens, called "safe houses", extended north across Ohio at ten to fifteen mile intervals. By 1810 settlers in Ohio were becoming increasingly aware of the brutalities of slavery as told and demonstrated by the fugitive slaves.

In 1820 Ephriam Cutler became a trustee of Ohio University at Athens, and worked unceasingly to promote the prosperity of that institution. He was known as an advocate for common schools, introducing the first bill in Ohio for the regulation and support of schools. He was the author of the ad valorem system of taxation, which was the foundation of the credit enabling the State to build and maintain canals. He also was involved with duties for the Presbyterian Church. Judge Ephriam Cutler died peacefully at his home in Constitution at the age of eighty-six, in 1853.

The rural community of Constitution, is located on present day Ohio State Route 7 in Washington County, Ohio six miles south of Marietta and about four miles north of Belpre. Besides its importance as an early Ohio River Underground Railroad station, it was the site of the Constitution Grindstone Co., one of a few companies that supplied the huge millstones in Washington County, for 90 percent of the heavy millstones for the United States. The work was hard, but for many years it furnished employment



for local residents including a number of African-Americans living in that part of Washington County. Present day Washington County Road #3 was the first leg of the Underground Railroad route that ran from Constitution on the Ohio River, northwest over the hills, across Barnett Ridge and on over to the James Lawson Underground Railroad station at Barlow, also in Washington County.

In 1861 during the early days of the American Civil War, a fatal train accident at Constitution occurred at Constitution when the engine jumped the track. At least two people were killed and several others were seriously injured. A passenger on the train was an African-American Civil War soldier named Solomon S. Male, who was on his way to military duty with the 148th O.N.G. at Harper's Ferry, (West) Virginia. Solomon lived to describe the tragedy, and continued his trip to front lines of the Civil War.

From 1842-1853 Judge Ephriam Cutler opened and operated the first Post Office in Constitution from his stone house by the Ohio River. Constitution had the only Post Office in the United States, named for the U.S. Constitution. Until 1974, when the U.S. Postal Service closed the post office, the Zip Code number for Constitution was 45722. The last Post Master of the Constitution Post Office was Mrs. Naomi R. Morris who operated it from 1954 through 1974. The U.S. Postal Service issued a special bicentennial post mark to commemorate Constitution and the American ideals of Freedom!

The Exact date when Judge Ephriam Cutler started his Underground Railroad activity at his home along the Ohio River in Constitution is not clear, but by 1810, Judge Cutler and his friend Colonel John Stone who lived a few miles down the Ohio River at Belpre, were involved in helping a few fugitive slaves from across the Ohio River in Wood County, Virginia, get headed in the right direction toward Canada. From this time and place, the Underground Railroad in Ohio spread very rapidly to other points along the Ohio River border between Ohio - Virginia, and Ohio - Kentucky. Over the following decade, the Underground Railroad spread west along the Ohio River as the states of Indiana and Illinois were settled. The village of Cutler, which was also an Underground Railroad Station in western Washington County, Ohio was named for Ephriam Cutler's son William Pitt Putnam.

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### **Slavery In "Western" Virginia.**

According to a deposition made by Joseph Tomlinson in Chancery Court at Clarksburg, in the spring of 1771, he and Samuel Tomlinson returned to land opposite the Muskingum. At the present day site of Williamstown, West Virginia, they cleared four acres of land, erected a log cabin (believed to have been located at the foot of Dodge Avenue in Williamstown), and in Joseph's own words "planted the first corn...raised by civilized man on or about this area." The Tomlinson cabin was the only white man's habitation between Grave Creek and Vincennes. During this trip the brothers took with them a supply of salt and bread. Soon their supply was exhausted and the brothers turned to the land for food.

Whether or not any, or all, of the Tomlinson brothers were slave owners before coming to "western" Virginia is unclear, but Joseph did own slaves at Grave Creek, Marshal County, "western" Virginia, when the American Revolution broke in 1776. Joseph Tomlinson had a several children born at Grave Creek during and after the American Revolution, along with several slave children, including a slave named Mike.

Joseph had a plantation at Grave Creek, and he also claimed lands at Williams Station, "western" Virginia, (Present day, Williamstown, Wood County, West Virginia) across the Ohio River from the mouth of the Muskingum River at ( Marietta, Washington County, Ohio ). Joseph Tomlinson used his slaves to work at both locations, presumably moving them up and down the Ohio River as needed. In 1800 there were a total of 61 slaves in Wood County, Virginia, and 257 slaves in Ohio County, Virginia. This included the area of early Ohio County, "western" Virginia that later became Marshall County, "western" Virginia during the 1830s.

In 1804, two Joseph Tomlinson's slaves, Mike and an unidentified slave ran away while working at Williams Station. The two slaves crossed the Ohio River and traveled about thirty-five miles north on the Muskingum River to the mouth of "Owl Creek", in Morgan County , Ohio, where they stayed at a



cabin owned by William Craig. The fugitive slaves reportedly had been staying at William Craig's place for some time and Joseph Tomlinson received information of their location from a traveler who had traveled down the Muskingum River by canoe, stopped by the Owl Creek cabin of William Craig, and while there had passed conversation with the two errant slaves.

As soon as he got the word, Joseph Tomlinson, along with four of his sons, Thomas, Carpenter, Ezekiel and Benjamin, set out for Owl Creek to retrieve their fugitive slaves. William Craig saw the Tomlinson party arriving and quickly gave the alarm call to the two fugitive slaves. The slaves immediately took off running, but young Thomas Tomlinson was swift of foot and soon overtook Mike. Thomas knocked Mike to the ground by using his rifle as a club. When Mike regained his feet, Thomas again knocked him to the ground. Thomas and Mike, who were the same age, had been raised together at Grave Creek, the rough treatment from Thomas understandably upset Mike. After repeatedly being knocked to the ground, Mike pulled a knife from his belt and fatally stabbed Thomas Tomlinson.

The other fugitive slave took advantage of the situation and made good his escape, but Mike was captured by Joseph Tomlinson and his other three sons. The Tomlinsons took Mike and started across country, heading for Grave Creek. They camped at Negro Run about three miles west of Cumberland, Guernsey County, Ohio. (This is an area along the present Morgan-Noble County, Ohio line that later had a lot of Underground Railroad traffic.) There they encountered a Mr. Reeve and Mr. Cockain who were on their way to Kentucky on business. Both men witnessed the Tomlinsons execute and partially bury the slave named Mike. Mr. Reeve and Mr. Cockain reported the murder to authorities in Muskingum County, Ohio and a coroner's inquest was held by Henry Smith, Esq. of Putnam, part of present day Zanesville, Muskingum County, Ohio.

Ohio's first Governor, Edward Tiffin, sent written notice for Joseph Tomlinson to be extradited back to Ohio for deposition, but the request was denied by Virginia's Governor. Mike was not even given a permanent burial, his bones eventually lay scattered around the area where he had been killed, according to Mr. Reeve, who claimed to have seen the bones often.

So in the very early days of slavery in the Mid-Ohio River Valley, tragedy needlessly struck down two young men before they had even begun to experience life. The deaths of the two young Americans signaled the beginning of "Ohio's war against slavery". The Ohio River was the front line of that of that war!

Joseph Tomlinson was the father of Elizabeth Ann Tomlinson who married George Washington Henderson. It is an interesting side note, that George Washington Henderson attended school classes in Marietta, Ohio and later graduated from Ohio University Athens, in 1818. Their plantation called Henderson Hall was built on land deeded to Elizabeth and George W. Henderson by Joseph Tomlinson. (The plantation mansion still stands at Henderson Hall Historic District, Route 2, Box 103, Williamstown, WV 26187. The mansion and grounds are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

Three children of Joseph Tomlinson, along with his sister Rebecca Tomlinson Martin Williams, settled in Wood County, Virginia. Some other early slaves in the Mid-Ohio Valley region of "western" Virginia, were those brought here by Isaac Williams, 2nd husband of Rebecca Tomlinson, around 1785, when he founded the settlement of Williams Station, in Wood County, Virginia. Isaac Williams married Rebecca Tomlinson, a sister of Joseph and Samuel Tomlinson. For her service as their housekeeper at their home base at Grave Creek during the early year, the two adventuring Tomlinson brothers had deeded some land at Williams Station to Rebecca.

Isaac Williams was an experienced frontiersman and had at one time served as a scout for George Rogers Clark in the Virginia Militia before the American Revolution. Shawnee Indians were still bitterly contesting the encroachment of white settlers on their tribal lands. The main Shawnee village was located at "Old Chillicothe" on the Muddy River just north present day Dayton, Ohio. The white encroachment along the Ohio River caused the Shawnee to increase their scouting patrols in the Mid-Ohio Valley.

Indian opposition caused the progress of establishing a settlement at Grave Creek to slow down.



The threat of Indian attacks at Grave Creek, had prompted Issac Williams to move further down river to the land given to Rebecca by her brothers. This land lay along the Ohio River, opposite the mouth of the Muskingum River, which empties into the Ohio River. On the north side of the Ohio River, Fort Harmar, (now part of Marietta, Ohio), had recently been completed and the American Militia offered this area some protection from Indians raids.

As reported by early documents, Williams came down river to Williams Station in the early spring of 1785. He brought a few slaves to clear land and plant crops to sustain them through the next winter, then returned to Grave Creek for the winter. On March 24, 1787, Isaac Williams again returned to Williams Station where he and his wife Rebecca settled in for good. The permanent settlement of Williams Station, Virginia, included Isaac's slaves along with twelve white tenant families.

For the next few years, Williams kept a number of slaves working at clearing and planting his land, while Williams himself spent at least some of his time at his old profession of scouting and tracking Indians. On one occasion he followed a scouting party of Shawnee that had abducted a teenage white girl from a family that had settled nearby. According to historical accounts, Williams and five other settlers traveled down the Ohio River to present day Little Hocking. He searched west along the Hocking River for ten miles before he found and killed the Indians, rescued the girl and after hiding from another band of Indians for two days, finally returned the girl to her family.

Williams is also credited with saving the settlement of Marietta during the hard winter of 1788-89, by selling them corn. In this case, the labor of the Williams' slaves saved the settlement of Marietta from starvation and/or abandonment. In 1789 Isaac Williams received a franchise from the State of Virginia to install and operate a ferry across the Ohio River between Williams Station and Marietta, and his slave Frank Wycoff often worked the line that pulled the ferry back and forth. Early on, slaves were very active in the development of the Mid-Ohio Valley. After 1790, several plantations sprang up in Wood County, "western" Virginia. Most of the planters who settled in western Virginia, during that time, were from wealthy families in eastern Virginia. When these planters moved across the mountains from "eastern" Virginia to the Mid-Ohio River Valley of "western Virginia", they brought slavery with them.

In October of 1791, a scouting party of Shawnee Indians led by a young warrior-chief named Tecumseh, was patrolling along the Ohio River in Wood county, Virginia. The Shawnee still claimed the "western" region of Virginia at that time. Tecumseh (1768?-1813), the great Shawnee leader, who fought against United States expansion into the Midwest in the early 19th century, was born at the Shawnee town of "Old Chillicothe" located on the Madd River in southwestern Ohio. He was the son of a Shawnee warrior who was killed fighting white settlers in the Battle of Point Pleasant during Lord Dunmore's War (1774). Isaac Williams was a Virginia Militia scout during that Campaign.

Seven miles north of Williams Station, Tecumseh, around 16 at that time, and his Shawnee patrol encountered and captured a young slave named Frank Wycoff, owned by Isaac Williams. Frank had been searching for horses that had wandered off near Kerr's Island (presently Buckley's Island, in the Ohio River adjacent to Marietta). The Indians had traveled with their captive for seven miles north to Bull Creek where they spotted Captain Nicholas Carpenter and five soldiers, driving a herd of toward Fort Harmar. Fort Harmar obtained its military supplies from the US Army Supply Depot at Clarksburg, Virginia (West Virginia). There had already been several cattle drives over a crude road that traveled from east to west along Bull Creek to the Ohio River, then down stream along the Ohio River to Williams Station where they were then ferried across the Ohio River to Fort Harmar.

It was growing dark when Captain Carpenter reached Bull Creek, so he decided to set up camp and wait until the next morning before continuing on to the ferry crossing. Even though there had been signs of Indians in the area, there had been no hostile acts for months. Perhaps this was why Captain Carpenter did not post a sentry at his camp that night. That was his last mistake. Tecumseh discovered Captain Carpenter's camp just before dark and decided to attack on the early the following morning! At the crack of dawn, young Tecumseh and his small band of warriors left Frank Wycoff tied to a tree some distance away while they crept up and surprised the unwary soldiers. Meanwhile, Frank Wycoff had managed to untie himself and rush back down to Williams Station to get help! By the time that Isaac Williams and a



party of would be rescuers managed to get up to Bull Creek, about three hours had elapsed. Captain Carpenter and four of his men were already dead; one trooper was still alive, but badly wounded.

In 1792, Tecumseh was only around 16 years old. This was Tecumseh's first recorded killing of white settlers. Two decades later in 1813, Tecumseh, who by then had become a great Shawnee warrior chief, and Brigadier General with the British forces, was killed at the Battle of the Thames River in Canada by Richard M. Johnson, future Congressman from Kentucky and Vice President of the United States (1837-1841).

Blennerhassett Island Plantation and Cajoe Phillips.

Harman Blennerhassett was born in 1767 of Irish parentage, in Hampshire, England, as his mother was there on a visit. Harman studied law at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and was admitted to practice in 1790. In 1796, his father died and he inherited a fortune of \$100,000. He then married his sister's daughter Margaret Agnew. According to some historians, in 1797, the Blennerhassetts were forced to flee Ireland because of their scandalous marriage, and came to America. They were received among the wealthy class of Americans, and traveled to Marietta where they spent the winter looking for a property to buy. That spring the Blennerhassetts purchased the upper portion of an island consisting of one-hundred and seventy-four acres then in the possession of Elijah Backus, for the sum of \$4,500. George Washington originally owned the island. Blennerhassett Island is located in the Ohio River just below present day Parkersburg, (West Virginia).

Cajoe Phillips was born in Tidewater Virginia around 1740. He claimed to have been personally acquainted with General George Washington, and Cajoe also claimed to have fought with the 16,000 American and French forces under Washington's command at the siege of Yorktown. Cornwallis, the British commander, made several vain attempts to break through the siege, but on October 19, 1781, he was obliged to surrender.

Contrary to George Washington's decree that slaves who fought with the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War (1776-1883) against England would be freed; Cajoe was not granted his freedom after his military service, instead Cajoe he was eventually sold by his master, to a slave dealer. Blennerhassett bought Cajoe Phillips at the slave auction market in Richmond Virginia around 1799 along with some other slaves which he brought back to his plantation. Cajoe's main job on the plantation was pulling the rope that propelled the ferry back and forth between the Virginia shore and the island plantation. Later in life, Cajoe reported that Blennerhassett was also a slave trader, and he treated his slaves cruelly.

In 1806, Harman Blennerhassett, who had a penchant for bad business deals, was introduced to Aaron Burr, who then visited Blennerhassett Island Plantation. Subsequently Blennerhassett loaned Burr a substantial amount of money for the so-called "Burr Conspiracy", reported to have been an ill fated plot by Burr and his associates, to take over some Spanish/Mexican Territory and form an independent country. Most details of the alleged plot remain a mystery, because Burr never revealed his full intentions. In a suspicious allegation, James Wilkinson, one of Burr's close associates in the project, denounced him to President Thomas Jefferson, who had Burr arrested in 1806. Burr was indicted for treason, but after a six-month trial in Richmond, Virginia, he was acquitted on September 1, 1807.

Harman Blennerhassett was also indicted, and while never convicted he didn't fare as well as Burr. Blennerhassett was held in Richmond, Virginia, as a material witness for 53 days, before finally being released. During his time in jail, the Virginia Militia occupied his island plantation, and the plantation home was burned. Some historians blame the fire on the Virginia Militia, while others blame a tipsy female slave.

Harman Blennerhassett never returned to his plantation. The Blennerhassetts abandoned the island, and Cajoe Phillips, already advanced in age, simply left the plantation and settled across the Ohio River near Waterford, Washington County, Ohio. There he established the Waterford Underground Railroad Station and lived out the rest of his long life span assisting fugitive slaves from his native Virginia. Micah "Cajoe" Phillips didn't quite live to see the end to slavery. He died at the age of 120 years, on



December 8, 1861. He rests on a quiet knoll on his former farm near Waterford.

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### Washington Bottom

Just below Parkersburg, (West Virginia) formerly Virginia, adjacent to Blennerhassett Island, lies a tract comprising some 2800 acres of prime bottom land on the south side of the Ohio River. Several plantations once existed on this tract of land that had originally been owned by George Washington, hence the name Washington Bottom. Actually George Washington owned a considerable amount of land in "western" Virginia, which he had acquired from the English; land acquired as a consequence of the French and Indian Wars. Some of the plantation owners in Washington Bottom were Robert Edelen, John H. Harwood, George Neale Sr., Jonas Lewis, William Lewis and Francis Keene. Many of the slaves owned by these planters escaped across the Ohio River into Washington County, Ohio, and the Underground Railroad.

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### The Vacluse Slave Auction.

The former village of Vacluse, later called Jonestown, is now a ghost village once located near present day St. Marys, Pleasants County, West Virginia, across the Ohio River from Newport, located seventeen miles north of Marietta in Washington County, Ohio. Those who view the Ohio River today must be aware that the river was much different during the time that the Underground Railroad was active. It was much narrower and the channel was not nearly as deep. During extended dry spells in the weather, a person could walk out into the riverbed almost to the middle, and sometimes wade across clear across the river. This facilitated the fugitive slaves that crossed the river.

According to a 1986 history article written by Mr. George Riggs of St. Marys and supported by Mrs. Jessie Radcliff's recollections of stories that her grandfather had told her; around 1789 a young French fur trapper named Pierre Vacluse was paddling his canoe down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh on his way to the new settlement of Marietta in the Northwest Territory. He spotted an interesting hollow on the Virginia side of the river, ( St. Marys, Pleasants County, West Virginia), and upon investigating found the place to his liking so he built a cabin there. Others joined him, and the settlement called Vacluse sprang up.

Soon the new Blacksburg Road, also known as the Northwest Turnpike, traveled west on the "old" state road to the little river port of Vacluse. Over time, the road was heavily used to haul freight by horse and wagon from Clarksburg to the steamboats that plied the Ohio River after 1811. The river port of Vacluse also had a slave auction market which served the domestic slave trade which used the Ohio River to transport Virginia slaves to markets in the "Deep" South. Mrs. Radcliff stated that her grandfather Mr. William Brown witnessed the slaves being auctioned in Vacluse when he was as small boy. They were placed on a platform standing on a ledge of rock. Toward the end of its existence, Vacluse was quite a busy place with Clarksburg teamsters yelling at their horses, slave dealers bidding on slaves and steamboat whistles blasting away!

Mr. Riggs went to further elaborate on the slavery that existed in this region of "western" Virginia before the Civil War. He wrote about the slave cemetery located south of St. Marys (Vacluse) on the former Dye Farm, (located near WV Route #2 at the present day community of Belmont, Pleasants County, Virginia. The home of Arch Bradford, formerly near the Ohio River during the slavery period, is reported to have had a tunnel leading from the basement of his house, and running down to the river. Abolitionists living in this area of "western" Virginia would help fugitives slaves cross the Ohio River to board the Underground Railroad.

The former Alexander Henderson Plantation, (now the site of the American Cyanamid Chemical Plant at Willow Island, Pleasants County, West Virginia), possessed a number of slaves, and many of them went through the tunnel to reach the river and the Underground Railroad in Ohio. Gangs of white



men and some slaves beat the bushes along with blood hounds, looking for the escaped slaves, only to lose them near the Bradford home. According to MR. Riggs, the Henderson house which is still standing within the perimeter of the American Cyanimid complex, used to have iron rings in the walls of the basement. These ring were used to secure the chains place on errant slaves who were being punished.

Many disputes arose between the suspected abolitionists and the slave owners. This sometimes led to violence and blood shed. Except for one incident that occurred in 1804, no other deaths associated with the Underground Railroad were reported by historians of that time. There was once a slave cemetery on the Alexander Henderson property at Willow Island, although I have failed to find any trace of it, historians also reported that Alexander Henderson's slaves were always buried on the plantation.

A short distance down the Ohio River at Bull Creek was a plantation owned by Solomon Harness, the third owner, who purchased the place around 1810. The second owner had bought the property from President George Washington and built a cabin made of native chestnut logs on the property in 1790.

The first evidence of slaves escaping from the Harness plantation was an 1820, reward posted in The Marietta Gazette newspaper, offering a reward of \$100.00 for a slave named Tom. There were, no doubt some more Harness slaves that escaped between the years 1820 and 1843 when the well documented event of eight slaves from the Harness plantation escaped across the Ohio River and made their way to Canada on the Underground Railroad!

The next plantation down river from the Harness plantation was the Wm. Corbett plantation. Corbett also lost some of his slaves to the Underground Railroad, though details about those escapes are scanty.

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### **Henderson Hall Plantation.**

**(Insert hendson jpg. file)**

One of the best examples of a plantation in the Mid-Ohio River Valley, is Henderson Hall. The Henderson family of Wood County, Virginia were descended from Alexander Henderson, who came to Virginia in 1756. Alexander was born in Glasgow, Scotland and immigrated to Dumfries, Virginia where he established a very profitable importing firm. Before the American Revolutionary War, he served in the Virginia House of Burgesses and was one of the five committee members appointed to establish the boundary between Virginia and Maryland. He was a close friend and political associate of George Washington, George Mason, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. His marriage to Sarah Moore is mentioned in George Washington's journal. Through George Washington, Alexander Henderson Sr. acquired over 26,000 acres in "western" Virginia. They had six sons and four daughters. In 1797 three sons of Alexander (Sr.) and Sarah Moore Henderson came to their father's land holdings in "western" Virginia.

Alexander Jr. came to Wood County, built a cabin for himself and his slaves, then returned home to Dumfries. In July 1799, he sent his overseer, Henry Summers, with ten slaves "for the purpose of effecting a settlement on the Little (sic) Kanawha River. The slaves were listed as: Henry Bull, 48 or 49 years old, his wife Suckey 36, their children, Heathy 9, Lucy 7, Sarah 6 months, Abram 24, Hannah 19 and her child Davy 18 Months, John Dingo 11 and his younger brother Stephen.

In 1801 Alexander Jr. married Jane Lithgow and brought her to Wood County. Alex hunted bear to get the \$5 per head bounty and had the silver he earned melted down to make hollowware and flatware for his bride. Their first two children died of "bilious fever". The third child, George Washington Henderson was born in 1804 at "Willow Island" near Bull Creek.

George W. Henderson attended school in Marietta and graduated from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio in 1818. In 1826 G. W. Henderson married Elizabeth Ann Tomlinson. Elizabeth was the daughter of Joseph Tomilnson III, son of the original claimant of the site of Williamstown, Wood County, "western" Virginia. Tomlinson owned a large tract of land around Williamstown. At first G.W. and Elizabeth Ann Henderson lived on his father's plantation at Willow Island where they worked the land with slaves. In 1836 the couple purchased land from Elizabeth's father, Joseph Tomlinson, land and



built a modest but comfortable home. During the 1850s they constructed a three story addition to the front of their home and the place became known as Henderson Hall. All the building material was produced on the plantation. The bricks for the addition were "fired" on site, the sandstone was quarried on the property and the wood came from the walnut trees on the place.

At one time G.W. Henderson owned over thirty slaves. The average number of slaves per slave owner in "western" Virginia during the 1840s was roughly five (5). Most the Henderson slaves ran away in droves during the 1840s. These escapes were well documented in the Marietta Gazetteer and the Marietta Intelligencer Newspapers.

Let's look at slavery Henderson Hall style. Trusted slaves at Henderson Hall had a considerable amount of mobility. It is hard to determine if all the slaves were treated in a similar fashion, but at least two Henderson slaves, Steven Dingo and his wife Julie were members of the First Congregational Church in Marietta. They also made regular trips back and forth across the Ohio River to Marietta where they delivered farm produce from Henderson Hall to Marietta merchants, collected the money and brought it back to Mr. Henderson, at least that's what they were supposed to.

As the story goes, "Uncle Steven", Dingo was called, began to take out small amounts of Henderson's money and put it in the care of a "free" colored abolitionists named Tom Jerry. Tom Jerry was also an agent for Marietta's branch of the Underground Railroad! When enough money had accumulated, "Uncle Steven" and "Aunt Julie", in spite of their advanced ages, boarded the Underground Railroad at Marietta, and took off for Canada sometime in during the early 1840s.

In 1845, another Henderson slave named Isaac Fairfax set off for Canada on the Underground Railroad! After an absence of about one year, Isaac wrote George W. Henderson this interesting letter:

**July 13, 1846**

**Niagara, Canada:**

*Mr. Henderson,*

*Dear Sir,*

*It is not any hard usage I have met with since my arrival in Canada which induces me to acknowledge that I am very sorry for the manner in which I left your house without your leave or the leave of any of your family\_\_\_\_. I must acknowledge that you ever treated me kindly, so not any unkindness of yours, but longing for Liberty induced me to leave you.*

*If you will promise me on your honor that no punishment shall be inflicted upon me for my offense, and I shall be on the same conditions as before, I am willing to return to you again and you never shall have any cause to repent it.*

*I know that I am taking a risk, but knowing you to be a man of honor, even where a slave is concerned, I will place my confidence in you. X -- (His Mark)*

*I remain Your Most Humblest obedient Servant,  
Isaac Fairfax*

*P.S.*

*I will remain in Niagara  
with my brother for  
your answer.*

George W. Henderson agreed to the terms in Isaac's letter and in September or October of 1846, Isaac Fairfax returned to Henderson Hall. He remained there until the spring of 1847, then he left again,



this time he took eight other slaves with him. A slave informant reported to Mr. Henderson that Isaac Fairfax had conspired with David Putnam Jr. of Marietta to escape on the Underground Railroad. A court case ensued! Abolitionists David Putnam Jr. (1808-1892)

**(Insert putnamd.jpg.file)**

David Putnam Jr. was born May 17, 1808, in Harmar, at 519 Fort Street, (Marietta, Ohio). He was the son of David Putnam Sr. and Elizabeth (Perkins) Putnam. He was also the grandson of Col. Israel Putnam and the great-grandson of General Israel Putnam (1718-90), the American soldier who left his plow in the field to go and fight in the battles of Lexington and Concord at the beginning of the American Revolution. David Putnam Jr. was also a cousin to Brigadier General Rufus Putnam, the Revolutionary War soldier that led the first party of authorized American settlers down the Ohio River to Marietta in 1788, establishing the first settlement in the Northwest Territory under the new American Government .

David Putnam Jr. married Hannah M. Munson on September 26, 1833, and their marriage was blessed with seven children, Peter Radcliff, Martha Munson, Mary Burr, Catherine Douglas, Hannah Hubbard, Rufus Browning and Elizabeth Perkins Putnam.

He built his home above the Harmar Cemetery on the west side of the Muskingum River in present day Marietta, Ohio. (The house was demolished for construction of the Washington Street Bridge around 1950.) There he raised his family amidst his, not so secret, activity with the Underground Railroad.. While he didn't hide fugitives slaves at his home very often, during difficult circumstances he was compelled to do so.

David Putnam Jr. acquired his antislavery sentiments from growing up across the Ohio River from Wood County, Virginia, part of the "Old Dominion" where slavery was not only legal, but thought of as essential to their economy. Both the south side (Virginia) and the north side, (Ohio), of the Mid-Ohio River Valley began development around the same time (1785-1788), with people of opposing political views about slavery settling directly across the river from each other. In all fairness it must be noted that the overwhelming many of the Virginians living in "western" Virginia eventually came to reject slavery and seceded from Virginia in 1863 to form the "free" state of West Virginia, which remained loyal to the Union all through the Civil War.

David was born and raised at just the right time in American history, in just the right location and with the necessary background, to become a leader of the local Underground Railroad. David Putnam Jr. and the Underground Railroad literally grew up together. As a young man David had become personally aquatinted with many of the slaves in Wood County, Virginia, and had listened to their fears of being "sold down the river" to plantations in the Deep South.

As a teenager he began his fight against slavery. When I use the word fight, I mean it literally. David Putnam grew up to be a tall muscular fellow who was equally comfortable settling his disputes either diplomatically or his with bare knuckles, as the need required. He would let his opponents choose their own poison, for he would never compromise his principles about slavery. In December of 1845, he wrote in a letter to be delivered by one William P. Cutler of Marietta, to one Mr. Guthrie in Columbus, Ohio: " If we cannot catch the kidnappers, the devil will!"; the kidnapers of course were bounty hunters in pursuit of fugitive slaves. In 1847, David Putnam Jr. was sued by Virginia plantation owner George Washington Henderson, for the loss of nine slaves, which Henderson claimed Putnam had influenced to run away. The suit, which was filed in the U.S. District Court in Columbus, was dismissed in 1852.

David Putnam was a merchant of good standing in Marietta, and had many supporters who came to his defense on several occasions when he was besieged by pro-slavery advocates. He lived to see the collapse of the Slavocracy a quarter of a century before died on January 7, 1892. He now rests in the Harmar Cemetery below his former dwelling in Marietta.

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### **The Historic Underground Railroad Law Suit: [Henderson vs. Putnam]**



**Filed in:** U.S. CIRCUIT COURT, District of Ohio in Columbus, on June 25, 1849.

**Attorneys for the Plaintiff:** Samuel F. Vinton and Noah H. Swain.

**Attorney for the Defendant:** Salmon P. Chase

G.W. Henderson, Briar Plantation, Wood County, Virginia (Slave Owner), charged that under provisions of the [1793 U.S. FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW], David Putnam Jr., Harmar (Marietta), Washington County, Ohio, did illegally entice, conceal and otherwise aid (nine) Negro slaves, all the legal property of G.W. Henderson, to run away from their owner, and the State of Virginia at various intervals commencing on or about 15 February, 1846, the last instance occurring on or about 11 February, 1847.

Plaintive filed two Suits for compensation for lost property.

- **Suit 1:** Asked \$5,500 for the value of the slaves.
- **Suit 2:** Asked \$10,000 compensation for causing a breach of contract (specified in the provisions of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law) and for lost labor, and legal fees.
- **Disposition:** The case was dismissed on October 12, 1852 on the grounds of flawed legal language in the FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT of 1850.
- **Ref:** INSUPERABLE BARRIERS - A Case Study of the Henderson vs. Putnam Fugitive Slave Case, by William B. Summers. [The complete manuscript, with notes and bibliography can be viewed at the Archives and Special Collections Room, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta College.]

It is also of interest to note the career of David Putnam's lawyer Salmon Portland Chase (1808-1873). Chase was one of the best attorneys in the United States at that time. Salmon P. Chase was born on January 13, 1808, in Cornish, New Hampshire, and educated at Dartmouth College. As a lawyer in Cincinnati, Ohio (after 1830), he defended numerous fugitive slave's cases. He was a leading spokesman for the antislavery Liberty party and helped found the Free-Soil party in 1848. Chase was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1848 as a Democrat, but he separated from the party in 1852 when it committed itself to slavery. He was elected governor of Ohio in 1855 as a Free-Soiree and in 1857 as a member of the newly formed Republican party, which he helped to found.

From 1861 to 1864 he was secretary of the treasury in the cabinet of President Abraham Lincoln. During his term in office Chase developed the national banking system and issued the first legal-tender paper currency not backed by gold. This currency, called greenbacks, was used to finance the federal cause during the American Civil War. Chase resigned from the cabinet because he thought Lincoln's antislavery position was too moderate. In 1864, however, Lincoln appointed him chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and in this capacity Chase presided at the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson. In 1873 he wrote a dissent in the well-known Slaughterhouse Cases. Chase dissented because he felt that this decision by the federal government would endanger the rights of black people in the South. He also took part in decisions that declared unconstitutional the issuing of greenbacks, a policy he had previously implemented as Secretary of the Treasury. Chase died on May 7, 1873.

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### Harness Farm

I first visited the Harness Farm when I was 13 years old. I became acquainted with Bill Harness, he lived in the old house on the left going south on Rt. #2, just before the Pleasants/Wood County line near the bridge over Bull Creek. Gave me my first real clue that there were ever any slaves in the Mid-Ohio River Valley of "western" Virginia. Since that time I have pursued nearly every story associated with slavery here, that I could find. This has been my main obsession, though I have had several lessor ones during the course of my life.



I also know/knew Douglas Foley, a fine gentleman, but have not heard from him for a few years. Himself a former teacher, Doug also told me a great deal about Solomon Harness, his ancestor who founded the Harness Plantation at Bull Creek around 1810. I believe he came here from Maryland. According to Doug, the old log house was occupied by Solomon Harness's slave blacksmith. The original farmhouse and the slave quarters are long gone, but Doug showed me the spot where they had been located.

#### A Day in the Life of a Slave on the Harness Plantation.

The slaves were required to be in the field in the mornings, as soon as it was light, and with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which was given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they were not permitted to be idle for a moment until it was too dark to see. When the moon was full, they often labored till the middle of the night. They did not dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to the quarters, however late it might be, until the order to halt had been given by the overseer.

The day's work in the field over, the last tobacco leaves were all tied to sticks, loaded on the wagon and sent to the tobacco sheds, where the leaves were then hung up to cure. No matter how fatigued and weary the slaves may have been; no matter how much he/she longed for sleep and rest; if the slaves had not fully performed all of their appointed tasks, he/she would suffer. And if he/she had somehow exceeded at some task, in all probability the overseer would measure the next day's task accordingly. So, whether the slave has done too little or too much, the approach to the overseer was always filled with fear and trembling. Most frequently the slaves that had done too little, were the least anxious to leave the fields. After the day's work had been measured, followed the whippings administered by the overseer to those he suspected of shirking their tasks.

This done, the labor of the day was not yet ended, by any means. Each slave must then attend to his additional chores. One slave had to feed the mules, another the swine - another slave cut the wood, and so forth. Finally, at a late hour, the slaves reached their quarters, sleepy and overcome with the long day's toil. Still a fire had to be kindled in the cabin, the corn ground in the small hand-mill, then supper and dinner had to be prepared for the next day in the field. The only food allowed them was corn and bacon, which was given out at the corncrib and smoke-house every Sunday morning. Each slave's weekly ration was three and a half pounds of bacon and enough corn for a peck of meal. That was all! No tea, coffee, sugar, and with the exception of a very scanty sprinkling now and then, no salt!

An hour before day light a horn blows the call to labor! The slaves arose, quickly prepared their breakfast, filled their gourds with water, in another gourd deposited their dinner of cold bacon and corn cake, and hurried to the field to the fields before daybreak. It was an offense that incurred a flogging, to be found in or near the slave quarters after daybreak. Then for the slaves, the rigors of another day, and until its close there was no such thing as rest.

In the month of October, generally, the tobacco season was completed. Then commenced the work of clearing land, sawing and stacking the timber, loading fire wood and lumber on the riverboats. Then when spring returned, came the plowing, planting, suckering tobacco plants. Summer brought hoeing corn, pulling weeds, burning stalks, drawing and cutting wood, making clothing, fattening and killing hogs were but incidental labors. If work ever grew slack, the slaves were hired out to work for farmers across the Ohio River in Ohio, where owning slaves was illegal. For most slaves, work occupied everyday of the four seasons of the year except sometimes on Sundays!

Given what slaves had to endure, it is small wonder that escape was on the mind of every slave. But closely watched, the opportunity to escape didn't come easily. Slaves on plantations near the Mason-Dixon Line in "western" Virginia, were more fortunate than slaves in other parts of the South, for the tracks of the Underground Railroad ran right up to the door of the slave quarters!

Reward

#### **Insert (Harness Reward Poster jpg. file)**

The next issue has to deal with strategy. There were relatively large rewards posted around the area for fugitive slaves. For instance in 1843, Solomon Harness advertised a reward of \$450 for the return of 8 slaves that escaped from his plantation. That is \$450.00 multiplied by 15 at today's economy! Even



people who had no feelings about slavery one way or another, were constantly on the look out for fugitive slaves, just to collect the reward. Due to the fact that slave owners had the right to come into "free" or "Northern" states and bring back their slaves if they could find them, generally speaking, fugitive slaves didn't hang around the Ohio River after they had crossed. Once across the river, conductors on the Underground Railroad escorted to a station that were located 10 to 15 miles from the river on the first night. The following night they continued north as fast as they could, continuing to travel at night and hide during the day. In my opinion, my observations make it highly unlikely that digging and maintaining extensive tunnels would not have been worth while.

I have observed that some of the Underground Railroad Stations and Safe Houses did have short entrance and exit tunnels that usually led from a cellar to a hidden ravine or such, with the exit or entrance located a short distance from the house or barn where fugitive slaves were hidden. These were probably used for emergencies, like when the house was thought by a Stationkeeper to have been under surveillance. I believe that these short tunnels plus the mistaken inference of "Underground" are responsible for all the myths about tunnels! Perhaps the Underground Railroad operators were responsible for starting and perpetuating the myth of tunnels to confuse or discourage bounty hunters. If anyone ever discovers evidence that a tunnel of any length ever existed, I will be very surprised!

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### **Jewett Palmer Sr. (A Man Great of Wisdom).**

There were at least three routes of the Underground Railroad that passed through or near Marietta. While fugitive slaves may have taken refuge in Marietta on rare occasions, usually in an emergency, most often they quickly passed through Marietta at night and headed for more remote Underground Railroad Stations ten or fifteen miles north of the Ohio River. Jewett Palmer operated such a station in Fearing Township, and later on a short distance away in Liberty Township, Washington County, Ohio.

Jewett Palmer was born near Orford, Grafton County, New Hampshire on May 18, 1797. He grew up and received his basic education on his father's farm, a typical situation at that time. While he had little formal schooling, Jewett was very intelligent and became an avid reader. When he was but sixteen years old, he joined the New Hampshire Volunteers and fought in the War of 1812. He was discharged after the war and returned to the farm in New Hampshire.

In 1817 the whole family began their move to Ohio, but spent the winter in Butler, Pennsylvania, arriving in Washington County, Ohio in 1818. Jewett was quickly exposed to the plight of fugitive slaves from across the Ohio River in Wood County, Virginia, trying to find their way north across Washington County, Ohio. Undoubtedly the Palmer family's tradition already had instilled antislavery sentiments in Jewett's mind; they were closely related to William Lloyd Garrison, the National Leader of the Abolitionist Movement in the United States.

In 1823, Jewett Palmer married Rachel Campbell and they settled on a farm at the northern edge of Fearing Township. He soon gained respect as a community leader, but he never ran for an elective office. His character was described as industrious, upright, with unwavering judgment and fearless adherence to principle; always a helping hand to the down trodden and the slave. By 1830 he was operating the Underground Railroad Station where many weary fugitive slaves found a helping hand for the next thirty-five years.

Known as "Uncle Jewett", Palmer remained popular with younger people for his entire life. Young men sought his political advice and often voted for his candidates, which of course were the antislavery. In 1852 he explained to a group of young voters that in their lifetime, they would see an end to slavery, little did he realize that emancipation would come about during his own lifetime.

At the beginning of the American Civil War in 1861, Jewett Palmer, by this time advancing in age, tried to enlist in the Union Army. He was affectionately assured by the recruiter that the situation was not yet so drastic to call upon men of his age, so Jewett, the old veteran of the War of 1812, went back to his farm to tend his crops, while his son, Jewett Palmer Jr. joined the Union Army, and attained the rank of Major before the war ended.



Jewett lived to see the end of the Civil War and the Emancipation of all slaves in 1865. In 1873 Jewett Palmer Sr. came in from the fields for dinner and began reading a newspaper while waiting. When called to the table, he declined, stating that he would wait a little while. Suddenly his arms dropped to his side and he peacefully departed this life on earth for the "better" life he truly deserves. As long as the struggle for freedom and justice continues, the spirit Jewett Palmer will live along the rugged trail of the Underground Railroad across northern Washington County.

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### **Thomas Ridgeway - Rainbow Station.**

**(Insert Ridgway jpg. file)**

Thomas Ridgeway, was born January 22, 1796, of English ancestors at Shelbourne, Nova Scotia, where he resided until he was thirteen years of age. He obtained his education by attending night school, since he worked a full time job during the day. Thomas was trained in the trade of a cooper. As a young man, he was engaged in superintending the cooperage department of one of the largest mackerel fisheries on Cape Breton Island. Later he was employed at other fisheries along the coast of Newfoundland.

During the War of 1812, Thomas Ridgeway was a British sailor and survived a terrible shipwreck. In 1821 Ridgeway went to New Orleans to seek his fortune working in the sugar refineries, but his health failed and he was forced to return Halifax, Nova Scotia later that same year. In the spring of 1822 he returned to New Orleans where he resumed his old job until autumn, then he traveled to Washington County, Ohio to visit Dyars, distant relatives who lived on the old Muskingum River homestead.

He stayed with the Dyers until spring, when accompanied by Joseph P. Dyar, they pushed a boat up the Kanawha River to the salt works near present day Malden, West Virginia. After disposing of their cargo at a nice profit, they contracted to produce salt barrels at the rate of 1 bushel and one peck of salt for each barrel. The following fall they brought the salt up the Ohio River and sold it at places between Marietta and Wheeling. They returned to the salt works where they continued for a couple of years before returning to Marietta to jointly buy some land. Around 1825 Thomas Ridgeway and Joseph P. Dyar dissolved their partnership and Thomas took the farm of his residence.

He soon married Esther Ann Dyar, sister of his partner, and they eventually had five children: James, John, George, William and Francis. Esther died in 1936 and he married Mrs. Sarah A. Doane in 1838 and had five more children: Caroline, Thomas, Mary, Isaac and Sidney. The second Mrs. Ridgeway died in 1862 and in 1866 he married Mrs. Caroline Johnson who died in 1872.

Thomas Ridgeway operated a ferry across the Muskingum River between his house and land he owned on the east bank of the river. From its beginning he was a staunch Republican supporter. Ridgeway's house was an asylum for fugitive slaves, where they always found food and shelter on their journey north along the Muskingum River. He is credited with sheltering more than 50 fugitives slaves during the Underground Railroad Era. During the American Civil War he was a staunch supporter of the Union, losing two sons in the War of Rebellion.

Throughout his life, Thomas Ridgeway was a civic minded man who supported many progressive causes including temperance and the Congregational Church at Lowell. Thomas Ridgeway died April 23, 1883 at the age of 87 years. He is buried beside his three wives and several children at the Rainbow Cemetery in Muskingum Township, Washington County, Ohio.

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### **Shooting of the Town Bull Parkersburg, Virginia (1845)**

During the last decades of slavery, say from 1830 through 1865, many dramatic events along the Ohio River ensued between pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates. While there was nothing humorous about slave escapes, some humorous incidents did occur occasionally.

This particular episode began on quite a serious note. On July 9, 1845, a group of abolitionists



from Decatur Township, Washington County, Ohio had gathered on the Ohio shore of the Ohio River at Hall's Landing near Constitution, for the purpose of rescuing a party of fugitive slaves that had escaped from a plantation located down river from Blennerhassett's Island in Virginia. The slave owner discovered the plot and had stationed seventeen or eighteen armed Virginians in the bushes along the Ohio side of the river to intercept the errant slaves.

Five slaves were captured, while one was rescued and quickly dispatched on the Underground Railroad. However three abolitionists, Mr. Garner, Mr. Loriane and Mr. Thomas were seized by the Virginians and taken to jail in Parkersburg, Virginia. They were kept imprisoned without a hearing or the opportunity for bail. They were not even allowed to contact their families. Finally on January 10, 1846, the abolitionist prisoners were released, but not before the incident had escalated into a war between Virginia and Ohio. In Parkersburg a company of militia under the command of Captain Daggs was raised to defend Parkersburg against any armed attempt to free the three Ohio abolitionists.

One night in the middle of September, the alert signal sounded down on Ann Street close to Court Square. It may be mentioned that some of the soldiers were visiting the "girls" in the sporting house, some were in the whiskey shops and many were sound asleep when the call to arms had come.

Within half an hour all were assembled and called to order by their good captain, then sent to the bushes near Pond Run where the impending invasion was thought to be materializing. There was deadly silence. Even the nightly serenade of insects was missing. Moments seemed like hours and nerves grew raw. They quietly waited with rifles and pistols ready.

The word went out, "the abolitionists are coming"! Even the captain trembled as a dark form parted the bushes. "Fire!" cried the captain. A hail of bullets lasting several minutes rained upon the form and a horrible roar that sounded like a cross between a steam whistle and thunder issued forth from the bushes! Once again silence ruled the midnight.

The strain of a second silence was too much, and the once brave captain, closely followed by his loyal troopers, bolted for the safety of home. Next morning some boys playing in the vicinity Pond Run discovered the carcass of the "town bull" so riddled with bullets that not even the hide was fit for tanning. Legend holds that for the next quarter century, the ghost of the "town bull of Parkersburg" would rise from Pond Run at midnight, to stare balefully toward the Ohio shore where the abolitionists that caused his untimely demise had once resided.

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### The Tunnel Myth.

I was born and raised amid stories about the Underground Railroad. Many stories circulated about tunnels linked to the Underground Railroad. Some were supposed to run under the city of Marietta. The most persistent story is about a tunnel that ran from the banks of the Ohio or Muskingum River, over to the Ankorage House, built by Douglas Putnam, which wasn't completed until 1858. I have spent considerable time trying to verify the existence of these tunnels on the Underground. At this point, I am very skeptical that there ever were any tunnels of a length beyond fifty or sixty feet, and even short tunnels must have been rare.

From my experience as an operating engineer for over thirty years, excavation was my specialty and I have dug up a lot of dirt on projects all over southeastern Ohio. Based on my observations, the soil types that exist in the Ohio River Valley and surrounding hills, would make very difficult to dig out and maintain long tunnels during the Underground Railroad Era when modern machinery didn't exist. I have several questions, like, where would they have placed the excavated soil so that it would not have been noticed? Who would have labored to put in timbers to support the tunnel's roof? How would a tunnel have been ventilated?

On more than one occasion, I know of workmen that were killed or injured when the side walls of an open trench less than 6' deep caved in, and in these open trenches there was not even a roof to consider. As a matter of safety, trenching is such a dangerous task, that OSHA safety regulations require construction crews to use a massive device called a "Trench Box", to protect workers when working in



trenches over 4' deep.

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### **The End of the Underground Railroad Era.**

The Underground Railroad officially ended its great service in the Mid-Ohio River Valley around 1861, when many of the abolitionists that worked on the Underground Railroad left home and joined the Union Army in the "War of Rebellion", ( Now commonly referred to as the American Civil War (1861-1865). On Apr. 12, 1861, Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter; five days later, at a state convention in Richmond, Virginians had to decide whether to join the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy or the Union. A majority voted for an ordinance of secession, but delegates from the northwestern part of the state returned home and held two conventions at Wheeling--on May 13 and June 11.

Declaring the government at Richmond void, the second Wheeling convention established a "restored" government of Virginia and appointed Francis H. Pierpont governor. In a public referendum on Oct. 24, 1861, voters overwhelmingly supported creation of a new state, Kanawha.

The next month a third convention met at Wheeling, changed the name of the state to West Virginia, and began to draft a constitution. Voters approved the new constitution in April 1862, and a year later President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed West Virginia a state, to be admitted to the Union 60 days later, on June 20, 1863.

***The End***