

The Underground Railroad and Kentucky Raid

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Introduction

Imagine my surprise in doing genealogical research to discover that my Martin ancestors, who later settled in Berrien County, had a sugar plantation in Antigua in the West Indies and extensively used slaves. My several times, great-grandfather, Samuel Martin, wrote and published a book on “plantership”-farming in the Caribbean utilizing slave labor in raising and processing sugar cane into sugar, molasses and rum. In December 1701, Samuel Martin asked his slaves to work on Christmas Day-an established 3-day holiday that included much eating, drinking and dancing. Beef, provided for the slaves by the plantation owner, was only eaten at this time of year. After working on that Christmas day his slaves rebelled and killed him. As a result my interest in slavery and the slave trade was kindled, and I began to read and study about the African Americans’ forced migration to and subsequent life in the Americas. My research on this topic has taken me about four years and included trips to Antigua, England, and Canada as well as many libraries and museums in this country. Grif and I have received assistance from many people in our endeavors to unravel the facts of a socially-sensitive and seemingly “moving target,” whose interpretation changes with each generation.

Tonight we will briefly review the history of slavery, the Underground Railroad, the raids by men from Kentucky to recapture their runaway slaves, and the legal cases and legislative action that resulted. We will also share some stories of the people involved with the UGRR.

If your picture of the Pre-Civil War life of an African American is one running from the clutches of a cruel slave master into the receptive arms of a tolerant and stoic, northern farmer, who either provided the fugitive with the means to earn a living or hurried him, at the farmer's own peril, across the Canadian border to "freedom," is wrong and diminishes the basic heroism of the African Americans themselves. Those mostly unnamed Free Blacks who helped their fellow human beings escape slavery were the Rosa Parks, Menger Evers, and James Meredith of one hundred and fifty years ago.

Following the Civil War White men wrote the county histories and reported the events of the times as they remembered or wanted them remembered. But, the African Americans who put forth the heroic effort to aid the fugitive enslaved in escaping bondage were often overlooked by past historians and researchers. The fugitives received some aid from Quakers and Native Americans, but more often they relied on their own resources and small communities of free African Americans along the way . These unschooled, Black pioneers suffered daily from White intolerance. Courage, determination, basic intelligence and a bit of luck were needed to survive and prosper in the North

To a large extent the fugitives' stories are not found in print; and the rich oral history of these early African American pioneers was buried with them. All too often, when faced with legal difficulties, the safest route for them was to escape to Canada.

William Allen, an African American teenager came to Cass County about 1848. He was very poor, but being accustomed to hard labor, he went to work for one of the Jones family of Quakers on Young's Prairie for \$23 a month and

stayed. At the age of 19, he married and settled in Porter Township and by perseverance and economy purchased and developed a 400 acre farm while supporting a family of seventeen.

Slavery was a major institution in antiquity. In the golden years of Greece and Rome slaves, who were usually captives taken in war, did all the physical work from mining to being domestic servants. In the 8th century during the sunset years of the Roman empire most ancient institutions collapsed, but slavery survived. Throughout the early Middle Ages, slaves were a highly-prized section of the European population. During the 13th century Southern Europeans were accustomed to both slaves and slavery. In the 1400s the maritime industry grew in importance and Portuguese sea captains kidnaped Africans, bought blacks that had been captured in raids or in war from African chiefs and kings, received slaves in tribute and then transported them to Europe. Spain, Holland and later England in 1562 got into lucrative slave trade. The enslaved were traded in Portugal, Spain and Africa and were regarded simply as just another commodity.

Columbus, unable to return with ship holds filled with gold from the Carribean, shipped the first cargo of slaves from the New World to Europe. Soon the slave trade in the Americas was a major enterprise. Slavery was a vile institution and included white Europeans as well as Native Americans and Africans.

The first Africans came to Jamestown in 1619. Labor was scarce and these few people were purchased on the same terms as white English indentured servants: after seven years of labor, they were free. Masters were buying labor, not people, although the distinction was lost on many. By 1625,

there were 23 Africans residing in Virginia; twenty-five years later there were about 300, and they made up 2% of the population. Rebellious indentured servants, black and white, posed a constant threat beginning in the mid 1600s in Virginia. By 1730 Indian slavery was all but over and the number of white indentured servants was dwindling, but the proportion of African slaves had risen to about 25% of Virginia's population. When slaves rebelled some were put to death; but most were sold off. Wealthy slave owners intent on protecting their investments, resisted the execution of their slaves. Colonial legislatures, unwilling or unable to reimburse masters for the loss of an executed slave, allowed the master to sell the troublemaker to an unsuspecting new slave master somewhere else.

In Colonial days, fugitive laws in both the North and South applied to white indentured servants and Native American slaves as well as African Americans. Before the Revolution, New York state was plagued by Black runaways. George Washington complained that runaway Black slaves were not likely to be recovered because the community of Philadelphia Quakers made a practice of helping them.¹

The first slaves in Michigan were Indians, held or sold into slavery as a result of tribal wars. During the French occupation during the first half of the 18th Century and subsequently by the British, for the Native Americans to kidnap African Americans from the South and sell them to settlers in the Detroit area. A few were brought from the South by their owners who settled in Michigan. In 1783 when the territory was transferred to the United States at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, there were 179 African American Slaves in the area

¹J. C. Furnas. *Goodbye to Uncle Tom*. (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1926), p. 207.

known as the Northwest Territory. In the Northwest Ordinance adopted in 1787, the Congress forbade slavery in the area, of which Michigan was part; but the Jay Treaty allowed French and British settlers to keep their slaves even though the area was now part of the United States. Some slaves were also held by American citizens in spite of the law.²

In examining the hand-written records of the Lake View Cemetery, now adjacent to the Chain Lake Baptist Church in Calvin Township of Cass County, the following entry was found: "Josiah Hood was born on the Atlantic Ocean March 4, 1795, and died in Calvin, Cass Co. Mich., July 8, 1899." This person undoubtedly was the child of a slave being transported to the United States.

Importation of slaves was officially barred in the U. S., in 1808, but illegal importations continued all along the East coast. Slave breeding was accepted and plantation owners even gave bonuses to slave women who had lots of children. One slave owner boasted that a slave baby was worth \$200 the moment it drew its first breath. Needless to report the breaking up of black families for economic gain was a heart-wrenching ordeal.

Although the popular vision of slavery was one of many slaves bending low over fields of cotton, sugar, tobacco, rice and indigo, only 25% of the almost four million slaves in the United States by 1860 were living on plantations that owned more than fifty slaves. Historically, the work of the northern slaves was somewhat less demanding than in the deep South and the Caribbean. Most northern slaves worked on farms, and some were skilled at trades like tailoring, sail making, carpentry, blacksmithing while others toiled in tanning factories, iron works and

²Danzy, John. C. "The Negro People in Michigan." *Michigan History* Vol 24: pp. 221-240

the fishing industry. Some Africans were allowed to work off their indenture while others were able to buy their freedom so that by the time of the Revolutionary War small pockets of free Africans were living in most of the newly formed colonies along the East Coast. Many slaves fought on both sides in the Revolutionary War hoping to earn their freedom only to be re-enslaved after the war by the victorious Americans. By the 1830s slave-owning Southerners did not want free Africans living in their midst.

Not one of the Midwestern states warmly welcomed African American settlement. Almost every Midwestern state had "Black Codes." - laws created by whites dead set against the idea of blacks entering the state-much less settling there. Some African Americans had to post bonds in order to travel through a state and/or to settle permanently. In Michigan as early as 1827, African Americans seeking to settle were required to post a \$500 bond and possess manumission papers. At that time a day laborer earned less than one dollar a day, so accumulating the money for a bond plus money to buy land was a monumental task. Legislators made the laws, but people did not always follow or enforce them. In Indiana, which may have had the harshest Black Codes in the Midwest, was also home to many abolitionist settlements and had the second-largest black population in the Midwest.

After the Quakers moved into Cass County, it became home to many African Americans. Slave and Free Blacks sought opportunities and freedoms that did not exist in the South. In Cass County they were able purchase property, farm their own land, raise their families and send their children to school. In the antebellum Midwest, although some Whites were willing to use African American labor, others were averse to African Americans living near them, especially if

they were free. Whites believed that the African Americans were a corrupting influence and infringed upon white employment opportunities. People of Color were subjected to rampant racism even if their blackness was evident only as a ghost in their blood.

Most people were tacitly opposed to slavery in the industrialized North, but were content to let it stand in the South.³ Others, who wanted to abolish the institution everywhere⁴, limited their opposition to rhetoric, publishing or prayer. The Democratic Party who represented nearly half of all American voters who valued the Union and believed the abolition of slavery would bring about a horrendous Civil War-which it did. On the other hand, State's Rights was also all about slavery, and the Democrats believed that if the slaves were freed, the United States as a nation would break apart -and again they were right. The newspapers of the time suggest that emotions ran high while beliefs, values, and morals were being questioned individually and publicly. Issues were championed or condemned based on how they might affect one's own pocketbook, family and life in general.

Ads for runaway slaves were common in ante-bellum America, but not in Southwestern Michigan. The following ad appeared In the May 11, 1836, *Niles*

³In 1851 Indiana approved a new state constitution that barred any Negro or mulatto from moving into Indiana. Voters approved the overall constitution by an 80.20 percent margin; in a separate vote they approved the exclusion clause by a slightly higher margin. By the ballot box the vast majority of white citizens wanted the state to be all white. However, in practice, more moderation existed and significant numbers of free and fugitive blacks found southwestern Michigan and northern Indiana to be hospitable to their aspirations. Martin DeAgostomo. "Underground Railroad An American Exodus." *South Bend Tribune*. February 28, 1991.

⁴When Blacks were freed in North Carolina and other southern states they were not allowed to remain in that state but had to find a new place to live. For free Blacks the formation of the national American Colonization Society persuaded them to organize for the abolition of slavery rather than act individually. The Colonization Society wanted the federal government to pay the costs of settling free blacks in an African colony they founded and called Liberia. The threat to free African Americans that this appeared to represent called for a more organized black response and for more white allies. "Operating the Underground Railroad" On line. Internet. 14 Feb. 2005. [Www.cr.nps.govnr/travel.underground/opugrr.htm](http://www.cr.nps.govnr/travel.underground/opugrr.htm).

Gazetteer and Advertiser. “One Cent Reward. Ranaway from the subscriber on or about 5th of April last, an indented Colored Boy, about 13 years (old). All persons are forbid(den) harboring or trusting said boy on penalty of the law. Edward Worth, (Mason Township), Cass County.”

The Society of Friends played a disproportionate role in the abolition of slavery. These people, best known as Quakers, were willing to sacrifice everything to reach their ends. No other group displayed such a single minded effort to eradicate The “Peculiar Institution.” as slavery was often called. Having experienced oppression themselves in Europe and early New England, they were brought “en masse” to the New World in the late 17th century by William Penn, who received a charter for land, most of present-day Pennsylvania. Quakers migrated southward into Virginia and the Carolinas where slavery was an accepted way of life. They ultimately rebelled against it and most of them moved north rather than live with the stigma of bondage of fellow human beings.

Charles Osborn was born in North Carolina and as a Quaker established manumission societies, and advocated the unconditional emancipation of the slaves in the United States. He established a newspaper devoted to anti-slavery and formed the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends in 1843. In 1842 Osborn and his family moved to Cass County where he lived for eight years before he moved back to Indiana.

Beginning in the early 1770's many Quakers who had been slave-holders accepted the proposition advanced by their church that owning a slave was a sin and began to free their slaves. In Philadelphia at the start of the Revolution, Quakers founded the Society for Promoting Abolition of Slavery and Relief of

Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. Benjamin Franklin became the organization's president in 1787. In Pennsylvania and New York, Quaker congregations began to expel their own slave owners. Later Methodists also voted to remove slave holders from church membership.

Many of the Quakers and African Americans who migrated into Cass County came from North Carolina. A recent genealogical publication of Free African Americans families that migrated into North and South Carolina from Virginia from the colonial period to about 1820 were descendants of white servant women who had children by slaves or free African Americans, and were not the descendants of slave owners.

Not every slave or Free Black longed to escape to the North. Many felt comfortable with their way of life. They knew what to expect and what was expected of them. Some of the lack of restiveness may lay in the utter familiarity of the slave system. Some slaves reasoned that their African ancestors had been slaves, slave holders and slave traders - thus taking the status quo for granted.

Southern slavery and Northern freedom shared a 1,200 mile unfenced boundary. Being able to see the lights of free soil across the Ohio River did not lure every slave to begin a perilous journey away from his friends, family, heritage and home. Those that did attempt to escape were usually within 100 miles of a free state.

The Underground Railroad

Between 1840 and the end of the Civil War the Underground Railroad operated in the Midwest. Two lines emanating in Ohio and Illinois merged in

Cass County. The Underground Railroad was neither a railroad nor was it underground; it had no tracks, no schedule, and ran intermittently between the slave states through the free states and on to Canada. The story of how this organization came to be called the Underground Railroad is this: A slaveholder was tracking a runaway slave to a small town where he lost all trace of the fugitive. Days later, the slave was spotted in Detroit. When the angry slave owner heard this, he exclaimed that the slave must have “boarded a railroad that ran underground.”

The Underground railroad was a system of routes with a network of people, predominantly Free Blacks and Quakers, who assisted the people of color escape northward. “Stations” and depots” were homes and businesses; these were run by “station masters.” “Conductors” were responsible for moving “passengers” from one station to the next. “Can you provide entertainment for myself and one other person?” It is alleged that query was used by Underground Railroad conductors when seeking shelter for their passengers. The organization was founded and operated by a small group of a few thousand earnest people. These were so-called abolitionists.

Quaker Levi Coffin of Fountain City, Indiana, was one of those given the name of “President” of the U.G.R.R. The others were Robert Purvis a free Black from Philadelphia and Peter Stewart of Joliet County, Illinois. Coffin’s home was referred to as the “Union Station” by slave holders. He was thought to be responsible for organizing the route from the Ohio River to Fountain City, Indiana, then followed routes north to Canada. Utmost speed and secrecy were required on the Indiana lines, but the need for haste diminished as they crossed into Michigan where seven main routes with several branches had been established to Canada. As slave hunters began to watch the regular routes

alternative routes to Canada were devised.

The Underground Railroad extended from Kansas to Maine with the middle states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, the most active because they bordered slave states. Initially over twenty stations of the Underground Rail Road were located along the Ohio River.

The principal players in the UGRR were the Free African Americans, and Quakers. Some Covenanter Presbyterians, like the Southern Quakers, had freed their slaves and moved to the Middle West, were also involved in the movement. Nearly every Negro settlement in the free states was an Underground depot by definition, because the runaway considered a black face an even more reliable promise of help than the Quaker broadbrim [hat].⁵ It is likely that upon reaching Michigan, some of the fugitives decided, or were persuaded, that they were safe from capture, and therefore remained for a period of time to rest, earn some money, and/ or settle. However, documentary evidence in support of this premise is difficult to find. Neither the fugitives nor their benefactors advertised their status, while the cloud of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 hung over their heads.

By 1840 a loosely organized chain of Quaker settlements extended through Indiana along which the fugitive slaves were harbored, fed, clothed and directed on their way. At that time there were no arrangements for providing local guides and usually the conductor who started the trip from the South accompanied them as far as Cass County, Michigan. Later the better organized Quaker Line started on the free soil at the Ohio River and ran through Indiana to the Quaker settlements near Birch Lake and Young's Prairie in Cass County.

⁵Ibid., p. 208 and 214.

Sometimes fugitives were transported by wagon or a man accompanied the travelers on horseback. Late summer and early fall were the best time to travel as there was apples to pick and corn to roast for food. Sleeping out of doors was endurable and fording or swimming streams practical. Furthermore, corn and prairie grasses were tall enough to conceal the travelers.⁶

The “Illinois” line was established by the minister, John Cross in 1842, and was well-organized. This line ran northeastward up from St. Louis and crossed Michigan through Niles to Cassopolis. Its stations were from ten to twenty miles apart, and each station agent was informed only as to the name and location of the agent ahead of him, and neither knew or sought to know of those below or far beyond them. The Quaker and Illinois lines came together in Cass County and followed common routes to Canada. The stations beyond Cass County were William Wheeler in Flowerfield, St. Joseph County and Dr. Nathan M. Thomas at Schoolcraft in Kalamazoo County.

Rev. John Cross who established the Illinois line, came to South Bend, where he found the Abolitionists too cautious to incur the penalties of slave running even though local feelings against slavery were intense and bitter. Therefore, the minister went on to Bertrand where he found Mr. King, a shoemaker and Mr. Adlery, a harness maker, up to the task of slave running; and for several years, they maintained the UGRR station at Bertrand.

Finding station agents was difficult; if the wrong individual was approached, suspicion was directed to the organizer and the entire route was

⁶Ibid., p. 215.

jeopardized and had to be abandoned. On one occasion John Cross, dressed as a southern planter, passed along the route inquiring of all whom he met if they had seen any “black boys” pass by. “Boys” was the derogatory term by which male slaves, young or old, were known. Meet Mr. Cross, who just approached a German woman working in a field:

Grif: Have you seen any black boys?

Barb: No, and if I had, I would not tell you

Grif: Why not?

Barb: Because you would take them back into slavery

Grif: But my good woman, don't you know you would be disobeying the law of the country if you help them escape?

Barb: know the law of God, and I don't care about that law of the country.

Grif: Does your husband feel as you do about this matter?

Barb: As much as I do. Thus the preacher established another station on the Underground Railroad.

In the early years of the Underground Railroad the fugitive slaves were

mostly males under the age of 40 that ran away individually or with a partner.⁷ As time went on, larger numbers gathered together for the trek.. The East, Osborn, Bonine, Jones, and James families in Cass County hired a number of Blacks and from casual observation no one knew if they were Free or fugitives and thus gave many slaves anonymity and some degree of safety.

The number of slaves that passed through Cass County has been has been a topic of much conjecture.⁸ Howard Rogers, author of the 1875 History of Cass County, contacted Erastus Hussey, the U.G.R.R. agent in Battle Creek, who estimated that fifteen hundred runaway slaves were fed and forwarded by him during the days of the Underground Railroad. Pamela Brown Thomas, wife of Dr. Nathan Thomas of Schoolcraft, the first physician in Kalamazoo County, a founding member of the Republican party, and Abolitionist, claims the doctor assisted 1,000 to 1,500 individuals to escape bondage.⁹ In 1843 Dr. Thomas was recruited by Rev. Cross to be operate a station on the Underground Railroad. Mrs. Thomas wrote in an addendum to her husband's autobiography that

“Zachariah Shugart, a Quaker on Young's Prairie in Cass County, was to bring the cargoes here[to Schoolcraft], and my husband had them taken to Mr. Erastus Hussey, a Quaker in Battle Creek. They soon began to arrive

⁷ J. C. Furnas. *The Americans A Social History of the United States 1587 - 1914*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons) pp 399-401.

⁸The U. S. Park Service in a comprehensive study of the Underground Railroad stated that “Most enslaved Africans who traveled the Underground Railroad are credited with beginning their journeys unaided and completing their emancipation without assistance. Each decade in which slavery was legal in the United States is said to have increased both the public perception of a secretive network and the number of people willing to aid escaping slaves. Further, the researchers estimated that about 100,000 persons successfully escaped slavery between 1790 and 1860. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service Theme Study, September, 1998. Internet: ket.org/underground/history/kyunderground. (Available on line 3/24/2005)

⁹Rogers, p. 132-3.; “Dr. Nathan Thomas House” Online. Internet. 14 January 2005. Available: www.cr.gov/nr/travel/underground/me1.htm. The Thomas house is located at East Cass Street in Schoolcraft and tours are available by appointment by writing: Schoolcraft Historical Society, P. O. Box 638, Schoolcraft, MI 49087.

in loads of from six to twelve. This brought much hard work to me and great expense to my husband.” “Often after my little ones were asleep and I thought the labor of the day was over, Friend Shugart would drive up with a load of hungry people to be fed and housed for the night.”...

She also tells us:

“One of the most intelligent of escaping fugitives, Henry Bibb, came to our house with Mr. Treadwell of Jackson. My husband invited a houseful of friends and neighbors to hear him tell of his life in slavery. He also sang some of [John Greenleaf] Whittier’s anti-slavery songs with a voice and feeling that were very affecting.”

Further Mrs. Thomas related that at the close of the Civil War:

“a colored man, George Harris who had lived in this county several years after escaping from bondage, came to see us and told of his experience as a soldier. He said he offered to enlist in this state [Michigan] when the first African troops were called for, but he was refused on account of his color - he was a light skinned mulatto. Later he learned his name was on the roll for drafting. Preferring to go as a volunteer, he went to Boston and enlisted in a colored regiment[the 54th or 55th Massachusetts Infantry] and was at the taking of Charleston [,South Carolina in 1865]. He said he knew many in the same regiment who had been in Canada and came back to the U. S. to help fight for the freedom of their brethren. They told him of being aided by my husband when escaping from slavery. Then he turned toward him, saying, “Doctor, that is the way you helped take Charleston.”¹⁰

¹⁰ *Nathan M. Thomas*. Cassopolis, Michigan: Stanton B. Thomas 1925. pp.110-112.

At first the slave running was done entirely by night, and the utmost precautions taken to escape observation; but as time went on and public sentiment became more sympathetic; fugitives were taken from UGRR station to another in broad daylight. Later some escaped slaves worked and lived in northern states as if they were free, but always clustered around their friends, the Quakers for protection. Freed Blacks would harbor fugitive slaves, but usually directed the fugitives to Quakers believing that a slave catcher would not be as physically brutal to a White as he would be to a Black caught harboring a runaway.

The Underground Railroad in Cass County

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 banned slavery from the territories of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan. At that time a few slaves were already living in these territories. Between 1790 and 1830 a gradual emancipation of slaves had taken place in the northern states had occurred as their slavery laws had been struck down. Prior to 1833, some Canadian slaves migrated to one of the Northern border states where the U. S. federal slave law was not rigidly enforced. Two popular crossing points from Canada to the U. S. for slaves were Detroit and Niagra Falls. However, in 1833 slavery was totally outlawed in the British Empire of which Canada was a part and became a haven for fugitive slaves.

Slavery was abolished in the northern states by 1830, but many state legislatures imposed a myriad of punitive laws resulting in racial discrimination, culminating with Indiana's constitutional ban on the admission of "Blacks" into that state in 1851. These legislative actions were usually complimented by

equally discriminatory community feelings. Many Michigan citizens deliberately disobeyed or ignored its state's black laws as well as their neighbor's prejudices.¹¹

The Blacks that settled in Calvin and Porter townships of Cass County during the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s were allowed to purchase property and granted privileges that most ex-slave residents of Michigan and elsewhere were denied. They were given legal rights and the use of the court system. African Americans had:

- The right to an attorney,
- The right to testify against white offenders,
- The right to bail,
- The right of habeas corpus
- The right to sue and be sued, and
- The right to a trial by a jury.¹²

Many African Americans wanted to vote in presidential elections, and Mr. Gordon, a resident of the second ward in Detroit sued his election board. The case was eventually heard by the Michigan Supreme Court which declared that a man followed the condition of his father and when an individual was of more than half Saxon (white) blood, he should have been allowed to vote. Thus, after 1846 mulattos with indistinct African characteristics were allowed to cast a vote in presidential elections.¹³

¹¹Benjamin C. Wilson "Kentucky Kidnappers, Fugitives, and Abolitionists In antebellum Cass County, Michigan." *Michigan History*. 1970. pp339-40

¹²Dorothy Emmer, "The Civil and Political Status of the Negro in Michigan and the Northwest Before 1870." (M.A. thesis, University of Detroit, 1938); Ben Wilson "Kentucky Kidnappers, Fugitives, and Abolitionists In Antebellum Cass County, Michigan." p.340-1.

¹³Michigan Supreme Court ruling in 1846 ruling, which substantially followed a previous ruling in Ohio on

African Americans property owners paid property taxes and operated schools in Calvin township; and as of 1855, there were legally able to vote in school elections.¹⁴ “The removal of the ban against black participation in school elections by the Michigan legislature was attributed Calvin Township,” wrote David M. Katzman in an article entitled “Rural Blacks in Michigan.”¹⁵

The National Democrat of Cassopolis, Michigan on April 12, 1856, gives us an idea of the feeling of at least 50% of the local white inhabitants when they printed:

“Fifteen Negroes voted in Calvin Township in this county at the late Township election. The corrupt and unprincipled [township] board who would permit such a thing to be done, who would violate their oaths of office, who would thus attempt to disgrace their township, deserve with execration of all good and true men. This is a part of the creed of the Negro worshipers in this latitude, their anti-Nebraskaism, their knownothingism, all tend that way. They would disfranchise every citizen of foreign birth, and permit Negroes to vote. Citizens of Cass County, will you submit to all this? On that board are Jefferson Osborn, your County Treasurer! Mark him! Calvin Township has for many years been an abolition township, but never, until this spring, have they carried matters with so high a hand. Such ‘going to bed with Dinah’ may suit Treasury

the same subject, declaring that a man followed the condition of his father and when an individual was of more than half Saxon (white) blood he should have been allowed to vote. Blanche Coggan, “The Underground Railroad in Michigan.” *The Negro History Bulletin*. p. 125 Machine copy of article found in Underground Railroad File in the Niles District Library, Niles Michigan. George Fox, “The Underground Railroad” Copy of speech given by Mr. Fox in South Bend, Indiana, and located in the Underground Railroad File in the History Library, Cassopolis, Michigan. Mr. Fox was a noted historian and frequent contributor to *Michigan History Magazine*. *Niles Republican* (Niles, Michigan) April 12, 1845 and November 8, 1856; *National Democrat* (Cassopolis, Michigan) July 12, 1856.

¹⁴Emmer, p. 341.

¹⁵David M. Katzman. “Rural Blacks in Michigan.” *Michigan Challenge* Vol. 9: June, 1969. p. 31.

Eaters, but it don't us.”

In the 1830s and 1840s Quakers settled along the border between Calvin and Porter townships and in the southern half of Penn township. In the mid-thirties through the 1840s freed Blacks settled in Calvin township. Some of the Free Africans had been employed by the Quakers or followed them. Other Free African Americans came directly to Calvin township because of the availability of low-priced land, employment and the developing African American community.. According the U. S. Census figures the “Black” population of Cass County increased from 5 in 1840 to 389 by 1850.

In 1846 it was estimated that there were about one hundred¹⁶ runaway slaves in Cass County, mostly in Penn and Calvin Townships in what were known as a East and Osborn family settlements of Quakers.

People of Color who possessed freedom papers had to travel through slave states as they moved north and westward, where every step they took could lead them straight back into bondage or worse. Most traveled in larger groups for even though they possessed all the correct documentation to prove they were free. In the slave states they were perceived as “walking wealth.” Slavers could overpower an individual, destroy his manumission papers, and sell him to anyone willing to ignore the pleas of the victim.

When African Americans, Jack and Betty James and their family moved from North Hampton County, North Carolina, he contacted Charlotte Rhodes, a

¹⁶The 1882 *History of Cass County* is quite positive the figure was closer to 50 (p. 110) than 100 stated in Rogers *History of Cass County* .p. 133.

respected friend and white woman. She prepared a document in which she certified that she had been “well acquainted with Jack James, a free man of Color for many years”. She also stated that she never doubted that Jack’s mother was a Free Woman. Ms Rhodes also stated that she was acquainted with Jack’s three children: Ervin, Jesse and Lang. This document was dated, signed and notarized. Furthermore, the Clerk of the Court vouched for the honesty of Ms. Rhodes, and certified that Jack with his wife, two sons and one daughter had appeared before him. He described their physical characteristics: “ Jack James is round built about five feet five inches high has a scar on his breast in the center. Dark Mulatto Colored and about fifty-seven years of age. Ervin, his son, is about five feet seven inches high, a little lighter than his Father, has a remarkable finger on his left hand, the fore finger having been cut at the end makes it appear that there are two nails on one finger,. he is about 20 years old. Jesse James, the youngest son, is a light mulatto about five feet four inches high, rather slender built and about seventeen years of age. Betty James was described as “nearly white, rather of the Indian appearance, slender built and about forty years old. Lang James is about the color of her mother rather dusky and about fourteen years of age. The clerk believed that Jack and Betty were “regularly married” and are all Free persons of color about to remove themselves somewhere to the west. The document was signed November 11, 1831.

In Anna-Lisa Cox’s book *A Stronger Kinship*, she describes the trip northward of the Conners and the Tyler families. William Bright Conner had a turpentine plantation in Snow Hill, Greene County, North Carolina, but he and his wife had dreamed of raising their family free of the racism they had known all their lives. They were free blacks and their families had lived in the Carolinas for almost two centuries. The large party traveled together for safety reasons. They

were stopped often on their journey through the slave states, but their “free papers” attested to their status and were honored. Despite the group’s good team of horses and a wagon in which the younger children could ride, progress was slow. Far into their journey, but still in the slave states, an aunt lost her manumission papers. The next time they were stopped by a group of white “patrollers; they were helpless to save her, and she was taken. The effect this must have had on the children and their families can only be imagined. Terrified and grieving, the group decided it would thereafter travel only at night until reaching the free states.¹⁷

For the most part Cass County Quakers maintained the ideals of personal and religious freedom and equality. No doubt some freed African Americans as well as the fugitive enslaved lived in barns and other outbuildings on the property of the Quakers for whom they worked. Stephen Bogue and James Bonine, Quakers and strong anti-slavery activists, are credited with the concept of providing cabins and/or small acreage to African Americans wanting to settle in the area. According to legend if an African American family settled on and improved a small plot of land over a period of time and worked for the Quaker,

¹⁷They were not out of danger yet, even when they finally reached the shores of the Ohio River. On the morning they were planning to cross to a new freedom, three white men stopped by their camp and tried to persuade William Bright Conner to trade his horses. He was unwilling to do so, and the traders soon left. Before long, though, one of the men came riding back and told Conner to pack up his belongings and gather his group as quickly and quietly as possible because his companions intended to ambush them at the bank of the river and sell them into slavery. This man then told them he would return at dusk, dressed in black, to lead them away from any pursuers and guide them to another crossing just downstream. The Conners then had to make a terrible decision. They had firsthand experience of the treachery and cruelty of whites who saw them only as chattel. They could cross the river at the pont they were sure of and soon be on freedoms shore, or they could risk trusting a white man who seemed willing to betray his friends for their sake. In the agony of uncertainty, the Conners finally decided to wait for a man to return. While packing up their belongings, they must have tried to calm the children, putting on a brave face for the youngest of the group, but everyone must have been on edge. The man finally returned, along, as he had promised. He motioned to them that they were not to speak to him or to one another during their flight. All night the group made their torturous and silent way through the woods until it was almost dawn. Their rescuer directed them to a crossing where they were able to pass unmolested. As they did so, they could see the other crossing and heard an angry roar from the mob that was waiting there for them. They reached a free state at last but continued their journey into Canada and returned to Michigan settling in Cass County.

the property owner would allow them to remain for a number of years. No deeds were ever given for these small homesteads. Over time a number of African Americans settled in "Ramptown," an area with 50-100 cabins that lay about a mile south of the present-day intersection of M - 60 and Calvin Center Road.¹⁸ The blacks as part of their compensation for clearing the land were allowed to raise crops and livestock on small pieces of land and were encouraged to sell their excess production. In this way, People of Color were able to accumulate capital and buy real estate. People like George Redfield, who had acquired between eight and ten thousand acres of land in Cass County, sold acreage to Blacks on liberal credit terms allowing them to pay their mortgages from the proceeds of their crops and produce.

Henry Shepard was born into slavery in 1817. In his early twenties from Kentucky, he fled bondage twice, succeeding the second time in getting to Canada. Shortly thereafter, he returned to the United States, settled on a small farm in Ramptown, and worked for Stephen Bogue. He was a successful farmer and became a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Henry had fifteen children by two wives. He was in his mid-forties when the Civil War broke out, but nevertheless he enlisted in the Michigan First Colored Regiment. Many Black men from Cass County volunteered. Many of these men knew the South and the

¹⁸Recently(2002-2005) a Western Michigan student, Amanda Campbell has been trying to validate the location of a Ramptown settlement that was on the west side of Calvin Center Road south of M - 60. "Ramps" are a cousin to an onion and plants grows in the spring in low, wet areas; Many southern recipes call for them. Another way and less glamorous way of looking at the subject of Ramptown is to think of it as a labor camp similar to those provided for seasonal migrant workers. The result of the archeological survey verified Ramptown's existence, but also indicated that it was not a single site, but a number of cabins and residences spread out over a wide area. The Quakers in exchange for their labor clearing land or harvesting crops allowed the Free and figtive enslaved people to live and farm 5 - 10 acre parcels, where most lived for some time until they either were able to purchase their own land or moved from the area. In those days foot travel was common, and it is logical that people lived near where they worked. [According to the 1870 U. S. census, the Ramptown area was occupied by Irish Air Line Railroad employees laying tracks in the area.]

temperament of the men they would be fighting. Yet they were deprived of the right to become soldiers until 1863. Many whites in the North were terrified of the idea of the Blacks with guns killing White men. During the Civil War the mortality rate among black troops was 40 percent higher than for white Union troops due in part of the Confederates “no quarter” policy against black soldiers. This meant that a black Union soldier going into battle must either win or die. After the war, Henry Shepard returned to Cass County; purchased a home in Vandalia; and after his daughter and son-in-law had established themselves in Covert, in Van Buren County, he moved there in 1877.¹⁹

Stephen Bogue was an uncle to William Jones, known as “Nigger Bill” because of his sympathy for the enslaved. Wright Modlin of Williamsville and William Holman Jones of Calvin Township, acted as Underground Railroad conductors and escorted African Americans from Kentucky via the Quaker line to Cass County. Jones made two round trips a year to Kentucky. In Cass County U.G.R.R. stations were located at the home of Stephen Bogue and Zachariah Shugart.²⁰ Other Quakers harbored African Americans as well.²¹

Zachariah Shugart kept an “Account Book.” which began on October (10th month) 7, 1838.²², and listed the names of 137 individuals that he had personally

¹⁹ Henry’s son-in-law, William Frank Conner, had put a deposit on land in Covert, then Deerfield, prior to serving in the Civil War. When William Conner left for the Civil War his wife was expecting their first baby. William Conner after being born in North Carolina in 1838 came to Michigan in the early 1850s with his parents and others. William faithfully sent home money from his Civil War pay to pay for the land on which he had made a deposit. He was politically active in Covert and became the first black man to hold the elected position of Justice of the Peace in Michigan.

²⁰ Howard East, “A Short History of Vandalia,” History Library, Cass District Library, Cassopolis, Michigan. About 1930. P. 33.

²¹ A stone marker and with bronze plate marks the site of Stephen Bogue’s house on M - 60 about three miles east of Cassopolis.

²² A copy of this Journal is in the Underground Railroad File at Niles District Library, Niles, Michigan

harbored and/or transported from 1841 through 1846:²³

²³The book was passed down to Shugart descendants by Susanna Shugart who presented it to Grant Overturf on May 11, 1881. Subsequently the Journal, owned at that time by G. B. Wilson of Elberon, Iowa, was loaned to the Niles Community Library for copying in July, 1964.] A machine copy was made as well as a typewritten list of the names of the 137 fugitive slaves listed in the Journal that Zachariah and his wife harbored on their property and helped for freedom:

“Julius Washington
Frances Johnson
George Smith
William Williams
Peter Tone
Samuel Strawther
William Cole
Thomas Something
Mary Mills
Hannah Kirkwood (3 ch)
Jurden Johnson
Ellen Something
Emily Strawther
Albert Wilson
Noah Johnson
Something
Obed What
Andrew Davis
Addison Davis
George Harry
Willis Rix
Selly Rix (2 ch)
Henry Garnes
Harthy Garnes
Georg What
Harriett What (3 ch)
Washington Goet
Goet
?
Goet
?
John Wesley
Lazreth Wesley
John Robertson
Christopher Ritleherson
Charles Spotford
Isom Buck
Match Davis

“ch” as used on previous list - was taken to mean children thus (3 ch) is three children.

By 1861 African Americans had made their way to all corners of the what is today the province of Ontario and became an integral part of the economy. More than half were from the United States. However, contrary to popular opinion, they were mainly free blacks, not runaway slaves - immigrants not fugitives. In many respects Canada was unkind to both free and enslaved African Americans. Although technically entitled to equality before the law, they experienced persistent discrimination. Whites called them ‘nigger’ to their faces, and worse. Still, when the Civil War ended most of the African Americans chose to return to Canada. That country was not all they had hoped for, but despite their white neighbors, it had become home. For the 40 percent of the black population who had been born in the province of Ontario, it had always been home to them.²⁴

In contrast to the number of runaway slaves the high proportion of Free African Americans that settled in Cass County (Calvin, Penn and Porter Townships) and in the Province of Ontario, the researchers have concluded that the majority of the African Americans using the Underground Railroad were free blacks and not fugitives from slavery. In those days there were no highway signs or maps to guide a traveler regardless of race. Also runaway slaves were mostly illiterate and inadequately prepared to earn a living and support themselves.]

Recapturing “lost” slaves was a lucrative business. Owning a slave was a status symbol; men would mortgage their property in order to buy slaves. By the 1850s owing a slave in the South was the equivalent of owning a piece of

²⁴Wayne, Michael. *Black Population of Canada West*.

the American Dream. Both Whites and African Americans owned enslaved people. By 1860 only about 25% of the Southern population owned slaves. No wonder so many Southerners were willing to fight for their state's right to continue to hold people in bondage, for they were eager to preserve the promise that someday they too could become slave owners and enjoy the status that position brought. If an enslaved person ran away, the owner would offer a reward for his/her return. These rewards gave rise to slave hunters who were willing to go to great lengths to capture fugitives. When captured, escaped slaves often beaten and tortured in order to terrify the other enslaved people. No doubt the slave raiders that visited Cass County envisioned a gold mine awaiting them as they rode North prepared to re-capture as many as they could.

Background on the Kentucky Raids

A number of fugitive slaves who temporarily settled in Cass County near the Osborn and East settlements were from Bourbon County, Kentucky. Kentucky slave hunters organized for the purpose of recapturing them. Several separate raids by Kentuckians took place into Michigan beginning in 1845.

During the winter of 1846-47 an association of Bourbon County, planters formed at Covington, Kentucky. Their mission was to recapture the slaves that had been "stolen by the rascally Abolitionists." Following the Covington meeting a young Kentuckian entered the law office of Charles E. Stuart of Kalamazoo, under the guise of being a student studying law.²⁵ This young man used the surname "Carpenter," and was in reality a spy for the slave holders. He intended to become

²⁵Stuart later became a governor and a U. S. Senator from Michigan

familiar with the neighboring counties and locate the errant slaves. However, his Southern accent betrayed him, and he fled Stuart's office. According to Dr. Ben Wilson, Carpenter, posed as abolitionist representing an Eastern newspaper when he visited Cass County and quietly gained first-hand information on the number and exact locations of the runaways and the areas of Kentucky from which they had fled.²⁶

The Crosswhite case in Marshall resulted from the Kentuckians first attempt in January, 1847, to re-capture six African American members of the Adam Crosswhite family. After an angry verbal confrontation between the Kentucky raiders, leading citizens of Marshall, and about forty African Americans, the Deputy Sheriff arrested the four raiders for assault, battery and housebreaking. The Crosswhite family escaped to Canada via the train accompanied by two town leaders. Eleven months later Kentuckians, Francis Troutman and David Giltner in Federal court sued seven Marshall residents including three town leaders and four African Americans for the value of the Crosswhites as slaves. The trials which began in June, 1848 in Detroit were influenced by national presidential aspirations of the judge himself, Henry Clay and Lewis Cass. United States Supreme Court Justice John McLean was the judge, and he was actively seeking the Whig nomination for President and was opposed to slavery. However, he believed that he had a duty to obey the law, regardless of his personal beliefs. During the trial considerable political pressure was exerted to ensure that the case go against the defendants. Lewis Cass was nominated as the Democratic

²⁶Wilson., p. 343-4.

²⁷Information for this section unless cited otherwise came from the following article: John C. Sherwood. "One flame in the Inferno The Legend of Marshall's Crosswhite Affair." Michigan History Magazine (March/April 1989) pp. 41 - 5.

party's presidential candidate, and it was important for his candidacy to convey that Michigan sympathized with the slave-holding states to ensure the Southern vote in the election. The trial was contentious and the community was closely involved in the progress of the case.

During the trial thirty witnesses testified, and McLean gave his charge to the jury in which he reviewed and commented on the testimony in great detail.”²⁸ Judge McLean admonished the jurors to render a decision based on the law, not their consciences:

“In the law is found [the] only safe rule by which controversies between man and man can be decided. In no supposable case, has a juror the right to substantiate his own views, and disregard established principles of law. A well instructed conscience is a proper guide for individual action; but when we are called upon to act upon the interest of others, we violate our oaths, and show ourselves unworthy of so important a trust, when we adopt, as a rule of action, our own convictions of what the law should be, rather than what it is.”²⁹

The trial ended in a hung jury; the village of Marshall was ecstatic! Historians believe the shockwaves of the Kentucky Raid incidents and Crosswhite's trial had ramifications on Lewis Cass' bid to become President. He lost the election to the Whig standard bearer, General Zachary Taylor, whose immediate fame was as the hero of the War with Mexico that concluded in 1848.

Battle Creek, Calhoun County, Michigan

²⁸Moorman, Pam. “Cass Quakers shook pro-slavers.” *Kalamazoo Gazette* B-11. Copy of article in Vertical File, Local History Library, Cassopolis, Michigan.

²⁹*Ibid.*

About the first of August, 1847, seven months after the Crosswhite raid, thirteen strangers from Kentucky arrived in Battle Creek. Before evening, Erastus Hussey heard about the outsiders. Hussey went to the hotel, charged them with being slave hunters, and told them to leave town at once because the people of Battle Creek would not allow fugitive slaves to be returned to bondage. The Kentuckians quietly left town.

The Kentucky Raid in Cass County, Michigan³⁰

On August 16, 1847, several days after leaving Battle Creek, at least eighteen marauding Kentuckians lead by Boone County Sheriff John L. Graves, crossed the St. Joseph River and entered Porter township of Cass County. They continued northward and halted in a wooded area near the southeast corner of Calvin township and Shavehead Lake. Leaving their large wagon behind, the Kentuckians divided up into small parties and raided four different locations in Penn and Porter townships looking for fugitives.³¹ They planned to rendezvous later and return to their wagon. The raiding party had maps and descriptions of the houses where the fugitives were likely to be found from Carpenter's previous visit. The success of the plan depended on swift execution and a quick retreat back to Indiana where the laws and public sentiment were in the Kentuckians favor.

³⁰Howard S. Rogers, History of Cass County 1825 - 1875 pp. 131 - 142, being the reference most contemporary with the events is largely relied upon in this description of the Kentucky Raid. Abstracts from other references appear as footnotes later in this subsection. Unless otherwise cited, Rogers, is the authority for this section. The details differ in number, location of the raids, and who did what and when, but the Kentucky Raid did take place in Cass County In August, 1847 and it is important not to throw the wheat out with the chaff in trying to figure out exactly who, what, where, why, and when relative to this important event in Cass County history.

³¹The mystery of what happened to the Kentuckian's covered wagon has been a topic of much conjecture over the years. Some say that the wagons were rolled down the hill on the west side of Birch Lake and lay buried in the mud at the bottom of the lake; this lake property was owned by the Easts. Others say that the wagons were put into Shavehead Lake; the Osborns owned land adjacent to that lake.

One party of Kentuckians went to Josiah Osborn's farm near Shavehead Lake on the Calvin/Porter township line where an old man and his two sons were seized, handcuffed, and taken. No resistance was offered by the enslaved or their friends, but the news of their re-capture spread like wildfire through the neighboring Quaker and African American communities.

Further north on William East's farm, four slaves were taken. One of those seized was a woman with a baby. Upon hearing the commotion the woman fled the cabin and left her baby on the bed. The Kentuckian named A. Stevens, a Baptist minister, discovered the child; and said, "If you want a cow, you can entice her with her calf." Thus, Rev. Stevens picked up the child, made it cry, and left the cabin. The mother rushed from her hiding place and was captured. The child was claimed by Rev. Stevens as his, although the child had been born in a free state; but he claimed that in slave states the child followed the "condition" of the mother. Young slave children were worth \$200 in Kentucky, and Stevens believed the baby was a valuable piece of property.³²

A third group of raiders went to the home of Zachariah Shugart near Christiana Creek in Vandalia. A family of fugitives had leased a piece of land from Mr. Shugart and built a cabin. At Shugart's, a man was captured, but his wife escaped through a window and gave the alarm. Mr. Shugart carried the warning to Stephen Bogue's home, and Bogue rode to the county seat of Cassopolis to alert others.

The raiders also went to the Bogue farm and captured William Merriman, known to the Southerners as "Lewis," who was living there in Henry Shepard's small

³² 1882 *History of Cass County*. p. 112.

cabin.³³ Merriman offered the only resistance of the night. After Merriman heard a knock on the door and recognized the voice of the brother of his former master, he attempted to flee but was stuck down with the butt of a riding crop, severely cutting his ear and the side of his head.

The groups, who had conducted the raids at the Osborn and East farms, continued northward toward Vandalia and waited south of the village for their compatriots. As the night progressed the word of the Kentucky Raid spread and free African Americans and Abolitionists gathered around the Osborn/East raiders. The crowd grew larger, louder, and more aggressive and were led by Moses Brown, a sturdy blacksmith and staunch abolitionist. The two parties of raiders met at O'Dell's mill, south of Vandalia about the same time a large party from Cassopolis, to whom Bogue had carried the warning, arrived. The Kentucky raiders were armed with pistols and Bowie knives, and the abolitionists carried shot-guns, rifles, axes and clubs. Angry words led to threats, and the crowd was ready for battle, but the Quakers urged that peaceable and lawful measures be employed. The mob was determined not to let the Kentuckians and their enslaved Blacks retreat southward. After much discussion, the Kentuckians agreed to go to Cassopolis to put their case before the court and prove their human property as required by law.

William Jones was in the midst of the heated dispute. He disarmed one of the raiders who drew a gun on him; forced Rev. Stevens to carry the baby; and ordered Kentuckian Hubbard Buckner to dismount so that an injured man could ride. Jones then voluntarily shackled himself to one of the enslaved and remained

³³ Ibid.

so until the group reached Cassopolis.³⁴ As the two sides marched toward the

³⁴Rogers History says they went to the East settlement and four were taken, one of them a wench belonging to ___ Stevens, a Baptist Preacher, being secured by Strategy. She was in a cabin apart from the rest, and being alarmed by the noise incident to the capture of the others, fled, leaving her picaninny on the bed. The Rev. S. Discovered the baby, and coarsely saying, "If you want a cow you can tole her with a calf," shouldered it and started for the road, whereupon the mother rushed from her place of concealment and was secured.

Miss Clara Bonine said "One party of the slave owners went to the home of Josiah Osborn in Calvin while another group rode north to Penn Township. The first captures were made at the Osborn station where three slaves were taken without resistance, but the alarm was spread and a number of free Negroes and abolitionists gathered around the party of raiders.

The second party went first to the East settlement and then on to the home of Zachariah Shugart, whose home was located near the Christiana Creek on land now included in the village of Vandalia. They captured three men, one woman and a small child. The child was claimed by one of the raiders, Rev. A. Stevens, on the plea that although the child had been born in a free territory it followed conditions of the mother, the rule in the slave states. Young slave children were worth \$200 in Kentucky and it was valuable property. At the Shugart home a man was captured and his wife escaped through a window and gave the alarm. Mr. Shugart carried the warning to Stephen Bogue and Mr. Bogue rode to Cassopolis to give the alarm there. Three raiders went to the Bogue farm and captured a man living there in a small cabin. The man resisted and had to be secured by force. Then the raiders turned southward for their retreat into Indiana.

The 1882 History of Cass County p. 112-3 Several months before the Kentucky Raid, a family of five fugitive slaves , tired, foot-sore and sick, had arrived at Mr. Osborn's on their way to Canada, and that been allowed to stop and rest. Subsequently, as they were satisfied to remain, thinking they had traveled far enough north to be safe, they had been given employment on the farm. The family consisted of an old man, his wife, two sons and a daughter. They occupied a small house a few rods from the one in which the Osborn family lived. The three males of this slave family were the first persons captured by the raiders. They were seized and handcuffed in bed making little or no resistance. The mother and daughter escaped by jumping from a window and concealing themselves. The men manacled together, were marched out to the road. Josiah Osborn immediately sent out messengers who apprised the farmers in the neighborhood of the capture and in an almost incredible short time, a large and excited company had gathered at the house. The party who made the arrest at Osborn's had intended to await the return of their comrades from Young's Prairie, but finding themselves surrounded by ta throng of angry and threatening men became uneasy.... In the meantime the other company of slave hunters had made captures in Penn Township and met with a reception similar to that of the party at Osborn's

They first went to the East Settlement in Calvin where William East and several sons all members of the Society of Friends had their residence. Here they captured three men, a woman and a chile. The raiders were resisted by one of the male slaves, but they battered down the door of his cabin and overpowered him. Then found lying upon the bed a child about two years old, which one of the Kentuckians, The Rev. A. Stevens, a Baptist minister, claimed as his property. He was the owner of the mother and although the child had been born on fee soil, it was declared that the child followed the condition of its mother. The mother had made her escape when the cabin was attacked and could not be found. But the Rev Stevens secured her by a strategy. Taking the babe in his arms and mimicking its cry, he started toward the road. The voice of the infant reached the mother, as was intended and emerging from her hiding place and was made a captive.

The raiders went next to the neighborhood of Zachariah Shugart's house which stood where Vandalia is now. One of the families of fugitives who lived here had leased a piece of land of Mr. Shugart, built a snug cabin upon it and were prospering finely. The cabin was approached stealthily and suddenly entered. A Negro man was seized but his wife made her escape unobserved through a window. She ran to Zachariah Shugart's, aroused the family, gave the alarm and then secreted herself and managed to escape capture. Shughart mounted his horse and rode to the home of Stephen Bogue who lived about two miles west. Bogue had a very fleet horse which he saddled and rode d to Cassopolis to sound the alarm and to have the kidnappers arrested. Passing on to Stephen Bogue's, the party secured a man who lived in a cabin upon his farm. Here they met with determined and vigorous resistance. The door of the cabin was securely fastened . The Negro's master demanded admittance, but his voice was recognized and the

county seat, telegrams were sent to Niles and Dowagiac summoning two prominent lawyers with pro-abolitionist views Ezekial S. Smith and James Sullivan to represent the fugitives..

Once in Cassopolis, the Kentuckians applied for a writ of restitution from Justice of the Peace, David M. Howell in accordance with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793.³⁵ Since the Cass County African Americans had the right to testify against white offenders, the fugitives were summoned to appear as witnesses in the kidnaping charges filed against the slave holders. In due course the Kentuckians were served with a writ of habeas corpus, and were indicted for kidnaping, assault, and battery. The fugitive, William Merriman, who had been badly beaten during his capture filed formal charges of assault and battery against his assailants. Henry Shepard, who owned the house Merriman and two others lived in, lodged a complaint against Jack Graves, the Kentuckian who broke into his house.³⁶The ten alleged slaves were taken to a second story room in the Baldwin Tavern for protection with a guard placed at the door before they were transferred for safety reasons to the county jail.³⁷ Ishmael Lee, Stephen Bogue and a Mr. Baugham stood guard. Since Alexander H. Redfield, Circuit Court Commissioner of Cass County, was not available to hear the case, the anti-slavery people got an

occupant of the cabin refused to throw open the door. It was soon battered down; however, the black man was overpowered, though he fought stoutly against his enemy. The blow which finally prostrated him was dealt with the butt-end of a heavy riding whip and it cut a terrible gash through his ear and across the side of his head.

³⁵Debian Marty. "The Kentucky Raid: Lessons From Practical Abolitionism." Paper presented at Borderlands III Underground Railroad Conference September 16-18, 2004. Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky. p. The names of the men from Kentucky are as follows: 1.Thorton Timberlake,2.George. W. Brashear, 3.Franklin B. Rust, 4.James P. Stephens, 5.Anselm Bristol, 6.John L. Graves, 7.Hubbards T. Buckner, 8. William M. Stephens or Griffin, 9. Thomas C. Willis,10. Washington Cleveland, 11. Fielding Huffman, 12. Obadiah Scott, 13.John Hoshall, 14.James C. Lemon. Other Kentuckians present but not arrested were Milton W. Graves, Richard B.

Carpenter and Richard G. Buckler.

³⁶Marty, p. 3.

³⁷Ibid. [The names of the slaves were as follows: Jonathan, Robert and Gabriel Hughbanks; Lewis Gardner and his daughter, Mary; Joseph, Cena and Benjamin Sanford; five members of the Eubank family, and Lewis (a.k.a. William Merriman)]

adjournment, and Berrien County Commissioner Ebenezer McIlvain, who unknown to the men from Kentucky an agent for the Underground Railroad, was asked to hear the case.

On August 20th at the Cassopolis Court house, local attorney George B. Tanner argued that the raiders had acted within the law and that the local officials, instead of impeding the slave catchers, had a duty to assist them. Although Tanner was absolutely correct as to the law, he was also realistic and advised his clients that the fugitives would not be returning to Kentucky with them. McIlvain listened to Tanner and to the fugitive's attorneys and ruled against the raiders on the technicality that they had failed to present a certified copy of the Kentucky statutes on slavery. McIlvain ordered the release of the ten fugitives. Turner was upset and charged the judge with an illegal and corrupt ruling.³⁸

Immediately after McIlvain's decision was rendered, the enslaved were taken to the home of Ishmael and Sallie (East) Lee, where a party of (43 slaves and nine guards with Zachariah Shugert in charge started toward Canada. This party probably included all the fugitives from Cass County that had initially come from Bourbon, Boone and Kenton counties in Kentucky.

With the fugitives gone, all of the criminal proceedings against the Kentuckians were dropped, and they were permitted to gather up their remaining property and departed. Josiah Osborn left Cassopolis ahead of the Kentucky raiders. When Osborn had gone a short distance into Calvin township, he saw four African Americans armed with guns in a corn field. They admitted they were waiting for

³⁸Emmer, "The Civil and Political Status of the Negro in Michigan and the Northwest Before 1870." p. 46; George N. Fuller, ed., *Michigan Centennial History*, 5 volumes. (Chicago, 1939) 1: 353.

the slave hunters. Josiah, a Quaker, persuaded them to give up their murderous plan. About a half hour later the raiders passed by safely.³⁹

An article entitled "Slavery Days Recalled" appeared in an issue of *The Cassopolis Vigilant* on July 28, 1904, in which Perry Sanford, the last African American survivor of the Kentucky Raid, shared his recollections. He was raised in Greenup County, Kentucky, and sold into Boone County and then into Kenton and Sanford counties. He left Kentucky in 1847 via the underground railroad. Upon reaching Cass County he shared a cabin owned by Henry Shepard with William Merriman and Rube Stephens, They were employed by Stephen Bogue and the cabin was a short distance from the Bogue's house. The morning of the raid a knock on the door awakened them and the person's voice was recognized as Sheriff Jack Graves, the brother of William Merriman's master and Perry Sanford's master. The men began yelling in an attempt to arouse someone in the Bogue household. The slave hunters smashed a window and thrust a double-barreled shot gun through the opening. The slaves kept a heavy hickory club in their cabin, and Merriman grabbed the club and struck at Graves, who retreated. Merriman escaped but was captured and beaten on his way to Bogue's house. Rube Stephens successfully escaped. Perry Sanford climbed up into the garret, crawled onto the roof, and jumped to the ground. Then he ran to Stephen Bogue's house where he was hidden. Later all three men accompanied the other fugitives to Battle Creek. When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850 all the fugitive enslaved from Battle Creek, except Perry Sanford and three others, went to

³⁹ 1882 *History of Cass County*. P. 114. The African Americas later denied that they had intended to take a life, but said their plan for was to shoot to break the men's legs and kill the horses they rode. Then the Blacks intended to escape to Canada. The said they "wanted to give the slave holders something to remember Michigan by," and it is altogether possible that their bitter hatred would have led them to shoot in such a manner as to kill instead of wound their victims.

Canada.⁴⁰

The Bristol, Elkhart County, Indiana Incident

After leaving Battle Creek, three Kentucky slavers traveled to Bristol, Elkhart County, Indiana in order to capture a runaway. No doubt the raiders planned to re-unite with those conducting raids in Cass County, Michigan and proceed South.

Runaway Slaves - A few days since several Kentuckians, who were searching for their runaway slaves, found that one of them was in the employ of Samuel Judson, Esq. of Bristol. They broke into Judson's home early in the morning and seized the old man known as Tom Harris, and handcuffed him. The noise awakened Mr. Judson, who came downstairs; whereas, the Southerners offered resistance and pointed a pistol at him. Soon afterward, a writ was served upon the Kentuckians for breaking into the house and for assault with intent to kill. Tom Harris was released and left the area and while the Kentuckians were bound over to Court, but each paid \$200 bail and was released. *We do not approve of the conduct of those who go into Slave States for the purpose of enticing Negroes away from their masters, but when they have escaped we can't say that we feel like giving a great deal of 'aid and comfort' to those who strive to re-enslave them.*

⁴⁰For forty years Perry was employed in Battle Creek by Nichols & Shepard Company's threshing machine works. William Casey, who also remained in Battle Creek, escaped capture at the William East home and threw a three-legged stool at one of the Kentuckians George W. Brashear, striking him in the stomach and resulting in injuries which afterwards reportedly caused the death of the raider. [Name of raider from Debian Marty's list of participants in the Kentucky Raid given to Barbara Cook in April, 2005.].

According to Esse Bissell Dakin in a paper given before the Northern Indiana Historical Society in April 1899, there were a number of abolitionists living on the road passing through Goshen and Bristol. The three Kentuckians that captured Tom Harris were named Joseph A. Graves, Elisha Coleman, and Hugh Longmoor and they were charged with inciting a riot and convicted, that decision was later overturned on appeal.⁴¹

The Kentucky slave owners were livid over what they termed as the “Cassopolis Outrage.” At home they sponsored meetings, wrote fiery letters to the local press and pressured their legislators for a more effective fugitive slave law. A Kentucky Legislature’s resolution was submitted to the U. S. Senate. Subsequently a report of the Senate Judiciary Committee expressed “the fearful truth that the laws now in force are inadequate to remedy the evil; or that the non-slaveholding States will not recognize or enforce them according to the obligation which it was intended they would impose on the parties to the federal compact.” Further the report urged the Senate to enact a bill to increase the penalties for hindering in the recapture of a fugitive slave.

The South Bend, Indiana, Fugitive Slave Case

In September 1849, as the Crosswhite case in Marshall was awaiting trial, John Norris of Boone County, Kentucky conducted a second raid on Cass County. About midnight on September 27th, Norris and eight associates armed with pistols and Bowie knives broke into the cabin of David Powell and his family, who had escaped from Norris two years earlier. The Powells had purchased a small tract of land and were working to pay for it. Powell and his eldest son were not at home,

⁴¹Marty. P. 7.

but the raiders captured his wife Lucy and three younger children and set out back towards Indiana, leaving behind a guard who was holding a number of African Americans that had been visiting the Powell home. The younger children were willing to accompany their mother, but the older one objected because he had recently married a free African American woman. The new wife was told that she could accompany her husband South, but declined, although Norris had guaranteed her that she would be treated well.

The Powell home was located next door to Wright Modlin, a prominent name in the Underground Railroad epic. Norris and his band with their captives had not been gone long before Modlin learned of the kidnaping and followed Norris' wagon. When Modlin arrived in South Bend, he contacted Abolitionist and Attorney Edward B. Crocker and explained the circumstances. Subsequently a writ of *habeas corpus* was issued by Elisha Egbert, probate judge of St. Joseph County and given to Deputy Sheriff Russell Day for service. Learning that the Kentuckians were armed, Day asked several citizens to accompany him in serving the writ. The deputy with his company of men overtook Norris and his captives about a mile south of town, where they had stopped to rest and feed their horses. Norris and his men showed their weapons and resisted the legal proceedings; but after considerable discussion, they agreed to go back to town and proceed to trial on the writ. There was no violence, but a crowd of 30 - 40 persons had come from town and two carried guns with them.

At Norris's request his captives were placed in jail until he could find legal counsel. Attorneys Liston and Stanfield agreed to conduct his defense while Mr. Deavitt and Mr. Crocker defended the African American captives.

Word of the disturbance spread quickly through South Bend and neighboring communities. Several large groups of people traveled from Cass County to South Bend in time for the Monday morning hearing. The main street of town teemed with hundreds of would-be rescuers, armed and unarmed, African American and white. They were angry but conducted themselves in a law-abiding manner.

When the Powells were brought into court, Norris ordered his men to un-holster their pistols and seize the fugitives. After several more tense moments, the judge convinced the Kentuckians to put down their arms and surrender. The judge then freed the Powells on a writ of habeas corpus, and the rescuers immediately escorted them back to Cass County. David Powell and his family were then taken safely to Canada.

Three months later, on December 21, 1849, John Norris filed suit in the Indiana U. S. Circuit Court against the men who had arrested him to recover the value of his slaves.⁴² The trial took place in May, 1850, before Justice James McLean, who again instructed the jury with the same respect for the law that he had demonstrated in the Crosswhite case from Marshall. The Indiana jury abided by his instructions and returned a verdict in Norris' favor for \$2,850 and this amount was proportionately assessed against eight Indiana abolitionists.⁴³

⁴²Salomon Palmer was a two-term sheriff of St. Joseph County, IN, who was named in the famous South Bend Fugitive Slave case, suffered serious legal and financial losses for his pro-slavery activities. Acting upon his principles Mr. Palmer and his associates lost most of their worldly possessions for their involvement with the Powell family and Kentucky slaver John Norris case that eventually ended up on the U. S. Supreme Court. Palmer died in 1879 and this information came from his obituary. Martin DeAgostino. "The Underground Railroad: An American Exodus. *South Bend Tribune*. February 28, 1991. Leander B. Newton, George W. Horton, Edwin B. Crocker, Solomon W. Palmer David Jordon, William Willington, Lot Day, Jr., Amable LaPierre and Wright Modlin were the men charged in the in the suit. Since Modlin was a citizen of Cass, the suit against him was dismissed; and Norris was unable to identify any of the blacks who had participated in the rescue

⁴³Ben C. Wilson, "Kentucky Kidnappers, Fugitives, and Abolitionists In Antebellum Cass County." p. 356; Esse Bissell Dakin "The Underground Railroad" paper given before the Northern Indiana Historical Society, April 29, 1899 - From the Archives of the Society. Found in the Underground Railroad file at the Niles District Library, Niles

This protracted case was ultimately appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court and highlighted two irreconcilable ideals - the rule of law against the moral imperative of slavery. The anti-Slavery Society of New York published a pamphlet of the proceedings of The South Bend Fugitive Slave Case whose verdict was then considered unjust.

Judge McLean, who had just left Washington had been listening to disunion threats for months. He sincerely believed that the Country should be held together at any sacrifice. His decision for the slave holders dashed any prospect of Judge McLean's might have had for his nomination to the U. S. presidency.⁴⁴

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850

The legal consequences of the raids by Kentuckians into several Michigan communities were far greater than the cash settlements subsequently awarded. They were responsible for loud and protracted protests from the South. Kentuckians circulated petitions and denouncements from the Legislature of Kentucky who even demanded redress from the Michigan Legislature.⁴⁵

Henry Clay was a personal friend of several Kentucky slave owners. On January 29, 1850, Clay introduced into the United States Senate his resolution demanding a more effective fugitive slave law. After heated debate the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was signed by the president on September 18. Senator Clay cited the 1847 Michigan Riot in Cass County as an example of the need to provide adequate

Michigan.

⁴⁴Esse Bissell Dakin, "The Underground Railroad."

⁴⁵John C. Dancy, "The Negro People in Michigan" *Michigan History Magazine* 24 (Spring 1940) -p.225.

protection for southern slave holders⁴⁶

Dr. Harold Field, distinguished professor of history at Michigan State University and Cass County resident wrote:“The Kentucky Raid together with the Crosswhite Affair in Marshall (which was carried out by the same group of Kentuckians) caused such a tremendous stir that it is credited with being partly responsible for the enactment and passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.”⁴⁷

The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law made it legal for owners of escaped slaves and bounty hunters to chase the runaways into free states and made it illegal for anyone to help the escaping Blacks. U. S. Marshals who refused to return fugitives could be fined up to \$1,000. It was now illegal for state and local officials not to help slave catchers. Further, accused runaways were denied both a jury trial and the right to testify in their own behalf. They could be sent to the South on the basis of one “supposed” owner’s affidavit. Under the new statute Circuit Court commissioners were paid \$10 to return the fugitive to the claimant and \$5 if they found the person not, in fact, a slave at all. Anti-slavery proponents decried the causes of the free blacks, who were torn from their families and forced back into slavery with little or no provocation.

On October 8, 1850, a former slave employed on the Michigan Governor, John S. Barry’s farm was apprehended by Tennessee slave catchers. Free Black Giles Rose had purchased his freedom from his former master for \$700 and had a deed

⁴⁶ *Detroit Journal*. Detroit, Michigan) January 6, 1896; *Ann Arbor News* (Ann Arbor, Michigan) January 31, 1961. Marshall Men and Marshall Measures. Historical Collections, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society. Lansing: Synkoop Hallenbeck, Crawford Co. 1912. Vol 38, pp. 259-64.

⁴⁷ Field, Harold. “Free Negroes in Cass County Before the Civil War.” Paper presented to Historical Society of Michigan on October 17, 1958 and reprinted in the *Journal of Michigan History in 1959* p. 359. A copy of the speech is in the Harold Field Collection, History Library, Cassopolis, Michigan.

to prove it. However, the new law did not allow him as a Black man, to testify on his own behalf. Riots erupted in Detroit, and the mayor called for two companies of U. S. Troops and three local guard groups to guard the prisoner.⁴⁸ The Timberlake v. Osborn trial began during this turmoil.

Cass County Kentucky Raid Trial

In January 1848 suits were initiated by the Kentucky slave owners against eight white abolitionists in Cass County seeking compensation for their lost property under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. For almost two years legal maneuvers and political intrigue occurred in both Michigan and Kentucky that mirrored the national struggle over slavery.⁴⁹ On December 18, 1850, the first Cass County raid trial, Timberlake v Osborn began in Detroit before Judge Ross Wilkins.⁵⁰ Plaintiff Thorton Timberlake,⁵¹ was represented by Abner Pratt while the defendants's counsel included Detroit attorney Jacob Merritt Howard, an abolitionist and former member of Congress (1841 - 43).⁵²

Timberlake sought \$2,000 for the loss of five slaves, Jonathon, Nancy, Mary,

⁴⁸ Jacob M. Howard, the Detroit lawyer for the Cass County abolitionists wasted no time in organizing a "Friends of Freedom" meeting on rose's behalf and in opposition to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. One of the keynote speakers on the evening of October 10th was James F. Joy, the defense counsel in the Crosswhite case and the attorney of record for the abolitionists in Timberlake v. Osborn. Marty. P. 8.

⁴⁹ The political fallout from the Crosswhite case infiltrated the Timberlake v Osborn trial. Abner Pratt, the lead prosecutor at the trial and a supporter of General Cass, was angling for a seat on Michigan's Supreme Court. The defense's representative, Jacob Howard, opposed Lewis Cass publicly, attacking his military record and pro-slavery, expansionist views. The legal maneuvers from both sides intersected with statewide, sectional and presidential political strategies. In the midst of this extraordinary political intrigue, fugitive slaves and their allies sought justice. Marty, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Slave owner and raider Thorton Timberlake sued Josiah Osborn and his sons Jefferson and Ellison Osborn; David T. Nicholson; Ishmael Lee; William Jones; and Commissioner Ebenezer McIlvain.

⁵¹ like Francis Giltner in the Crosswhite Case in Marshall.

⁵² In 1854, Howard helped found the Republican party, and as a U. S. Senator during the Civil War, drafted the Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution to abolish slavery.

Robert and Gabriel Highbanks.⁵³ The jury heard depositions given by witnesses from Kentucky and testimony from about 30 witnesses in all.⁵⁴ On January 7, 1851, Judge Wilkins told the jury that the people of Cass County did not act as a mob, did not riot, did not violate the Constitution and did not endanger the Union. Wilkins also impressed on the jurors that Timberlake had acted within the law, even if he used force to recover his slaves.⁵⁵ On January 8th, the jurors reported that they could not agree, and Judge Wilkins declared a mistrial. Later that same day, one juror told Howard that the jurors were split on believing the plaintiff's evidence but that they had difficulty accepting the defendant's explanations as well.⁵⁶

Kentucky's famed senator and three time candidate for the U. S. Presidency, Henry Clay⁵⁷ became involved directly with the slavery issue on behalf of his constituents. Working through Lewis Cass, Clay was able to arrange a second trial scheduled to begin in December, 1851 for those involved in Cass County's

⁵³Marty, p. 4.

⁵⁴Judge Wilkins instructed the jury, according to Ezekial. S. Smith, one of the defense attorneys and the one who represented the slaves in court in Cassopolis The court records from these cases are sketchy at best and no official transcript exists. Notes from attorney's files have been used to reconstruct the proceedings. Evidence such as the Cass County Sheriff's Docket, have disappeared, Evidence was subpoenaed for use in more than one trial and over time was not returned to the Wayne County Clerk

⁵⁵In his trial notes Howard quoted Wilkin's admonition that "The master cannot commit an assault in the recapture of his slaves," and Howard complained that "This savage remark is repeated with emphasis." Although no verbatim record remains of Judge Wilkins's charge in this case, Howard's notes indicate that it was in the same spirit as his charge to a grand jury in May 1851, in which he warned that the fugitive slave laws "Will be enforced in this Judicial District." The Timberlake jury retired to consider its verdict.

⁵⁶Chardavoyne pp. 8-9

⁵⁷In 1842, Presidential hopeful, Henry clay addressed the Society of Friends at their regional meeting in Richmond, Indiana. Just after Clay finished his speech, an abolitionist Quaker named Hiram Mendenhall presented a petition to the Senator, asking him to free his slaves. This petition had 2,000 signatures including those belonging to white women and free people of color. Clay publically derided Mendenhall's action. Later that same day, the more conservative Quakers formally cast out eight abolitionist leaders from the Meeting for Sufferings, as executive committee in the Society of Friends. Among the eight who were disowned was Charles Osborn, an internationally famous abolitionist and supporter of immediate and unconditional emancipation. He also was father and grandfather to the three Osborn defendants in the Timberlake fugitive slave lawsuit. After the confrontation with Henry clay and the exclusion from the Quakers, the Osborn family and others who later became defendants in the Kentucky raid lawsuits helped to form the Anti-slavery Friends and moved to Cass County, MI where Charles lived for 8 years before removing to northern Indiana where he died.. Marty, p. 8.

Kentucky Raid.⁵⁸ With the enactment new Fugitive Slave Law a legal contest loomed over whether the new more stringent law of 1850 would apply over the 1793 law in the second trial. The Kentucky Raid defendants had incurred heavy attorney fees, about \$2,200 in total, during the first trial, and they faced similar fees, for a second trial in addition to the possibility of an unfavorable judgment. Although their chances of success were increased by the indictment of plaintiff's chief witness, Jonathan Crews, for perjury, many of the defendants did not want to present a defense in a second trial. David T. Nicholson and Ishmael Lee faced the probability of bearing the entire expense of the second trial and agreed to settle and pay Abner Pratt \$1,000 plus costs for damages for the slaves in return for a dismissal of the case for all the defendants.⁵⁹ Since Pratt had not been paid by for his earlier legal work by the Kentuckians, Pratt kept the money paid to him by the Quakers, and the slave owners never received one dollar.⁶⁰ Nominally the Kentuckians got justice, but their slaves were gone and their attorney took all the money paid by the defendants. After the case was settled a number of the principal Cass County Quakers relocated in the West.⁶¹ However, Cass County remained an anti-slavery refuge and survived as a unique inter-racial community to this day.

The Personal Liberty Act

⁵⁸ The first governor of the Michigan Territory, who was later elected to the U. S. Senate,

⁵⁹ Marty p.5.

⁶⁰ Local legend in Cass County insists that the defendants all contributed to the settlement, at a great financial sacrifice. In February, 1852, however, a Kentucky newspaper published a letter by Nicholson (possibly reprinted from a Michigan paper) complaining that only he and Lee had paid while the other defendants had refused to contribute. According to a descendant of Ishmael Lee, the attorney's fees from the first trial were paid by contributions of those named in the suit and donations from African Americans and white residents of Cass County and the surrounding area and only Nicholson and Lee paid for the dismissal of the second suit. Nicholson took a mortgage on his property and paid \$600 and Ishmael Lee paid \$400.

⁶¹ Marty p. 5.

Law or no law, more and more Northern sentiment was with the escaped slave.⁶²

The Quakers in Cass County continued their Underground Railroad activity until end of the Civil War. The anti-slavery Friends were steadfast in their beliefs and contended with political and community pressures.

Despite the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, the anti-slavery faction in Michigan did not sit idly by. In January, 1855, due to their persistence a bill was introduced in the Michigan Senate to protect the state's African American residents. Erastus Hussey, now a state senator who was also instrumental in the 1854 formation of the Republican Party in Jackson, played a vital role in drafting the Personal Liberty Law, which defied the Federal Fugitive Slave Laws passed earlier. The Personal Liberty Act required prosecuting attorneys in Michigan to defend all persons arrested as fugitives. Moreover, persons accused of being escaped slaves were entitled to the benefits of habeas corpus, trial by jury, and the right of appeal through county courts. All these costs were to be borne by the state, and local jails could no longer be used to incarcerate alleged fugitives. This law also meted out punishment for those who bore false witness-anyone falsely accusing a person of being an escaped slave could be punished by a fine or imprisonment. In all cases involving African Americans alleged to be fugitives, two witnesses were now required. A second legislative act prohibited state marshals from helping to recapture suspected fugitive slaves. The bill was passed and officially became Michigan's Personal Liberty Law.⁶³

Personal Liberty Laws contradicting the Fugitive Slave Laws were also adopted by most other Northern States. The actions of Northern courts in nullifying the

⁶²Michelle Johnson. "From here to freedom Michigan was crucial to the Underground Railroad" On line. Internet. www.freep.com/news/blackhistory2003/rail9 Available: 14 January, 2005

⁶³Norman McRae, *Negroes in Michigan, During the Civil War*. Lansing, 1966),,p. 19. *Acts of the Legislature of Michigan passed at the Regular Session of 1855, with an Appendix* (Lansing, 1855) pp 413-5.

fugitive slave laws were cited (December 24, 1860) by South Carolina as one cause for that state's secession from the Union. Both the fugitive slave laws of 1793 and 1850 were repealed by the U. S. Congress on June 28, 1864.

The Underground Railroad in the Niles area

Now, we'd like to mention some of those involved from the Niles area. Pasquel LaRue Finley was a free Black, born in 1804 in Virginia, and a conductor on the Underground Railroad. His father was a Frenchman; and reportedly, Pasquel and his own family did not get along. They gave him \$1,000 "to disappear" and he set up a freight line with false-bottomed wagons. Pasquel hated slavery because he believed it broke up so many families and for ten years he used his freight wagons to haul runaway slaves from Kentucky to Ohio and Michigan. He escaped capture as a wanted man with the aid of some Native Americans and subsequently sold real estate in Highland County, Ohio before moving to Michigan where he worked for the Michigan Central Railroad. He earned four cents for setting a tie and twenty-five cents per cubic yard of soil or stones he moved. In two years he saved \$500, purchased 43 acres, which is now part of the Niles City Airport and returned to Ohio to get his wife Sarah (Newts, a mulatto) and four boys. The united family increased in size by the addition of five girls and they raised and sold produce to local families and businesses. He also sold wood to the railway. The children were educated in segregated schools. In 1863, during the Civil War two of Pasquel's, Edward and Richard, joined the 102nd Volunteer Colored Unit. Edward became a Sergeant. However, African American soldiers were paid three dollars per month less than white soldiers.

Amable LaPierre after losing his hotel and a house to pay for fines and court costs

stemming from the South Bend Fugitive Slave Case, moved to the Niles area in Michigan in 1850 and continued to take part in Underground Railroad activities. He purchased Michigan Central Rail Road tickets for runaways. He also helped African American families during the Civil War when they needed assistance with food and money and while the man of the house was serving in the military. Amable was a brick mason by trade. [Ed LaPierre started a jewelry business in Niles that later became Thayer's Jewelry Store.]

Lorenzo P. Alexander was a merchant in Buchanan and he brought those using the Underground Railroad to Niles by wagon. Most of the slaves that arrived in Niles either traveled to Detroit by train or continued eastward on the Underground Railroad to Cass County and eventually arrived in Detroit.

The First Masonic Prince Hall Grand Lodge was formed in Niles in 1859 and they stood firmly against slavery. This African American organization was renamed the John W. Moore Lodge and is still in operation

In Conclusion

The history of the Underground Railroad and Kentucky raids and resulting court cases are notable in themselves and form a very important chapter in the history of our nation, while the movement against slavery was gaining strength. Of their effects on the African American colony in Cass County, it is probable that it increased rather than retarded the flight of African Americans - free and enslaved - to this vicinity. It advertised the county as a safe retreat for slaves and also sent

a warning to slave owners to consider carefully before attempting a raid in Cass county.⁶⁴ The Kentucky Raid in Cass County has not garnered as much media attention or scholarly investigation as the Crosswhite and South Bend Fugitive Slave Cases have, but in many ways considering the number of fugitives that escaped being returned to slavery, it is more significant than any other Michigan incident.

In the end the Quakers' beliefs prevailed: The Quakers believed that slavery was wrong, and if it was wrong for them, it was also wrong for the United States. They were the only united establishment - maybe in history - to put their beliefs solidly to the test, risking everything to defend men and women of another race - black African Americans. It could be said that the Underground Railroad was officially closed on December 18th, 1865 when the 13th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution that abolished slavery was ratified by the 27th state! The majority of the American public was slow to come to grips with the moral quandary of slavery. Once aroused, however, the Northern populace countered with a terrible vengeance and the cost of a million casualties and untold hardship on both sides; slavery was abolished and the Union was preserved.

In 2005 Grif and I worked closely with the Michigan Bar Association in the creation of the 30th Legal Milestone Marker erected In Cassopolis. The plaque commemorates the Underground Railroad and the Kentucky Raid in Cass County. The association's president, Nancy Diehl, told us that this was the first time that the august body had honored events that were blatantly illegal in their time.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 352.

For decades African Americans have observed festivals celebrating their heritage. After the Civil War, “Juneteenth” festivals have been held on a “teen” day in June. These festivals celebrated the American emancipation of slaves, the news of which did not reach enslaved Texans until June 19, 1865, two months after the war was over. Grif and I attended the Juneteenth Celebration in Calvin Township last year, it was a life-enriching experience.

Each of us should be proud of our heritage, and keep the history of our family roots as well as our country alive. Take a look at those around you who have achieved their life’s goals through hard work and perseverance. Go for it and display some hope and faith in others and as well as yourselves.

Pass out a copy of the text of the 30th Legal Milestone marker entitled :Freedom Road” erected at the Cass County Building by the Michigan Bar Association in August, 2005