

Underground Railroad Residents Buried In Woodland Cemetery



The Underground Railroad was an informal network of people who helped freedom seekers travel to Canada where they would be free from slavery. The term emerged as railroads became the important form of travel in the 1830s, but slaves had been escaping from their bonds since their capture in Africa, aboard the ships bringing them to the Western hemisphere, and once on land in South America, the Caribbean, and North America. Helping a slave was a crime institutionalized in the Constitution. Federal enforcement of this crime came with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Between 1830-1860, over 3,000 abolitionists risked life, livelihoods, and property to help over 50,000 fugitives get to freedom.

Ohio had the greatest miles of Underground Railroad escape routes of any state. Cleveland was one of the top ten ports transporting freedom seekers. In Cleveland, the first published case of a fugitive slave was in 1806. It was also the site of the last decision in the North in 1861 to return a fugitive slave to the South to avert a civil war. Cleveland was a center of group civil disobedience, where participants in the Underground Railroad broke man's law to help God's children.

Woodland Cemetery is located at 6901 Woodland Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44104

Seth Abbey (1798-1880) was born in New York, but came to Cleveland in 1830. He operated a tavern in the Farmers' and Mechanics Hotel. Tavern keepers often entered politics, which reflects the remainder of his life: helped to incorporate the city, served as one of the first judges of elections, city marshal, and judge of the Police Court in Cleveland. He served in the Civil War as 1st Lieutenant in the 2nd Ohio Cavalry. As the city marshal, Abbey was put in the position of having to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, in particular the seizure and holding of Lucy Bagby, a fugitive slave, whose case in 1861 caused mass protest. (Sec 7 Lot 17) (HS)

James T. Alston (1824-1881) was born in North Carolina and left in his 30s to come to Cleveland for greater freedoms and opportunities. He patented a bed frame for invalids in 1856. He jumped right into leadership of the Cleveland emigration movement. He served as president of the African Civilization Society to recruit emigrants and solicit money for emigration to Africa. Working out of his barber shop on Superior Avenue, Alston served as president of the Fugitive Aid Society to guard the public against imposters applying for assistance and continued to serve in officer positions throughout the war years. In 1863, he supported the recruitment of black men for service in the Civil War. When the Thirteenth Amendment passed, Alston was the president of the committee. A few years later, when the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, Alston headed the citywide committee to organize the celebration. He was an active Republican and

worshiped at St. Johns African Methodist Episcopal Church when located on Erie Street. (Sec D-1 Tier 1 Grave 46) (No HS)

Maria A. Ambush (ca. 1830-1870) is listed as a native of Africa in burial records. The census has her birthplace as Massachusetts and identity mulatto. She married William E. Ambush while still in Boston. They moved to Cleveland and he became the militant leader of Cleveland's Vigilance Committee. Their home on Greenwood was a station in the Underground Railroad providing shelter to freedom seekers for days or weeks until safe conditions prevailed for their exit. The most famous fugitive was Lucy Bagby, who stayed with the Ambush family before being moved to two other locations. She died of consumption at 40 leaving behind her 2 daughters and a husband. (Sec 20 Lot 5 Grave 26) (No HS)

Alexander Bowman (ca.1806-1879) escaped slavery in Tennessee along with his brother, Jeremiah, who gained a good education and became a preacher. Alexander hired out as a porter on the Lake Erie boats going between Cleveland and Lake Huron. He saved his money and invested in real estate, making him one of the wealthy black leaders in Cleveland. He used that money to help freedom seekers get to Canada, to pay for lawyers to challenge laws in the courts, and to support institutions in the black community as with the first colored school. In 1843, Bowman, together with John Malvin and John Brown, posted the \$1,000 bond to get fugitives Alexander Williams and John

Houston released from jail and to help them escape to freedom in Canada. In his later years, the income from his rental property allowed him a secure retirement so he could live out his years as a respected leader in Cleveland. (Sec 24 Lot 107) (No HS)

John Brown "the barber" (1839-1911) was one of the top black leaders of the Underground Railroad in Cleveland. Born free in Virginia, he arrived in Cleveland with a group of Hicksite Quakers in 1828. He became a barber, having several businesses in downtown hotels over the years. He used these connections to hear about runaways and help their escape to Canada. His barber shops served as stations as did his personal home, which at one time held 13 freedom seekers for several days. As an ardent abolitionist, he used his wealth to help fugitives through the courts and in travel. John Brown, Alexander Bowman and John Malvin came up with the \$1,000 bond for the Williams-Houston trial in 1843, which enabled both to eventually make it to freedom in Canada. He also personally financed the first colored school in Cleveland. He invested in land both in Cleveland and around Toledo, which made him one of the wealthiest African Americans in the city. His sons served in the Civil War as part of a Massachusetts regiment. (Sec 10 Lot 83) (Monument)

David Hazzard Crosby (1824-1890) was born in Philadelphia, one of the most active enclaves of antislavery sentiment. He married Jane Crosby in New York City shortly before arriving in Cleveland in 1853. He worked for the Lake Superior Railroad while he raised two daughters. The Federal Census listed his occupation as porter in 1860. It was his community life that defined him as a leader in St. John's AME Church and the Ohio Lodge of Odd Fellows. He served on the executive committee for the Fugitive/Freemen's Aid Society, which raised money and provided guidance for the freedom seekers and the newly emancipated slaves coming through the city. (Sec 14 Lot 50) (No HS)

George (1825-1904) and Julia (Fairfax) Hayes (1821-1918) were freedom seekers escaping from Maysville, Kentucky in 1854. Through the Underground Railroad network, they made it to Canada's St. Catharine's community where Harriet Tubman made her home. George's work at Walker's Mill led to his occupation as a distiller of whiskey after return to the United States. They returned to Cleveland to live with their daughter, Catherine, who married Peterson Lawson, who served on the USS North Carolina as part of the Union naval blockade. Their lives served as testimony to the courage and resilience of freedom seekers. (Sec 28 Lot 38 E 1/2) (HS)

Betsy Gould (1815-1890) was known as the "colored talker", which meant she was a leading speaker within the anti-slavery lecturing circuit. Born in New Lisbon, Ohio, she worked for Clement Vallandinam in Cincinnati, where she was kidnapped and taken as a slave to Vicksburg, Virginia. For seven years she plotted her escape. She pretended to be cooking, but used it to scald the two overseers. Making her way back to Ohio, she told her story to crowds. Saving the money she earned from the speaking, she bought a rooming house on the southwest corner of Lake and Wood Streets. She also was a station master keeping freedom seekers in her boarding house. Her story later in life was that she was a descendent of George Washington's manservant, John Dimmitt, and was due the land grant of 1,574 acres in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina as his heir. The outcome of her lawsuit was

not resolved before her death. (Sec 43 Lot 89) (No HS)

Benjamin S. Green (1832-1905) left New Berne, North Carolina where he had been a carpenter, to seek opportunity and freedom in Ohio, at first, Columbus in 1853, and later, Cleveland in 1859 to live with his wife, children and parents in Ward 4. First working as a carpenter, by 1863 he was working as a waiter when he became secretary to the Cleveland Freeman's Aid Society. During the beginning of the Civil War, Green sold maps out of Alston's barber shop opposite the Post Office of rebel sections to help civilians understand Union Army movements. Following the Civil War, he became a book publisher and agent beginning at the Hoffman Block and later moving his business to The Arcade. Called "a man of fine presence and irreproachable manners," Green was well-respected by Cleveland businessmen. (Sec 15 Lot 6 sub 3) (No HS)

Jarvis Frary Hanks (1799-1853) was a prominent Ohio artist and abolitionist. Born in Pittsford, New York, Hanks first studied painting with his uncle, a local carpenter. While still a teenager, Hanks left home to serve as a drummer boy in the United States Army during the War of 1812 at the age of 14. At the end of the war, Hanks moved with his family to what is now Wheeling, West Virginia, then on to Gallipolis, Ohio, where he had a cabinet-making business. By 1825, Hanks earned a living as an artist by establishing a studio in Cleveland, Ohio along several locations on Superior Avenue. He supplemented his income by teaching violin and dancing. He belonged to the Cleveland Mozart Society, Cleveland Harmonic Society, and served as secretary to the Cuyahoga County Total Abstinence Society and to the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society. His studio served as a station on the Underground Railroad. Freedom Seekers hid in plain sight as his apprentices. His residence was listed at Muirson (East 12th St.), but he had a farm in East Cleveland where his wife and 10 children lived. As a member of the East Cleveland enclave, he was a member of the East Cleveland church (along with the Cyrus Ford family, the Cozad family, Asa Cady and other abolitionists that broke away from the

main church over the issue of slavery). (Sec 14 Lot 6) (HS)

Henry Jackson (1815-1853) held many occupations including that as a barber on Merwin while he participated as an active abolitionist in anti-slavery activities and organizations. This gained the trust of freedom seekers. At one point, however, Jackson sold this trust for money. In 1843, Alexander Williams and John Houston escaped from Tennessee to be hidden by Jackson for nearly six weeks. He contacted their owners by letter and soon the owners arrived in Cleveland to find the two had gone to Buffalo. Jackson accompanied the owners' agent, Mr. Lindenberger to Buffalo to persuade the two to return to Cleveland before they could get to Canada. Jackson persuaded Williams and Houston to return by promising to Williams an apprenticeship with painter, Jarvis Hanks, and for Houston a job as a cook on a new steamer on Lake Erie. When they returned to Cleveland, both were seized by Sheriff Miller and imprisoned. Although both reached Canada through legal maneuvers and escape, Jackson disappeared from the city fearing retaliation from the abolitionist community. He eventually returned to Cleveland before his death. (Sec 18 Lot 6 N 1/2) (No HS)

Sara "Lucy" Bagby Johnson (abt 1843-1906) was a fugitive slave whose court case was the last to be tried in the North under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 before the start of the Civil War. Lucy escaped from her owner through the Underground Railroad, which brought her to Cleveland. She spent several days with William and Maria Ambush, leaders of the Vigilance Committee. She then went on to stay with Congressman-elect, A. J. Riddle, who feared political calamity for his action. She moved on to stay as a house maid for jeweler, Lucius Benton, where she was reclaimed by William Goshorn, her owner, in January, 1861. Ambush tried to raise \$1,200 to purchase Lucy, but Goshorn refused. Her hearing resulted in mass protests outside the Federal Court House and efforts to rescue her

from the train carrying her back to Wheeling, Virginia. In 1863, the Union Army took over the region, thereby freeing Lucy, who made her way north again. She married in Pennsylvania and the couple moved to Cleveland, where she was honored by the Early Settlers Association of the Western Reserve in 1904. (Sec D-3 Tier 1 Grave 25) (HS donated by Northcoast Memorials)

David Long (1787-1851) born and educated in New York, David Long moved to Cleveland after getting his medical degree in 1810 and became the city's first physician. He married Juliana Walworth in 1811 and left her behind to join the Western Army as a surgeon during the War of 1812. He lived in a stone house on SW corner of Seneca and Superior. His office was at Superior and Erie. To supplement his medical income, he operated a dry goods store, helped organize a commercial bank, a pier company and the first warehouse on the Cuyahoga River while serving in many city leadership positions. In 1833, he founded and became the first president of the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society. In 1836, he moved to a farm on Woodland around currently E. 30th-E. 40thSt. His son-in-law, Solomon Severance, served as secretary for the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society and as treasurer in the Cuyahoga County Anti-Slavery Society established in 1837. Long's daughter, Mary Severance, was active in the anti-slavery movement. Dr. Long was originally buried in Erie St. Cemetery and then moved to Woodland Cemetery after it accepted burials. (Sec 7 Lot 1) (Monument)

Allen Meddlin (1810-1886) was born in North Carolina, but sought greater opportunities in Cleveland in the late 1850s. Living in Ward 6, Meddlin became the treasurer for the Freeman's Aid Society serving with men recognized for having aided fugitives in the Underground Railroad: Benjamin S. Green, James T. Alston, and David H. Crosby. He worked as a joiner and a carpenter. In his will, he left one third of his estate to Mrs. Lisa Bryant (Eliza), founder of the Home for Aged Colored People, for the care of his surviving wife. (Sec 60 Tier 8 Grave 34) (No HS)

United States Colored Troops (USCT) monument was dedicated in 2012. Nearly 80 black veterans from the Civil War are buried in Woodland Cemetery. The Massachusetts

54th Volunteer Regiment was the first to recruit blacks in the North to fight in the Civil War. The history of this regiment is featured in the 1989 movie, *Glory*. The Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863) encouraged recruitment of blacks into the Union Army and Navy. Both branches are represented on this monument. Nearly 50,000 had been trained for service by the end of 1863. Almost 20% of the 54th and 55th Regiments and the 5th Massachusetts Colored Cavalry were Ohio volunteers. One such man was Peterson Lawson, who enlisted in the Navy at age 28. He was part of the Union naval blockade during the Civil War. After the war he married the daughter of successful freedom seekers. They raised 7 boys and 2 girls in Cleveland, living on E. 30th (Sterling). (Center of cemetery. Monument donated by Johns-Carabelli Monument Co.)

George Vosburgh (1819-1904) came from a family of anti-slavery activists. His father Robert Vosburgh founded the Erie County Anti-Slavery Society as he operated a successful barber shop. George continued this leadership when he came to Cleveland in 1844 after working on the Lake Erie boats since 1833. George, like his father, operated a barber shop before gaining his job at the Union Depot in 1858. He became the city's most well-known black man due to this 46-year career as a porter and then the operator of the lunch room where all travelers came through upon entering the city. During the years of the Underground Railroad, Vosburgh was a leader assisting runaways. He also entertained Frederick Douglass and John Brown, the white abolitionist, at his house when they came to Cleveland. (Sec 16 Lot 2) (Monument)

Edward Wade (1802-1866) was born in Massachusetts and moved as a boy with his large family to Ashtabula. He studied law with Elisha Whittlesey and practiced as a lawyer in 1827 in Jefferson, Ohio. His politics were Free Soil. He served as a Justice of the Peace and a Prosecuting Attorney in Ashtabula. In 1832, he married Sarah Atkins, daughter of a prominent abolitionist, Josiah Atkins, who was deeply involved with the Underground Railroad. Wade and his father-in-law wrote letters encoded about cargo passing from the West to Cleveland. Josiah Atkins lived on the Wade farm since 1839 as part of the abolitionist network. Wade had

worked on the Ohio Canal and became an advocate for improved conditions for workers. As soon as Wade came to Cleveland in 1837, he took on the presidency of the Cuyahoga County Antislavery Society while serving as a law partner to Hiram Willson. He and friends created the Liberty Party of the Western Reserve, which was later absorbed by the Free Soil Party. In 1853 he was elected to the US House of Representatives in which he served through 1861 as a Republican. His family farm was in Brooklyn, Ohio, which later became part of Cleveland. As an ardent abolitionist, he broke the Fugitive Slave Law by accepting freedom seekers at his farm and at the Wade House Tavern on Columbus and Pearl. He was both a station master and a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Wade also helped Salmon P. Chase organize protests in Public Square in response to the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue trial at the Federal Court House in 1859. (Sec 2 Lot 7) (Monument)

Rev. Hiram Wilson (1803-1864) was an ardent abolitionist and distinguished minister who received his Theology Degree from Oberlin Theology Seminary in 1836. He came to Oberlin as a Lane Rebel, a student kicked out of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati for arguing against slavery and for abolition. He worked with escaped and former slaves in southwestern Ontario, Canada. His home in St. Catharine's was the final terminal in the Underground Railroad. He tried to improve living conditions, education and work experiences to help them survive and develop skills of free persons. His work with Harriet Tubman is well documented. (Sec 21 Lot 55) (Monument)

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Timeline for Understanding the Underground Railroad in Cleveland

National /State Events	Cleveland Region
<p>1787 Northwest Ordinance 1803 Ohio becomes State (no slavery) 1804-7 Ohio Black Codes 1815 1st Antislavery Society in Ohio 1820s St. Catharines, Canada emigration stop</p> <p>1833 American Antislavery Society (national) 1834 Lane Seminary debates—Cincinnati Emancipation Day (end slavery in British Empire)</p> <p>1835 1st vigilance committee (NYC)</p> <p>1838 Frederick Douglass escapes Maryland 1839 splits in antislavery movement</p> <p>1840 World’s Antislavery Convention, London formation American Foreign ASS and Liberty Party</p> <p>1847 1st issue <i>North Star</i> 1848 Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention Formation Free Soil Party 1849 Harriet Tubman escapes</p>	<p>1766 Lorenzo Carter (1st permanent white settler)</p> <p>1806 slave Ben</p> <p>1820 congregation First Presbyterian (Old Stone C) 1825 Erie Street Cemetery 1827 Cuyahoga County Colonization Society 1832 First Baptist Church 1833 Cleveland Antislavery Society 1834-42 William Wells Brown in Cleveland Building dedicated for Old Stone Church</p> <p>1836 Incorporation of Ohio City (Monroe Cem.) Charter for AME Society St. John Episcopal dedicated 1837 Cuyahoga County Antislavery Society</p> <p>1840-1842 steamer ran between Cleveland and Port Stanley</p> <p>1843 First Presbyterian of Church of Cleveland 1845 Justin Holland settles in Cleveland 1846 Black Baptist mission (Shiloh) Emigration meeting at Liberty Hall 1848 National Colored Convention 1849 Repeal of Black Codes (Wesleyan Chapel)</p>
<p>1850 Fugitive Slave Law Organization of the Colored American League</p> <p>1852 publication of <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i></p>	<p>1850 Bolivar St. AME Church dedicated West Indian Emancipation (16th anniversary celebration, Wesleyan Chapel) Meeting at Empire Hall about Fugitive Slave Law Congregants leave Old Stone Church and form Free (Plymouth) Presbyterian 1851 Christian Anti-Slavery Convention 1852 Lucy Stanton returns to city to marry William Howard Day Independent Presbyterian Church of Euclid formed Formation of Cleveland Vigilance Committee</p> <p>1853 Dedication Woodland Cemetery Vigilance Committee meets at Empire Hall Publication of <i>Aliened American</i> newspaper</p>

<p>1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act Free Soil Party Republican Party founded</p> <p>1857 Dred Scott decision</p> <p>1858 Ohio General Assembly bill introduced to halt Negro and mulatto immigration Indictment of Oberlin-Wellington Rescuers</p> <p>1859 John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry (Oct)</p> <p>April, 1861 Civil War begins</p> <p>April, 1865 End of Civil War</p>	<p>1854 Annexation of Ohio City Fire destroys New England Hotel National Emigration Convention in Cleveland Formation of the Committee of Nine 1855 new district court in Ohio—Cleveland 1856 Days move to Buxton, Canada Pilgrim Church becomes independent 1857 National Emancipation Convention held at Melodeon Hall</p> <p>1858 Oberlin-Wellington Rescuers brought to Cleveland for 10-day trial</p> <p>1859 New Court House built, used for trial in May State Antislavery Society Executive Committee met and had Antislavery Festival Meeting on the hanging of John Brown 1860 Lucy Bagby Johnson escapes from the Goshorns 1861 January, Lucy seized at jeweler's house and tried using the Fugitive Slave Act</p>
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Quotes from the Underground Railroad

After the successful rescue of Pete, Mary, and Sam, Horace Ford wrote a note to their former owner in December of 1843: "Dear Sir:---I have seen your chattels, Pete, Mary and Sam safe off for Canada. If I can serve you any farther, I am at your command." Truly, Horace Ford

Reacting to First Baptist Church attempts to segregate blacks, John Malvin replied, "If I have to be colonized, I prefer to be colonized in Liberia rather than in the House of God: Christ nor the apostles never made any distinction on account of race or color."

Slave hunter quoted in newspaper: "so many niggers and abolitionists...that one might as well try to hunt the devil...as hunt a nigger (in Cleveland)." Siebert p. 277 note Cleveland *Leader* 9-10-1858

Frederick Douglass about the boldness of the URR in the West (includes Ohio): "I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the underground railroad, but which I think, by their open declarations, has been made most emphatically the upper ground railroad." FD Narrative. 60.

1850 meeting at Empire Hall about Fugitive Slave Law: "Resolved that whenever any of the laws of the Republic clearly conflict with the law of God, it is the duty of every good citizen to render obedience to the latter..." (292 Orth) This is act of civil disobedience.