

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN IOWA AND CEDAR COUNTY

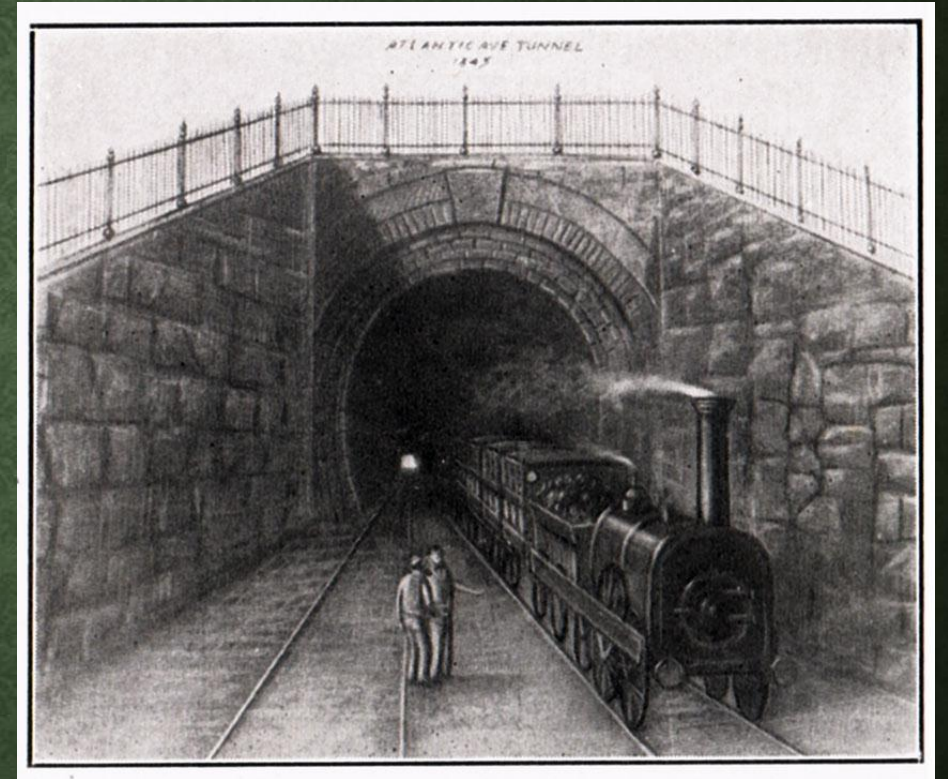
Tanya Demmel

Museum Coordinator

Cedar County Historical Society Museum and Prairie Village

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- Misconception = Literally a Railroad Underground
- High level of Secrecy = Underground
- New & Popular Transportation Method Inspired Titles and Railroad
 - Stations/Depots
 - Stationmasters/Station Agents
 - Conductors
 - Passengers



SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1820 – Missouri admitted as slave state – Remaining Louisiana Purchase prohibits slavery
- 1833 – Black Hawk purchase allows whites to settle in Eastern Iowa
- 1838 – Iowa territory formed and excludes free blacks
- 1840 – 188 African Americans in Iowa – 16 slaves
- 1844 – Edward Langworthy argues successfully for laws preventing settlement of “blacks and mulattoes in this state”
- 1846 – Iowa admitted to the union – State constitution prohibits African Americans from voting, holding office, and serving in the militia
- 1850 – New Fugitive Slave Act - \$1,000 fine and 6 months in jail

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CONT.

- 1854 – Kansas – Nebraska act passed = violent conflict between pro and anti slavery supporters
- 1855 – John Brown visits Iowa and meets Springdale Quakers
- 1857 – Dred Scott decision
 - African Americans are not US citizens
 - Missouri Compromise Unconstitutional
 - Prohibits Congress legislating on slavery in territories
- 1863 – 1851 law prohibiting African Americans from settling in Iowa overturned
- 1865 – 13th Amendment to US Constitution prohibiting slavery passed

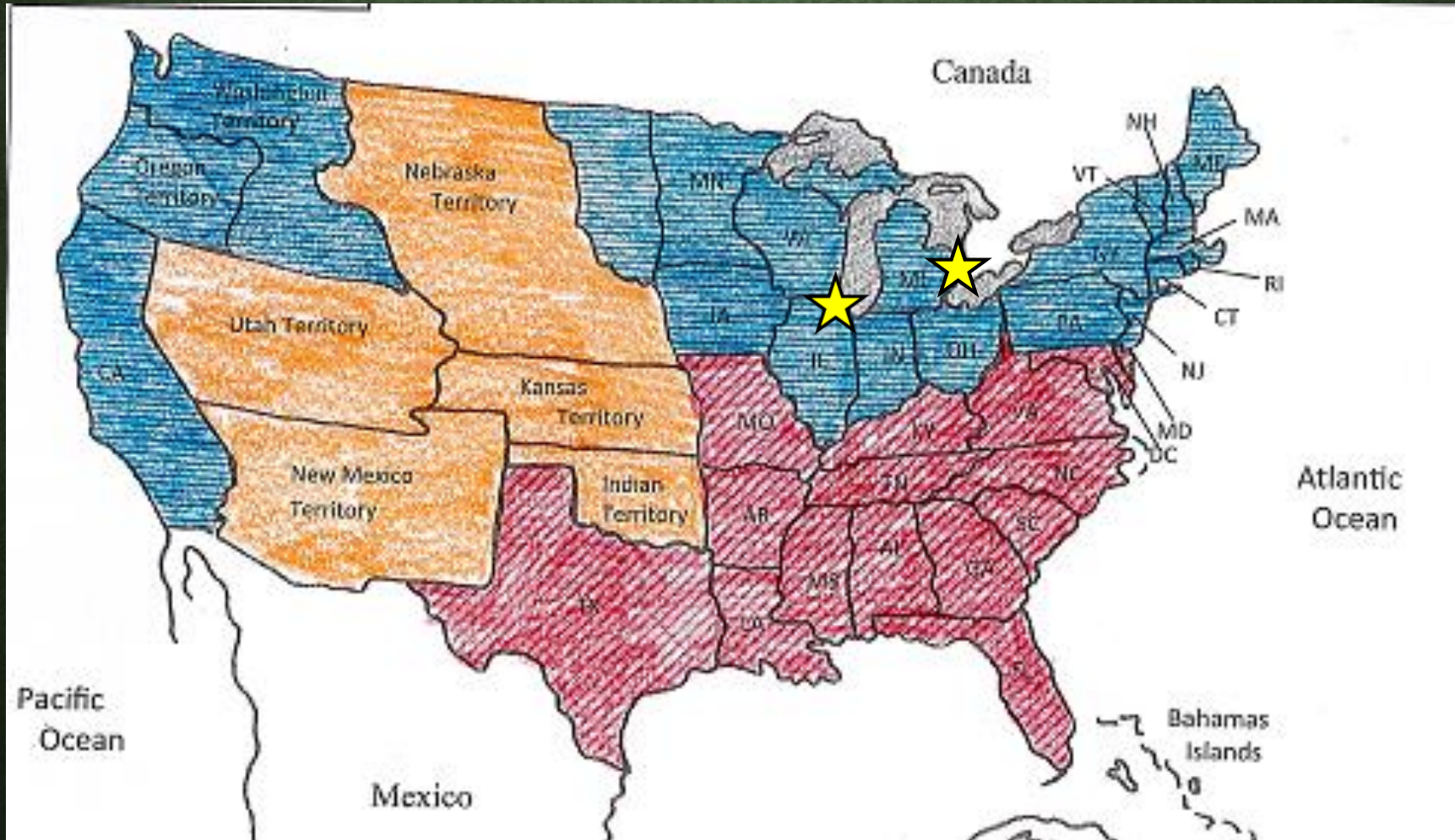
RELIGIOUS GROUPS OPPOSING SLAVERY

- Quakers
- Congregationalists
- Presbyterians
- Wesley Methodists
- Baptists

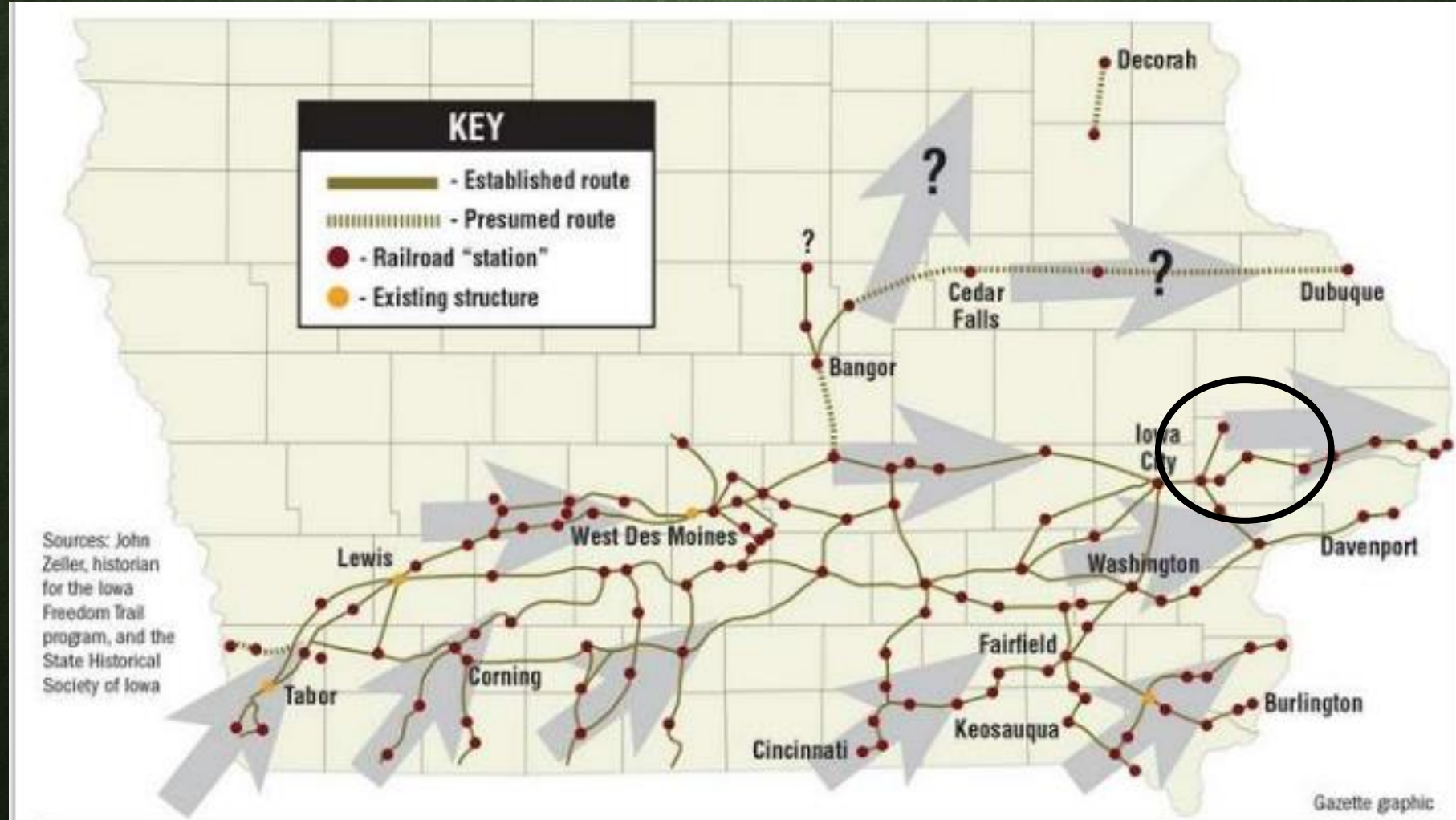
FREEDOM SEEKERS

- Usually young men or women or teens from the south and southwest
- Referred to as:
 - Paqssengers
 - Black wool
 - Meat and wool (Laurie Tatum)
 - Sheep
 - “Irrepressible Comfort” bound in black

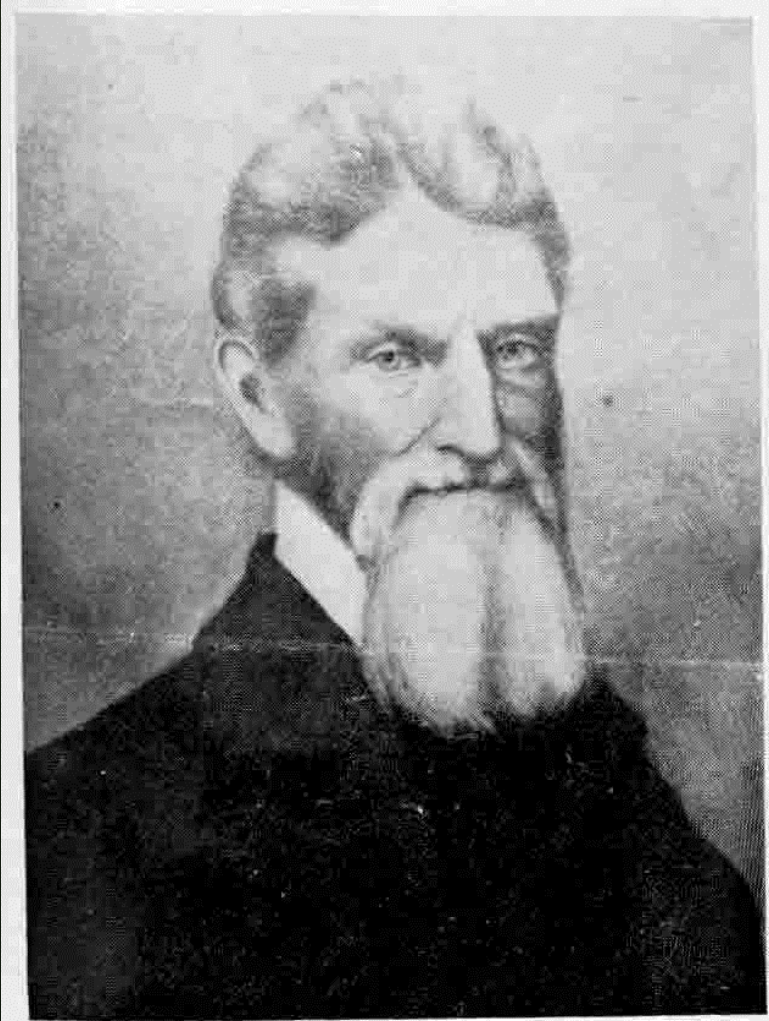
UNITED STATES - 1860



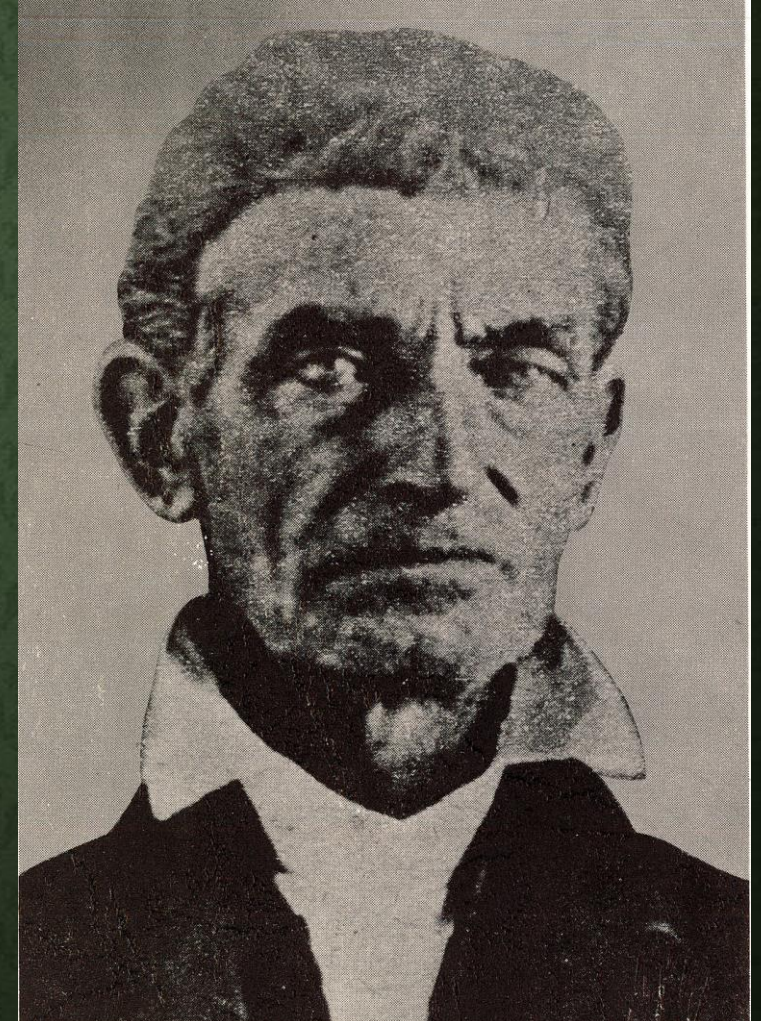
IOWA UNDERGROUND RAILROAD ROUTES



JOHN BROWN



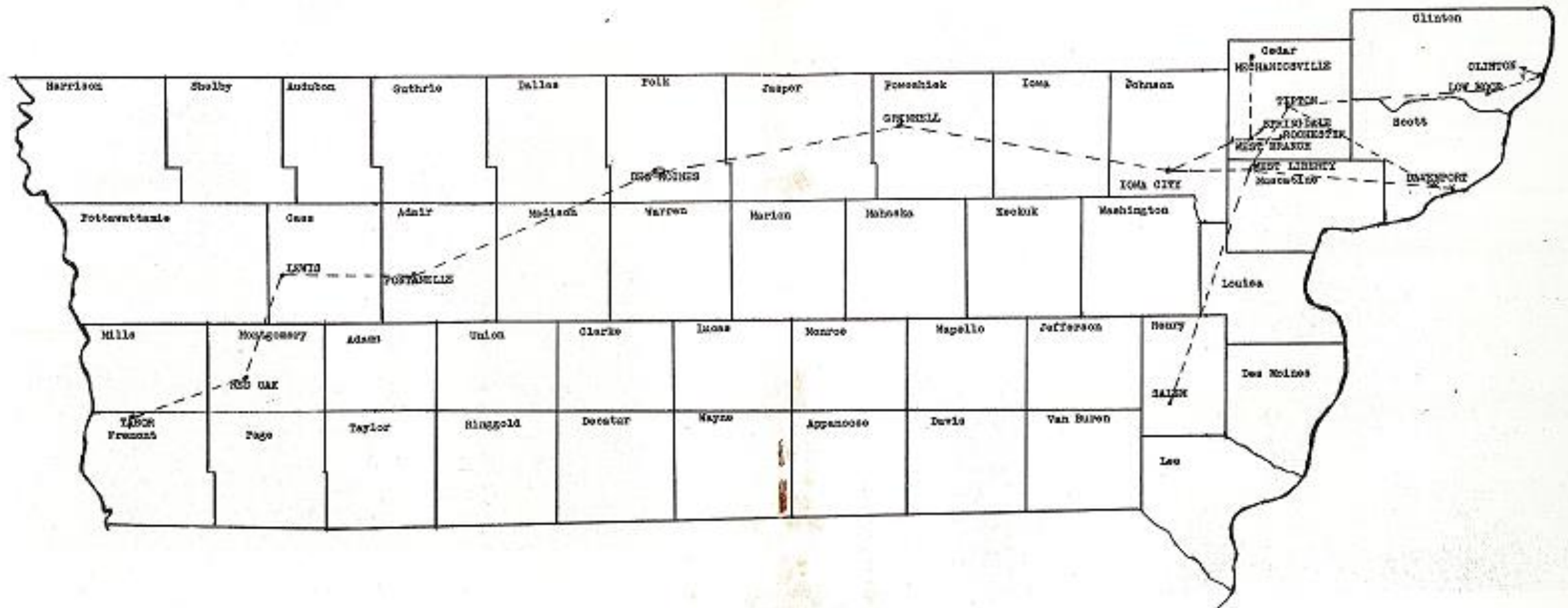
- Thought slaves should be liberated – That he was the instrument of God to abolish slavery
- Second wife in Decorah
- Trained militia in Tabor Iowa, near Missouri border
- Liberated 12 slaves up for auction, wagons and supplies
- Planned and Trained men for raid on Harper's Ferry
- Cautioned against the raid by Dr. Gill
- Executed Dec 2, 1859 for treason, conspiring with slaves and murder



JOHN BROWN CONTINUED

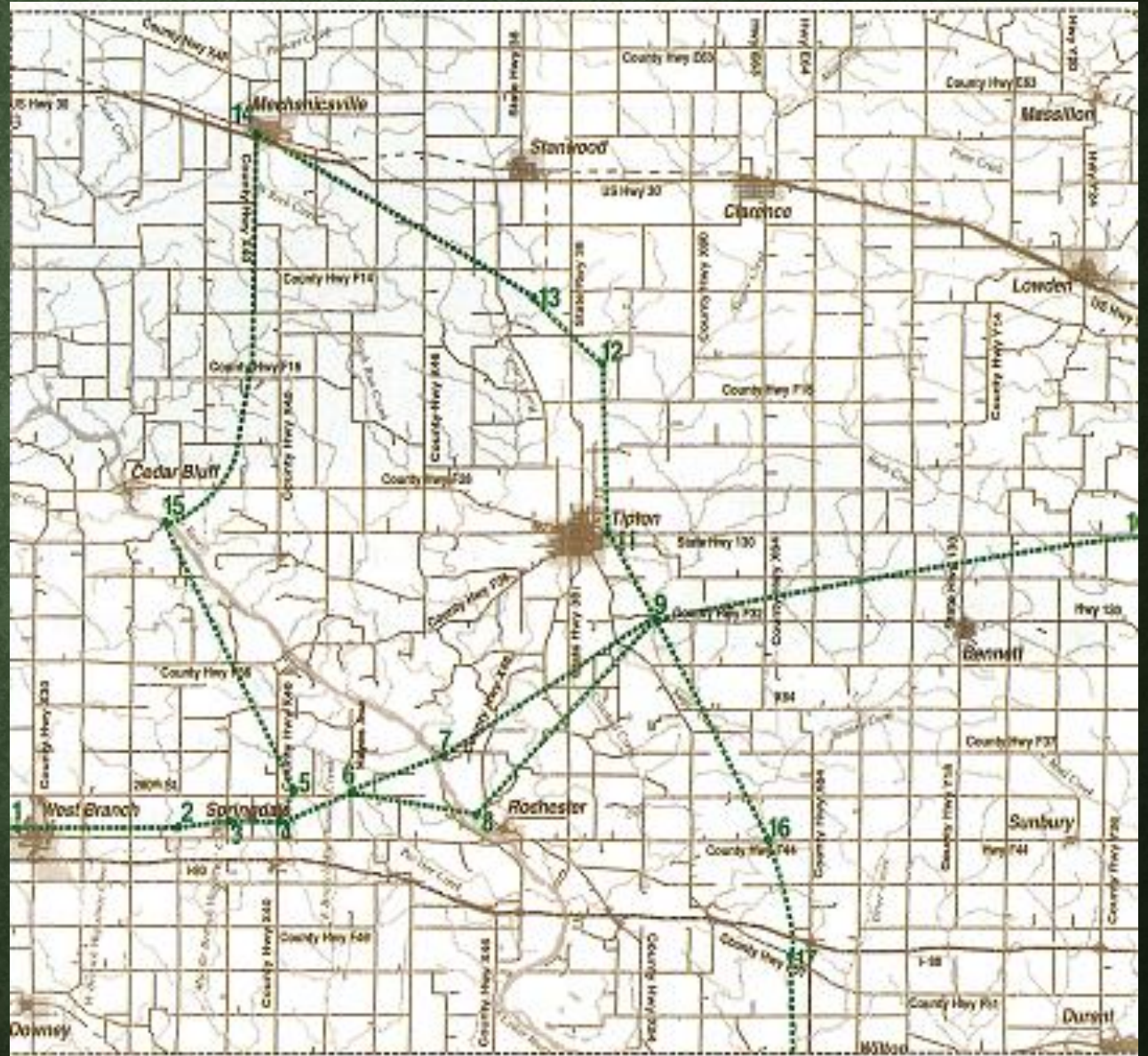
- Descendent of settlers from the Mayflower
- Born May 9, 1800
- Born Torrington Connecticut
- Moved to Ohio as a child
- Learned the tanning trade
- Was restless and moved 10 times before starting abolitionist work in Kansas
- Married twice; 7 children of the first marriage, 13 of the second; 13/20 were boys
- Learned his beliefs of religion and abolition from his father
- His Pennsylvania farm was Underground Railroad Station
- Went to the aid of 5 of his sons in Kansas fall of 1855 bringing fire arms and ammunition
- Settled in Ossawatimie, Kansas
- Joined local militia and led attack on five pro slavery leaders, killing them all
- His name then struck fear in his opponents

JOHN BROWN'S ROUTE

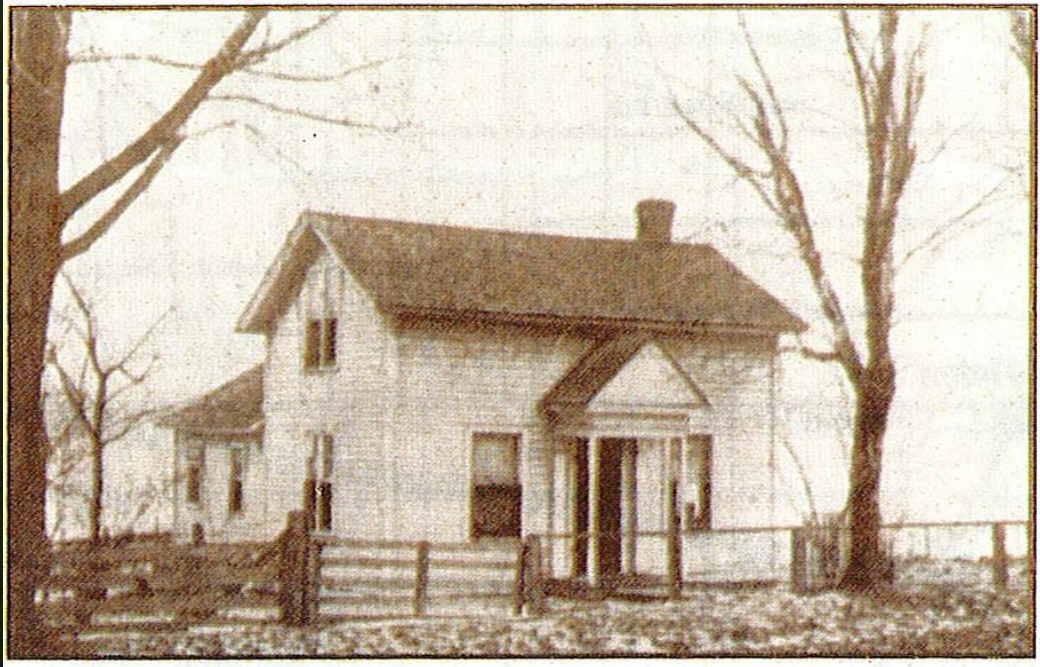


UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN CEDAR COUNTY

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. "Traveler's Rest" | 9. Humphry Farm |
| 2. Moses Varney Home | 10. Posten's Grove |
| 3. Home of Dr. H C Gill | 11. Home of Dr. Maynard |
| 4. Home of Coppoc Brothers | 12. Home of John Safley |
| 5. Home of John Painter | 13. Samuel Yule Home |
| 6. Maxson House aka John Brown House | 14. Mechanicsville |
| 7. Gray's Ford | 15. Gower's Ferry |
| 8. Rochester | 16. J D Lewis Home |
| | 17. "Fort Sumter" |



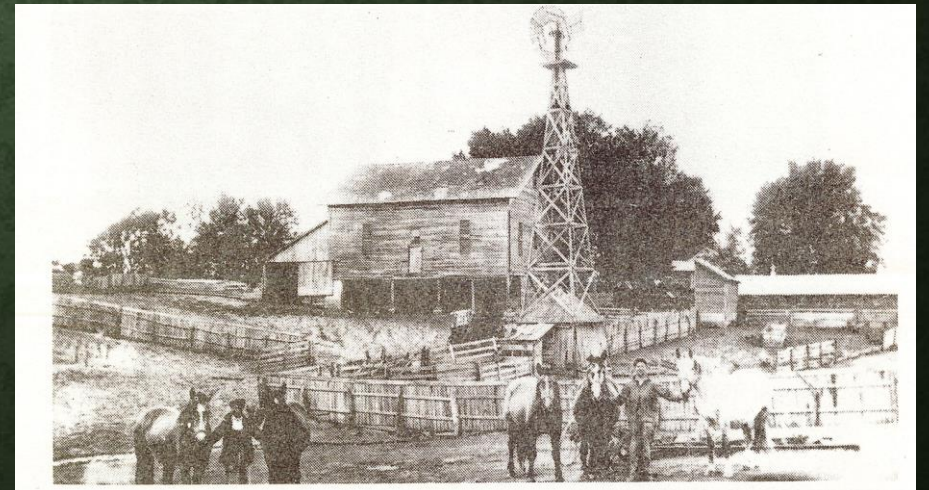
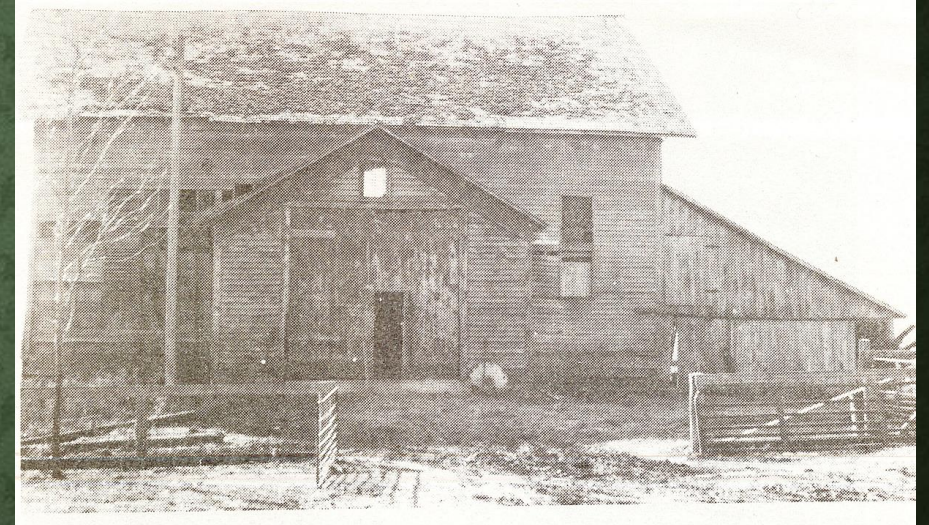
#1 TRAVELER'S REST



- East Side of West Branch
- Owned by James Townsend
- Has since been moved
- 1st Place John Brown stayed in Cedar County
- John Brown was always a non-paying guest
- Shed had small cave underneath to secret 4-5 freedom seekers

#5 HOME OF JOHN PAINTER

- John Brown spent much time here
- Painter's Chair
- Later Pearson Farm
- Later Maple Lawn Stock Farm
- Sent Weapons to John Brown for Harper's Ferry Raid



#2 MOSES VARNEY HOME

- In Section 10 of Springdale Township
- Daughter Anna was sent to home of Quaker Minster Annabella Winn when freedom seekers expected
- Anna sent to her room when visitors arrived unexpected where she tried to listen and see by the stove pipe
- Arrival of a mother and two sons, one with red hair
- The mom ran after hearing of plan to sell boys
- The mom and Charlotte Varney combed sage tea through the red hair to disguise the easily identifiable red hair and used it to color his skin
- The family did arrive in Canada safely

#15 GOWER'S FERRY & #8 ROCHESTER

- Gower's Ferry = Cedar Bluff
- Cedar River Crossings
- If stations existed, they have been lost to history
- From here they usually went north to pick up the line to Clinton

#14 MECHANICSVILLE DEPOT



- The C & NW
- The station agent would secret on trains to Chicago
- Ignored the “sneezing potatoes”

9 HUMPHRY FARM & #10 POSTON'S GROVE

- Southeast of Tipton
- Section 17 of Center Township
- Served as a refuge
- From here taken east to Poston's Grove or north to Tipton
- The route roughly followed the C & NW line to Clinton

#11 HOME OF DR. MAYNARD



HOME OF DR. MAYNARD

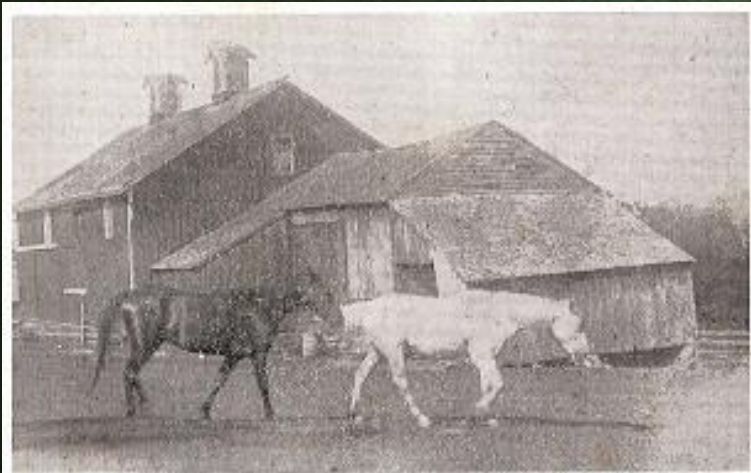


- Original structure burned
- Across southeast corner of Court House Square
- The barn was the actual refuge

#12 JOHN SAFLEY FARM

- Red Oak Township
- Picked up transportation if possible
- If no transportation freedom seekers moved on to Yule Farm two miles west

#13 SAMUEL YULE HOME



Barn at Samuel Yule Farm



April 2014

SAMUEL YULE AND WIFE

- In Section 10 Red Oak Township
- Hid Freedom Seekers In Barn
- Very Cautious with Freedom Seekers
- Family usually never saw freedom seekers
- Samuel would take full basket of food out and return with it empty.
- Only once, when two freedom seekers were sitting on the gate, did the family ever see them

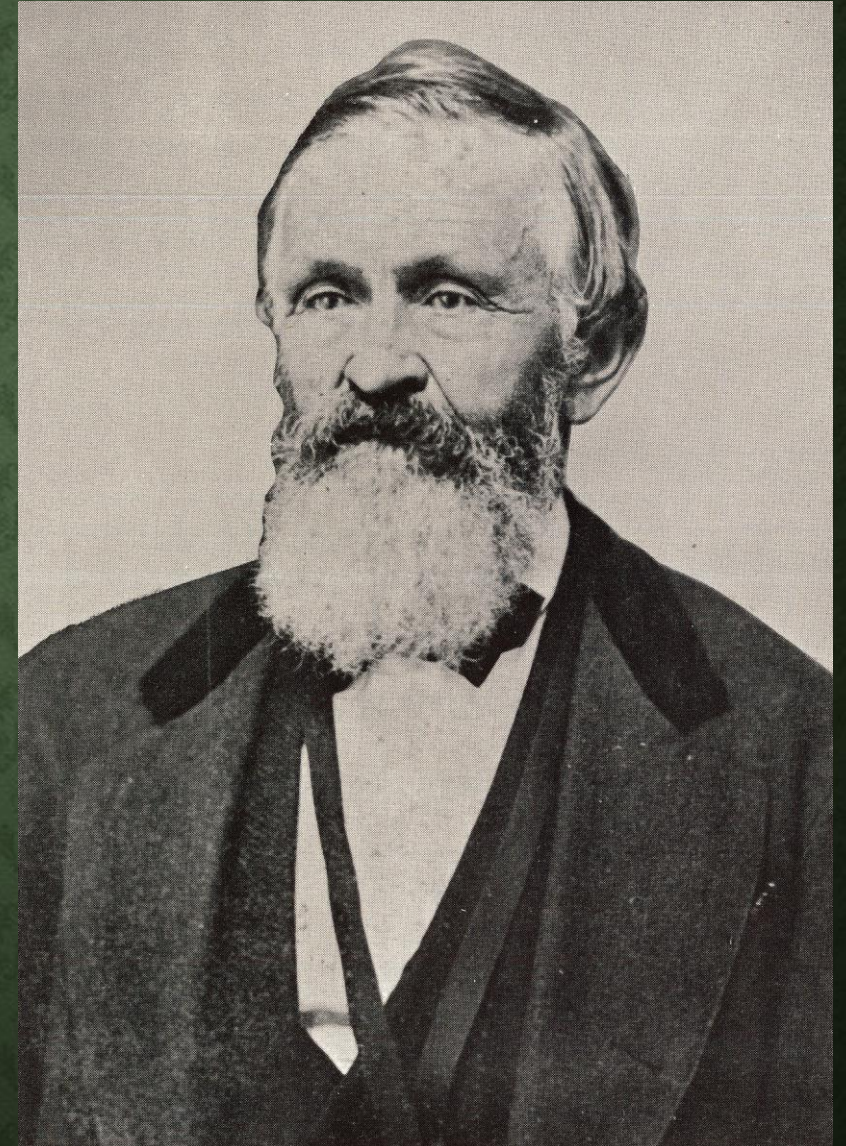


#6 WILLIAM MAXSON HOUSE



WILLIAM MAXSON

- Friend of John Brown, well known abolitionist
- John Brown trained men for Harper's Ferry Raid (October 1859)
- Conductor
- "Sneezing" Potatoes
- Home torn down 1934
- Site designated with marker
- Existing Artifacts



#6 MAXSON HOUSE ARTIFACTS



#4 ANN COPPOC BARN

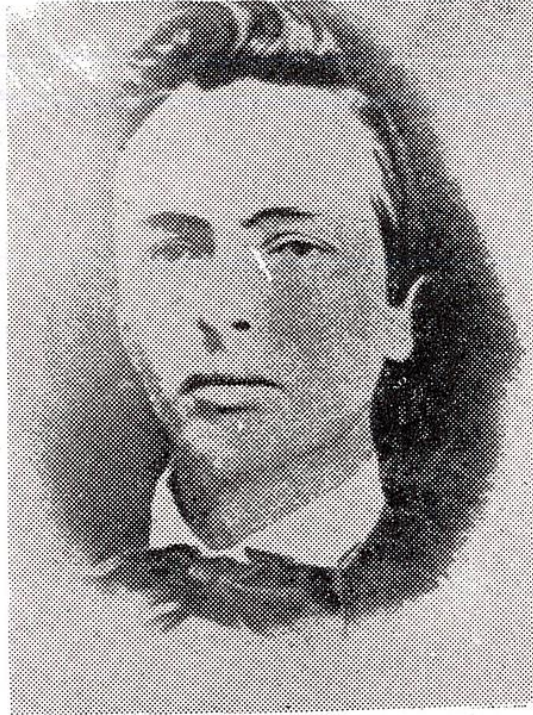


- Mother of the Coppoc Brothers, Edwin and Barclay
- Conductor
- Married to Absolom Railey

COPPOC BROTHERS



Edwin Coppock



Barclay Coppock

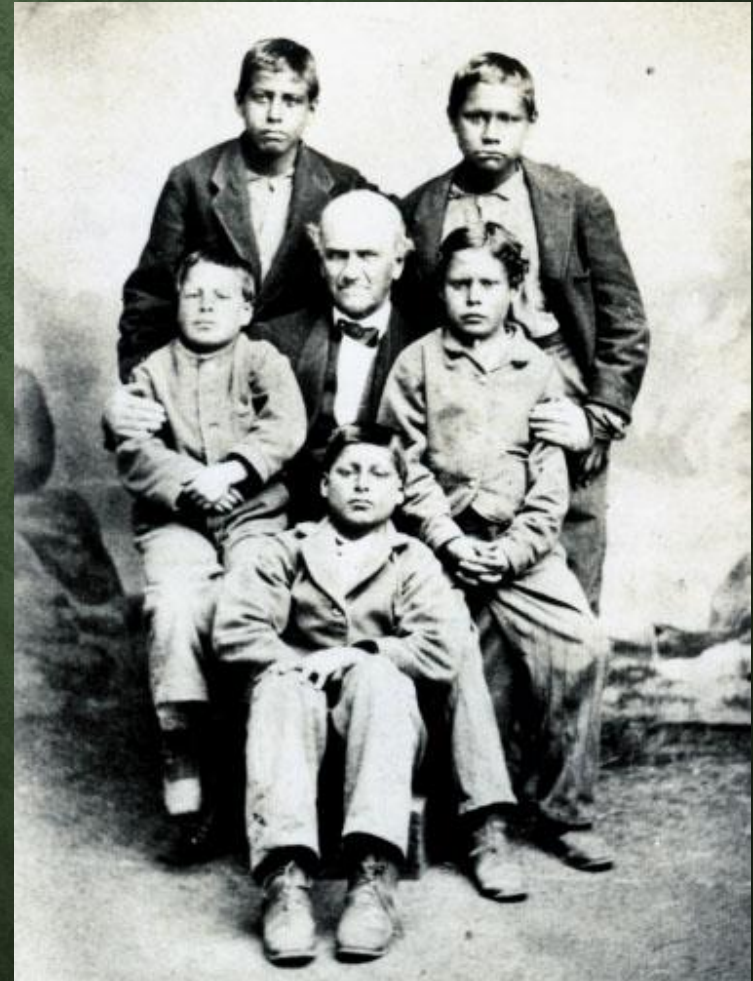
- Like John Brown thought slaves should be removed.
- Barclay Served with John Brown in Kansas
- Ousted from The Society of Friends
- Joined the Raid on Harper's Ferry
- Told Mother they were going to Ohio
- Edwin last man caught, tried and executed
- Barclay at out post with another man, they escaped when learned what happened
- No Extradition by Governor Kirkwood, initially
 - Led to the start of the Civil War
- Nearly shot private detective

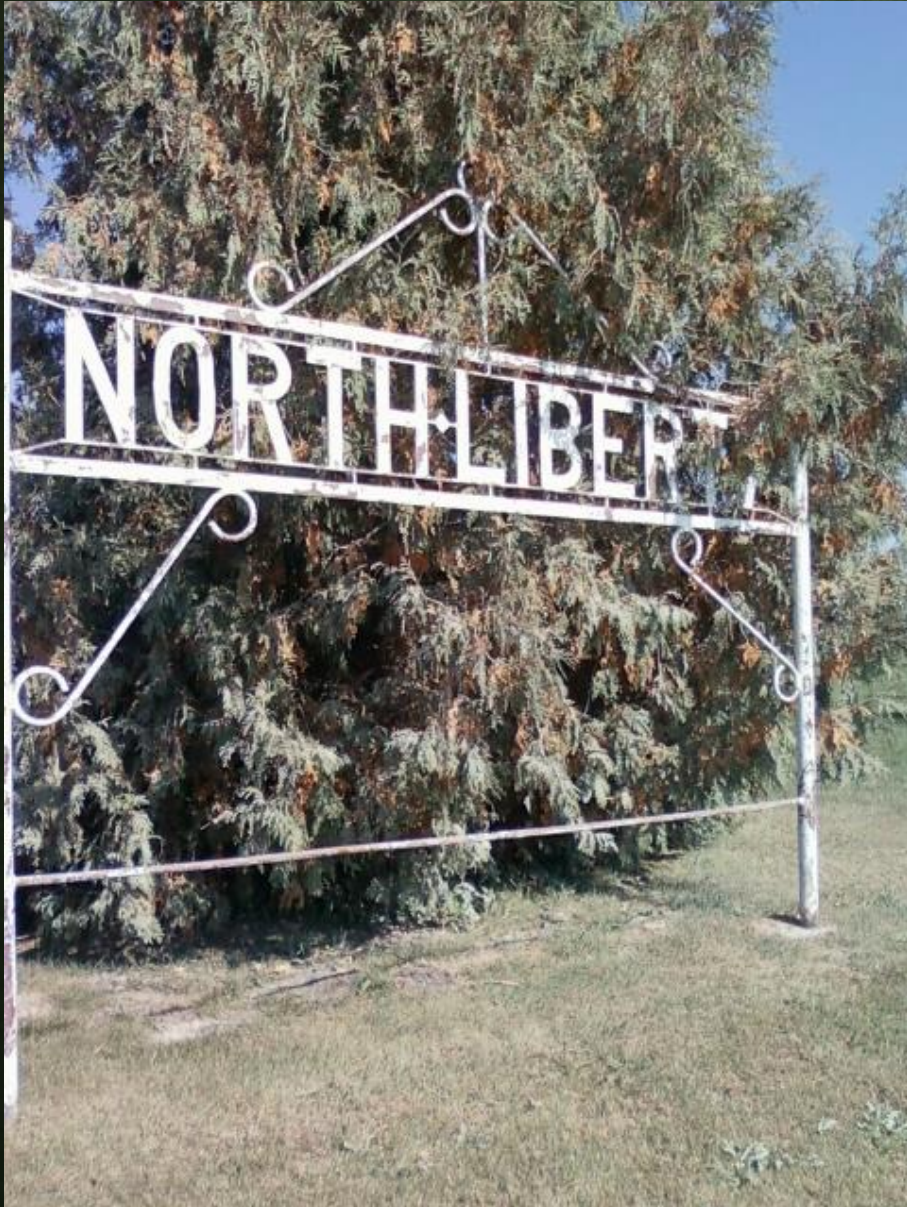
OTHER STOPS

- #3 Home of Dr HC Gill
 - Confidant of John Brown
 - Later of Barclay Coppoc
- #7 Gray's Ford – a Cedar River Crossing
- #16 JD Lewis Home
 - Operated a stagecoach stop
 - Had a windowless underground room connected by tunnel to the basement
- #17 “Old Fort Sumter”
 - ½ mile west of Sharon School in Sugar Creek Township
 - Owned by Jonathan Casebeer – related to Mr. Humphry
 - Freedom Seekers from Muscatine

LAWRIE TATUM AND FAMILY

- Legal Guardian of Herbert Hoover
- Assisted American Indians
- Conductor to Mechanicsville
- Stuck Wagon





NORTH LIBERTY CEMETERY

- Located north of Springdale
- Rumored Quakers buried Freedom Seekers here
- Tests indicate the possibility of unmarked graves
- Soil samples needed

HARPER'S FERRY

- West Virginia at the junction of Potomac and Shenandoah rivers
- Night of Sunday October 16, 1959 to begin the raid
- 22 men reported
- At 7AM 30-40 prisoners were in custody
- Strategic placement of men kept militia at bay and appeared to be a larger force
- Bridges Brown's company held were regained by militia cutting off retreat for Brown's men – all but 5 were captured or killed
- South felt Brown was a traitor for attempting to overthrow government
- Lincoln compared it to the assassination of Kings and Emperors – An enthusiast “commissioned by Heaven”
- North regretted the lawlessness but recognized the courage
- Abolitionists looked to John Brown as a martyr
- Victor Hugo predicted John Brown's execution would “will finally sunder the States”