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'HARBORING NEGROES': RACE, RELIGION, AND POLITICS IN NORTH
CAROLINA AND INDIANA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
PUBLIC HISTORY

BY
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MURFREESBORO, TN

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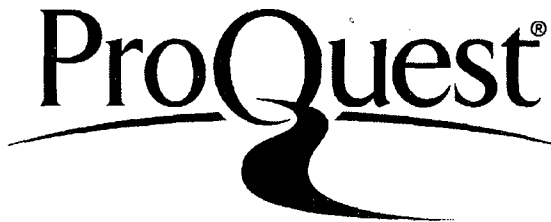
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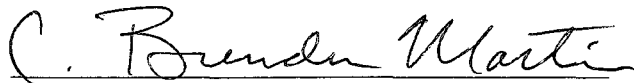
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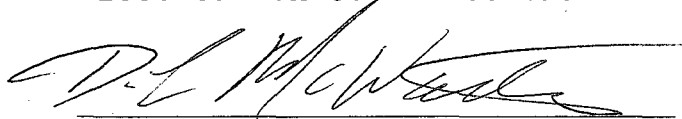
RACE, RELIGION, AND POLITICS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND INDIANA

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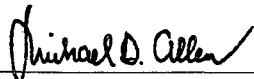
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Dedication

FOR DEA

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If this work is worthy of any notice at all, it is because I have had the help and guidance of so many people. These people, and so many others not listed here, will never know the depth of my gratitude to them. I truly hope that I am worthy of their efforts on my behalf.

I begin this list with the faculty and staff of the History department at Middle Tennessee State University. I am grateful that they saw enough in me to allow me a place in their Public History PhD program. I am grateful for Dr. Rebecca Conard and Dr. Susan Myers-Shirk who met with me prior to my application to the program and aided me in getting through my time at MTSU. I have been blessed with a number of professors who have aided me during my tenure at the university including several whom I had the privilege to assist in the teaching of their classes. From each one of them I gained something that will make me a better teacher and a better historian. This list includes, Dr. Jan Leone, Dr. James Williams, Dr. Bren Martin, Dr.

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Especially note worthy is the help I received from Dr. David Row, who was kind enough to mentor me during the professional residency phase of my tenure at MTSU.

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Dr. Martin, as chairman of my Dissertation Committee acted as both mentor and friend, keeping me both sane and on track to finish my degree. Watching him work with students helped me rekindle my interest in teaching history and why we do what we do. It is professors like Dr. Martin that inspire students the most. If there is any good in this dissertation, it was his coaxing that has brought it out.

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payback for all those station wagon trips to graveyards and
historic sites we took as a family.

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children Nina and Ben. I am the luckiest man in the world
to have them by my side.

Brian Lang Hackett, Fall 2009.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to challenge currently accepted ideas about free blacks in the north in the last few decades before the Civil War, focusing on the plight of a group of African Americans from North Carolina and their white, largely Quaker, supporters. The road to freedom for freepeople in the North was a dynamic and multilayered process, in this case involving the interaction of free blacks and Quakers from North Carolina, newly freed enslaved people from Alabama, and white communities in Indiana.

The primary focus of this work is a group of free and enslaved African Americans and their Quaker supporters that found themselves involved in a court case in Indiana. The principle question explored is how this event illustrates a broader perspective of the role of blacks in a "free" society in the few decades before the Civil War. Also examined is how influences outside the state would come to shape actions within the state, and how these events would

affect the future. Lastly, it is a goal to see that at least part of the story of the freemen who suffered great hardship in making a place for themselves in Indiana and elsewhere is told, giving them the agency they deserve.

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INTRODUCTION

The New England Anti-Slavery Society was on the move. In the spring of 1843 the Society brought its message of immediate emancipation on a tour of the northern states. Their goal was to hold a hundred abolitionist conventions between Vermont and Indiana, stopping at dozens of northeastern and midwestern cities. Highlighting this tour of abolitionist superstars was Frederick Douglass, the famous runaway slave who was now a powerhouse orator. This tour was what Douglass had been waiting for, an opportunity to appeal to a national audience of abolitionists and other anti-slavery advocates.

The New Englanders believed residents of free northern states would be receptive to their message of freedom and emancipation for the enslaved. Indeed, in Douglass's mind, his midwestern audiences need only be shown "the light," and they would enthusiastically join the abolitionist cause.¹ The first portion of the tour went well and, while

¹ Furgus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Cannon: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 228.

touring Ohio, the tour leaders decided to divide into two groups in order to reach a wider audience in Indiana.

The group that included Frederick Douglass traveled to Richmond, Indiana, where it expected to receive a warm reception from the anti-slavery Quakers who populated that part of the state. Almost immediately, things began to go wrong. At the first anti-slavery rally in Richmond, Douglass and his fellow orators confronted a hostile crowd who pelted them with stones and rotten eggs.² A local paper, the *Wayne County Record*, called Douglass's visit a "monstrous outrage upon the good citizens of Richmond" and referred to the black abolitionist as "impudent."³

The Richmond incident was only a foreshadowing of things to come. Looking for a friendlier audience, the party traveled fifty miles northwest to the city of Pendleton in Madison County. Douglass and his party arranged to speak at a gathering of people hosted by the local Baptist Church. The morning portion of the gathering

² Gwendolyn J. Crenshaw, *"Bury Me in a Free Land": The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816-1865* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1993), 37.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

went smoothly, but Church leaders, sensing hostility in the growing crowd, asked that the afternoon gathering be moved into a small clearing in some neighboring woods. After a small platform was erected for the speakers, the anti-slavery lectures continued without incident.⁴

The next morning, just as Douglass began his oratory on the small platform, a hostile crowd of about thirty men emerged from the woods, cursing and demanding Douglass end his speech. Like the mob in Richmond, the men were armed with stones and rotten eggs. Raising his voice in defiance, Douglass continued with his lecture, which immediately brought forth a hail of eggs and stones from the mob of men.⁵ Douglass continued his speech unabated, which provoked the angry men to take violent action. The mob surged forward with shouts of "surround them" and "drive them off." William White, an abolitionist traveling with Douglass, attempted to calm the crowd with reason, only to be smashed in the face with a club that knocked out several of his teeth. When members of the mob

⁴ Crenshaw, 37.

⁵ Brodewich, 229.

attacked another speaker, they struck him from behind with a blow so severe that it removed part of his scalp.

Douglass, acting out of a desire for self-preservation and to protect his friends, grabbed a stick and stepped into the hostile crowd. The image of a black man raising a weapon in defiance of the white mob further enraged the crowd. Shouts came from the crowd to "Kill the nigger!" as they turned their anger toward Douglass.⁶ The black abolitionist quickly fell to the blows of the mob, his right hand crushed and broken in a futile attempt to protect himself from the violent fury of the enraged men. The unconscious Douglass would have been killed if the shocked abolitionist crowd had not rallied and come to his aid.

Neal Hardy, a local Quaker farmer, revived Douglass and took him to his farm, where his wife treated his wounds. For years to come, Douglass spoke fondly of his treatment by the Hardy family and the many others that he met while in Indiana. Unfortunately for Douglass, despite Mrs. Hardy's tender care, the bones of his hand were never

⁶ Brodewich, 229.

properly set. As a result, his hand never fully recovered its strength or dexterity.⁷ His damaged right hand would forever serve as a painful reminder of the divergent visions of the place of free blacks in the state of Indiana.

Similar to many northern "free" states, the people of Indiana held widely different attitudes about the role and place of free African Americans in their society. There were those like the famous abolitionist, Levi Coffin, who believed in universal emancipation and full rights for people of African descent. There were others who may have disagreed with the institution of slavery yet had no affection for free blacks. To them, free blacks were a threat to their livelihood and a corrupting influence on civil white society.⁸ In their opinion, Indiana had no place for any African American, slave or free.

At the farthest end of the political spectrum from the abolitionist camp were those few Hoosiers who desired

⁷ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, Conn: Park Publishing Co., 1881), Facsimile reprint, 1983 by Citadel Press, Secaucus, New Jersey. 234.

⁸ Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 73.

slavery to be instituted in the state. In the Ordinance of 1787 that established the Northwest Territory of the United States, slavery was to be forever banned within the confines of the Territory. However, starting almost from the founding date of the state in 1816, groups of citizens sent petitions to the state legislature requesting a reversal of Indiana's anti-slavery laws.⁹

While this range of opinion in the North was not unique to the Hoosier state, Indiana had emerged as a battleground in the conflict over the place of free blacks in American society. During the three decades before the Civil War, the people of Indiana witnessed the passage of "Black Laws" and a new state constitution restricting the migration of free African Americans into the state. In addition, free blacks saw their individual rights threatened in court and in individual acts of racism and violence. At the same time, however, there were incredible acts of human kindness and sacrifice toward free blacks and runaway slaves. Whole communities served as areas of

⁹ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: a Study of a Minority*, reprint, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 62-65.

refuge and acceptance. While Quakers led most of these communities, even they were not immune to internal conflict over the rights of free African Americans. A schism in the Indiana Quaker Church reflected the turmoil over slavery and race that plagued the state and indeed the nation. Some welcomed free blacks with open arms; others gladly provided aid when needed, but they did not wish the African Americans to stay in their communities. Still others had no sympathy for slaves or free blacks, despite Quaker teachings against slavery.

One manifestation of this split within communities over the vision of slavery and free blacks can be found in a series of trials that took place in a small community in western Indiana in 1847, the focus of this study. Sometime in the mid-1840s a group of enslaved Americans on an Alabama plantation became the inheritance of an Indiana Quaker named Thomas Woodard.¹⁰ Turning to his Quaker community for help, they decided to sell the plantation and

¹⁰ L. White Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon: The Story of a Pioneer American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), 51. Although Busby only mentions the man who inherited the slaves as being a "Quaker by the name of Woodward," he is clearly referring to Thomas Woodard. The only North Carolina Quakers living in Parke County, Indiana at the time with the name of Woodard were Thomas Woodard and his family.

bring the enslaved to freedom in rural Parke County, Indiana. The congregation solicited volunteers to travel to Alabama to liquidate the plantation and bring its human property to the small Quaker settlement of Bloomfield and the neighboring industrial town of Annapolis.¹¹ Both communities already had small but successful settlements of African American farmers and artisans. Many of these residents were free blacks who migrated to Indiana with the Quakers in the 1830s and 1840s, when laws restricting their freedom in North Carolina made it too difficult for them to remain.

Upon arrival, according to published reports, the Quakers provided the enslaved people with homes and small farms purchased with proceeds from the sale of the Alabama plantation.¹² In addition, the community worked to find employment for these newly arrived members.¹³ Many of the

¹¹ The community of Bloomfield changed its name to Bloomingdale in 1860. See figure 10.

¹² Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, 52.

¹³ *Ibid.*

former slaves had skills in carpentry, masonry, and blacksmithing as well as domestic arts.¹⁴

Inevitably, not all appreciated or accepted the African Americans coming to their county. From the moment of their arrival, the African Americans met hostility from some of their white neighbors. According to Joe Cannon, whose father, Dr. Horace Cannon, led the volunteers bringing the African Americans out of Alabama, the freed people encountered an angry crowd when they arrived in Parke County. A mob of men would not allow them to disembark from the steamboats that brought them up the Wabash River. It was only when Dr. Cannon raised a pistol handed to him by the steamboat captain that the crowd backed down.¹⁵

Over the next few months conflicts continued and even spread inside the Bloomfield Quaker Church. Soon after the arrival of the freedpeople, the state of Indiana indicted some of the Quakers and others who had given employment to them for violating an 1831 Law. The law stated that no

¹⁴ Busbey, 52.

¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

free Negroes would be allowed to enter the state without first posting a five hundred dollar bond as security for their good behavior and to insure that they would not become wards of the state. The act further stipulated that anyone employing free blacks who had come into the state after September 1831 and had not first posted the bond would be liable for a heavy fine and possible jail time.¹⁶ The indictments targeted not only the people who helped the African Americans but the African American community itself. Many of the blacks named in the indictments were people already living and established in the community. Some had been free people of color when they migrated from North Carolina.

Since its passage by the state legislature in September of 1831, Indiana's "Black Law" was rarely invoked.¹⁷ Its passage was a panic reaction to both the Nat Turner Rebellion and to the fear that southern states would dump their unwanted, troublesome, and "worthless" former

¹⁶ James H. Madison, "Race Law and the Burden of Indiana History" in *The History of Indiana Law*, David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard, editors, (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 43.

¹⁷ Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 71 and Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 62.

slaves into Indiana.¹⁸ According to historian Leon Litwack, author of *North of Slavery*, state legislators crafted such laws specifically to intimidate African Americans and keep them from staying in the state. The effectiveness of the law was not in its enforcement, but rather in its existence as a preventive measure. The hope was that blacks would see the law as a sign of a hostile environment and move elsewhere. As one Ohio legislator put it, "it was an attempt to do by stealth what no one would have the courage to do openly."¹⁹ Many other states adopted similar "Black" laws.²⁰

More often than not, local officials used the law to punish those they believed pushed a community's tolerance of change just a bit too far. Driven by complaining citizens, local prosecutors went after those who helped runaway slaves or free blacks. These prosecutions seemed targeted at appeasing slave owners who had lost slaves to

¹⁸ Crenshaw, "Bury Me in a Free Land", 12.

¹⁹ Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 72.

²⁰ Ohio in 1803, Indiana in 1831, Illinois in 1819 and 1853, and Oregon in 1849. Dean Kotlowski, "'The Jordan is a Hard Road to Travel': Hoosier Responses to the Fugitive Slave Cases, 1850-1860" *International Social Science Review*, Fall-Winter, 2003.

the Underground Railroad and those in the northern states who were in sympathy with them. The authorities also used the Black Laws to punish those who encouraged free blacks to stay by providing them employment. Often the prosecutions merely followed the letter of the law but not the spirit, and they usually ended with little punishment or a quick dismissal. The purpose was more to harass those who aided African Americans than to punish any real crime.

In one such case, involving Levi Coffin, the famous abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor, the prosecutor seemed to be overtly supportive of the defendant. No doubt to answer charges put forth by those who opposed his work, Coffin was called before a grand jury investigating his Underground Railroad activities. The Wayne County prosecutor, perhaps knowing that Coffin represented a good portion of the community, saw to it that the attempted prosecution died in the jury room and went no further. This type of scenario may have been repeated in courtrooms throughout Indiana as prosecutors for personal or political reasons manipulated the outcome of grand juries for or against African Americans and their

supporters. The Coffin case will be discussed later in this work.²¹

In other cases, such as the trial involving the Parke County inhabitants, the real crime was that Quakers encouraged free blacks to stay in the county. In Parke County, the indictments targeted those who brought the former slaves into the county and found them employment, thus changing the makeup of the community. In the minds of some, this was intolerable and had to be confronted. It may have been acceptable to help runaways or freed African Americans on their way to somewhere else, but having them as neighbors was unacceptable in the eyes of many white citizens of Parke County, even though a center for Underground Railroad activities for many years. If the Underground Railroad was not fully supported by the people of Parke County, its actions were at least well-tolerated. However, many in Indiana and elsewhere did not envision the place of free blacks in American society as staying in their communities.

²¹ See chapter 6.

Unlike the Wayne County prosecutor in the Coffin case, those in Parke County who desired to prosecute the people who aided African Americans found a willing ally in local State's Attorney James C. Allen. A newly elected Democrat to the Seventh Judicial District, Allen needed little encouragement to bring a case against those employing African Americans. He seems to have deliberately picked his grand jury pool from individuals who would bring back the indictments he sought. Upon receiving his indictments, in early 1847, he quickly set out to prosecute those he felt were guilty of "harboring Negroes."

Allen's vision of the role of free blacks in white society reflected those who did not want to share their communities with African Americans. Allen's view of the role of African Americans in the North was diametrically opposed to those he was prosecuting.

It was within this conflicting vision among white Hoosiers that displaced black Americans tried to build homes and a communities. Unfortunately, neither the court cases nor later local histories that discuss the event

mention the plight of the freemen.²² The only subjects written about are the self-sacrificing white members of the community like Horace Cannon. History has largely ignored the people at the core of the event, the African Americans named in the indictments.

Research for this dissertation reveals that the plight of the Alabama enslaved, as well as a longstanding community of free blacks they joined in Parke County, actually began years earlier in the State of North Carolina. Evidence strongly indicates that the formerly enslaved people who arrived in Parke County sometime in 1846 may have been related to some of the free blacks already living in the area.²³ It seems that economic, religious and political forces in North Carolina brought about the division of both black and white families. Ironically, some of the same forces would work to reunite

²² Court cases involving individuals indicted for harboring Negroes during the Circuit Court term of April 1847 are located in the Clerk's office of Parke County courthouse, Rockville, Indiana. The primary source for history of the Park County trials is *Uncle Joe Cannon* by L. White Busbey, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927).

²³ There are a number surnames that appear in the 1840 census in Parke and nearby counties that are same. There were a number of free people or former slaves who came to Indiana with Quakers who left family members behind in bondage. These people would later be "reunited" when freedom came their way.

them in Indiana. This is why a study of the variant visions of white North Carolinians about slavery and free blacks in North Carolina is so important to understanding the racial conflicts that played out in the courts and communities of antebellum Indiana.

The court cases involving the freed African Americans are central to the story, because the cases identify them in a particular place and time and bring them front and center in the cultural and legal debate taking place in America at this time. The court cases are not, however, the beginning or the end of their story. The events that led to the court cases in Indiana originated in North Carolina, in areas heavily settled by Quakers and slave owners alike. They involve the conflict between the meaning of freedom and the conflicting visions of Americans of slavery in North Carolina and in United States. This story is one of migration, for some the road to freedom and for others further enslavement. The plight of freemen ended (and some may claim it never ends) in the Bassett-Ellis settlement in Howard County, Indiana, where the free people finally found a home where they felt welcomed. They could not fit into the world provided them by the white

citizens of Parke County, so they established their own in another part of the state. In short, the events that surround a little known series of court cases in western Indiana in the mid ninetieth century can provide clear insights into antebellum America, especially in free midwestern states like Indiana.

The majority of the information we have on the plight of the African Americans involved in this story is pieced together from primary sources, including census records, legal cases and other official court documents. These documents reveal not only the events affecting to one or two individuals, but they also give us insight into the actions of groups within a wider community. The evidence clearly indicates how different political, racial, and cultural elements of the community reacted to forces both inside and outside the county. The events of Parke County taking place in latter half of the 1840s are clearly reflective of what is happening throughout America.

It is part of our popular culture to believe that life in the northern free states was easy for free blacks once they escaped the slave South. Others argue the opposite, that freemen in the north were no better off than a slave

in the south.²⁴ Such arguments, of course, are absurd; however, the truth is that neither North nor South has a record to be proud of in this matter. Racism and discrimination were rampant in both regions. Finding a place for the freeman in either the North or the South was not an easy task.

Popular culture also suggests that people living in northern states in the years before the Civil War were unified in their opposition to slavery. Many believe the land north of the Ohio River supposedly contained a vast network of pathways and safe houses designed solely for the benefit of the "thousands of fugitives" who fled southern bondage.²⁵ Some estimates of slaves that escaped in the Underground Railroad are as high as 100,000 individuals.²⁶ This is clearly not the case, according to Larry Gara, who argues in *The Liberty Line*, that the number is much lower,

²⁴ Such arguments are put forth by various groups including the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

²⁵ Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1961), 7.

²⁶ A number of sources use the figure 100,000 for the number of slaves who escaped bondage by using the Underground Railroad, including websites such as PBS.org and Teacher.Scholastic.com and such popular history works as *From Midnight to Dawn: The Last Tracks of the Underground Railroad* by Jacquelyn L. Tobin, (New York: Anchor Books, 2008). No original source for such a high number can be found.

perhaps only ten percent of the high number claimed.²⁷ Although important to the people who traveled and those who operated it, the actual impact of the Underground Railroad on slavery derives from its role as a propaganda tool for abolitionists. The number of the enslaved that actually used the system was smaller than most people believe.²⁸ The public opinion of most northerners of the Underground Railroad were neutral at best and often hostile to both runaway slaves and railroad conductors.

The purpose of this dissertation is to challenge currently accepted ideas about free blacks in the north in the last few decades before the Civil War, focusing on the plight of a group of African Americans from North Carolina and their white, largely Quaker, supporters. The road to freedom for freepeople in the North was a dynamic and multilayered process, in this case involving the interaction of free blacks and Quakers from North Carolina, newly freed enslaved people from Alabama, and white communities in Indiana. Evidence examined in this study

²⁷ Gara, *The Liberty Line*, 15-16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

reveals that neither the North nor the South was monolithic in its acceptance or rejection of the freemen, but rather a constantly changing mix of different attitudes and opinions influenced by religion, politics, personal origins, and circumstance. Even the stalwart Quakers, whose historical reputation is one of unwavering support of freepeople, were not of one voice on the subject. Like much of the nation, they too were divided by personal racism, conflict over the place for the freemen in white America, and the various efforts needed to bring about slavery's end. Lastly, it is clear that the freepeople themselves determined to succeed despite the hardships and obstacles placed before them. What was going on around them, and in some cases to them, was clearly just background noise to the lives they were trying to build.

At the heart of this study is an in-depth examination of some heretofore ignored primary sources. These documents include court files surrounding the indictments of a number of white Hoosiers accused of the crime of "Harboring Negroes." A very close study of the documents, as well as an investigation of the principle participants in the cases, reveals layers of motivation including the

obvious: the desire to make Parke County inhospitable to freepeople. Although the freepeople of Parke County are not the individuals named in the indictments, they are clearly one of the main targets. The study of these and other court-related materials adds greatly to the understanding of the complex racial-ised society that the freemen of Indiana and elsewhere had to navigate.

A number of fine historians have written about the subject of racism in the northern states before the Civil War.²⁹ For Indiana, the work of Emma Thornbrough remains the model work on the subject, although her work ignores the agency of freemen and women. Modern scholars still praise her book, *The Negro in Indiana before 1900*, even though it was first published in 1957.³⁰ Thornbrough's research, however, provides a helpful framework for this dissertation by setting a statewide stage for the more local details of this study.

²⁹ Just a few are, Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1960*, and George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, and Robert V. Haynes, *Blacks in White America Before 1865*.

³⁰ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*.

Thornbrough sees the state divided into three areas of thought when it came to the place of freemen in antebellum Indiana. There were those who were hostile to African Americans, supported slavery, in thought at least if not overtly, and who were often friendly to the slave owning South. Another group may not have supported the institution of slavery, and indeed may have wanted to see it ended, but at the same time did not wish to give a home to the freemen in Indiana. Some in this group even went as far as helping fugitives or needy black families as long as they were on their way to somewhere else. The third group saw African Americans as able and capable citizens, worthy of their place as inhabitants of the state. Generally, according to Thornbrough, more tolerance was found by freemen the further they got away from the Ohio River, although there were pockets of tolerance and intolerance in every part of the State.

The only serious weakness of the work is the author's approach to the African American subjects. She paints the freemen in Indiana as "a helpless and inoffensive minority

seeking refuge in a haven of freedom." ³¹ Thornbrough rarely takes into account the actions of the freemen in the events she illustrates. Her subjects are helpless victims at the mercy of white Hoosiers and the law. We know now that this was not the case; free blacks worked hard, within a racist system, to improve their own lives and the lives of their families. As in the case of the free blacks in Parke County, the African Americans were not hapless victims but rather ingenious and industrious people who did the best they could despite the restrictions placed upon them by a racist society.

Despite Thornbrough's tendency to deny black agency, it remains the seminal reference work for those studying race relations in Indiana before the turn of the twentieth century. Many writers on the subject of Indiana history and race have used Thornbrough as a starting point of their work. These include Darrel Bigham, whose *On Jordan's Banks* and *We Ask Only a Fair Trial*, study race relations in the

³¹ Joseph Taylor, "review of *The Negro in Indiana before 1900*, by Emma Lou Thornbrough", *Journal of Negro History*, 43:1 (Jan:1958), 69-71.

border counties and cities along the Ohio River.³² Although *On Jordan's Banks* focuses primarily on the lives of African Americans in Indiana after emancipation, the work offers solid insights into black and white relations prior to the Civil War. His work clearly shows the tension growing within the state as more freemen moved in and exerted themselves in building communities. The north side of the river was "not so much antislavery as they were anti-Black," he writes in his discussion about life before the war.³³ Although such sweeping statements are hardly ever fully correct, Bigham's portrait is quite sound. Many people on the north side of the Ohio River did not welcome the free blacks entering the so-called free states.

One discussion missing in Bigham's work is the political and cultural differences at the center of the internal conflicts between whites and their differing views of their new black neighbors. My research shows that

³² Darrel Bigham's works include *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006) and *We Ask Only a Fair Trial: A History of the Black Community in Evansville, Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

³³ Darrel E. Bigham, *On Jordan's Bank's: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 33.

freepeople were a foil for local political conflicts. Neither party, Democrat nor Whig/Republican, wanted to be seen as embracing African Americans. In some cases the actions against blacks and their supporters was a political struggle between parties, where the African Americans were convenient pawns.

Also, it seems clear that part of the conflict between Indiana whites regarding free blacks was a matter of culture. Nicole Etcheson discusses this cultural conflict as a clash between upland southerners and Yankees who settled in the same regions of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.³⁴ No doubt part of this clash of cultures included strong views on the role of freemen in society. Etcheson argues that the Compromise of 1850 brought such conflicts in the Midwest to the forefront because of the heated conflicts over the passage of the law.³⁵ An argument could be made, however, that the Compromise of 1850 and the accompanying

³⁴ Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

³⁵ Kim M. Gruenwald, review of "*The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861*," by Nicole Etcheson, in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54:2 (April, 1997), pp 451-452.

Fugitive Slave Law were an attempt by the government to award a victory to one political faction over another. The resulting conflict was partly the reaction of one party's, or rather a portion of that party, who refused to accept legislative defeat. However, my study reveals that the political and cultural conflict involving the freemen in the North was an ongoing circumstance which existed for many years and that the Compromise of 1850 was only one symptom.

For free blacks as well as other blacks living in Parke County Indiana, the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law made life more difficult by drawing more attention to them. It did not, however, destroy their resolve. They continued to work to make a life for themselves in areas where the majority of their neighbors did not want them. Black settlements continued to grow and prosper, despite legislative efforts to the contrary.

Several historians have documented the racism and other challenges faced by African Americans in the northern "Free" states.³⁶ One of the finest is *North of Slavery* by

³⁶ Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free*

Leon Litwack. Although somewhat dated in language and style since its 1967 release, it is still a standard on the subject. It was one of the first to challenge the popular notion that runaway slaves and free blacks enjoyed an easy life once they left the slave South. Former bondsmen and free blacks alike suffered great hardships and often could depend only on themselves and fellow African Americans to survive. Many freemen banded together and started their own settlements free of white influence. This is why so many small rural African American settlements grew and prospered in the years before the Civil War in northern states like Indiana. The Bassett-Ellis settlement in Howard County, settled largely by self-sufficient free blacks from Parke County is a good example of one such settlement.

Some recent historians focus their studies on the African Americans themselves as participants in creating

States: 1790-1860, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), and Robert Haynes, *Blacks in White America Before 1865*, (New York: David McKay company, Inc., 1972), and Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), and James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture and Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

their own world and on the few groups that were most frequently there to help them in their efforts.³⁷ Scholars have both praised and vilified one such group, the Quakers, for its work. Authors have discussed the lives of individual Quakers, Quakers as a group and, of course, Quakers as part of larger movements such as abolitionism or the American Colonization Society.

The works of Thomas Hamm, Ryan Jordan, Stephen Weeks, and Hiram Hilty are most prominent in addressing the role of Quakers as abolitionists, Underground Railroad operators, and even slave owners.³⁸ Historians and purveyors of popular culture, such as novelists and television producers, often credit Quakers as the stalwarts

³⁷ Some of these works include, Karolyn Smardz Frost, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), Anna-Lisa Cox, *A Stronger Kinship: One Town's Extraordinary Story of Hope and Faith*, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2006), Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990) and Anne Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2002).

³⁸ Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), Ryan P. Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House: The Quakers and the Abolitionist Dilemma, 1820-1865* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1896) and Hiram Hilty, *Toward freedom for All: North Carolina Quakers and Slavery* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1984).

of abolitionism and promoters of the rights of African Americans, both enslaved and free. These and other authors point out that the roles of Quakers in this effort were far from monolithic. The Quakers were clearly in the forefront of the freedom struggle and many deserve high praise, but their glorious efforts were not universal within their denomination. Where some Quakers displayed great courage and high moral standards, others fell considerably short of their own beliefs. These points are clearly illustrated in this study of the lives of the Parke County Quakers.

Part of this study involves an investigation of some of the current arguments historians have put forth on the subject of free and enslaved people in the South. A strong understanding of the economics of slavery and the legal influences on both enslaved and free are important in framing this study. To further this understanding, the works of James Sellers, Ira Berlin, Eugene Geneovese, and especially John Hope Franklin have shaped my research.³⁹

³⁹ James Benson Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1950), Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters; The free Negro in the Antebellum South*, (New York: The New Press, 1974) Eugene Geneovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1943).

The most important element of this discussion are the variant visions of the place of free blacks that northerners had of freemen during the 1830s and 1840s. This includes the way that antebellum northern society viewed those who supported abolitionists. Again the works of John Hope Franklin are key, as are those of Jay Mandle, Lara Gara and Shirley Yee.⁴⁰ All these authors paint a strong picture of what free blacks faced once they escaped or moved north, where freedom was often a rare and precious commodity.

Historians and writers today tend to study the acts of single individuals or examine state and national trends. Rarely is one event chosen and explored in depth. By focusing on the interactions of one group of individuals from various backgrounds and motivations, who are all involved in a series of interrelated trials, this study offers a clear picture of the true nature of the plight of the freeman in the north in the 1830s and 1840s. My

⁴⁰ Jay Mandle, *Not Slave, Not Free: The African American Economic Experience Since the Civil War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), and Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

research recognizes and explores the enormously complex nature of race relations in antebellum America. Race relations were not simply the rejection of the "intrusion" of blacks by a white culture, but a manifestation of influences including religion, politics, and personal background. The study is also revealing of how African Americans adapted to this landscape and survived within it.

This work is in part a synthesis of existing arguments by historians, designed to place the events within a wider historical context. The approach is to explore race relations in North Carolina and Indiana and to interpret how these attitudes would be later reflected in Parke County. In this work I am trying to understand the meaning of the events in Parke County as a reflection of larger trends on a state and national stage. The question that drove the research was: were the events in Parke County unique, or were they a microcosm of larger events in the region and the nation? This study contends that this story is the product of trans-regional migrations, existing racial attitudes and political party conflict that is not unique. Following this interpretive approach allowed for a fresh interpretation of the events in Parke County.

Tracing the story from North Carolina to Alabama and Indiana, this work offers a narrative history as an analysis of the nation's debate over slavery and freedom in the decades before the Civil War.

Chapter One of this study explores life in North Carolina for slaves, free blacks and Quakers as well as the variant forces these groups faced in the early nineteenth century as the state evolved into a plantation society. Particularly important are the unique relationships developed by a Quaker society opposed to slavery in an environment so dependent on the slave labor of others. It is said that politics makes strange bedfellows, but in North Carolina, slavery and those who supported it, as well as those who opposed it, made for some rather strange relationships. In this state there were free African Americans owning slaves, Quakers owning slaves, Quakers working with slave owners on "anti-slavery" projects, and slave owners using, and thus supporting, traditionally abolitionist projects such as the Underground Railroad.

Chapter Two more intently focuses on Quakers and freeman and discusses the relationship between Quakers and slavery as Quakers became more actively opposed to the

institution in North Carolina. Quakers looked for ways to help slaves and free people that did not violate the laws of the State while still trying to live within the teachings of their faith. A review and discussion of laws, court proceedings, and the actions of individual Quakers provides insight into the actions and reactions of the North Carolina Quakers. Sources explored in this chapter include general works on Quakers in North Carolina, United States census records, and the records of the Supreme and Superior Courts in the State.

Chapter Three explores the conflicting forces that made migration out of North Carolina by freemen and Quakers an important choice for many. Following many years of peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation between slave owners, Quakers, free blacks and slaves, things began to change after the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Part of the change was due to economics and the expansion of the slave economy in other states. There was also change as a result of some well-publicized and often-exaggerated threats of slave rebellions, which caused a tightening on the rights and freedoms of people of color in the South. Soon the political and cultural landscape in

North Carolina made it difficult for Quakers and their free black neighbors to stay in the state as restrictions on slaves and freemen became more severe. Likewise, westward expansions and new opportunities elsewhere in the country during the period of the 1820s to the 1850s made it possible for those owning slaves in North Carolina to move further south where more opportunities to get rich were available. The political atmosphere of North Carolina clearly played a role in the events that were to take place in Indiana years later, as both Quakers and freemen fled repressive laws in North Carolina. Quakers, non-Quakers, and free blacks from that state worked to shape a unique reality in antebellum Indiana.

The sources heavily relied on in this chapter are census records, personal diaries, and histories about the great Quaker migration out of North Carolina. In addition, some of the individuals who played a central role in the Parke County events are introduced in this chapter. Census, court, and tax records are used in an attempt to get a more complete picture of who these people were and what their motivations for migration to Indiana might have been.

Chapter Four shifts the focus to Indiana, a state that occupies a unique place in the annals of antebellum race relations. Conceived as a free state from its founding, Indiana was a place of profoundly conflicting opinions on race and freedom. It served as the home of the Charles Osborn's Free Produce Movement and witnessed a schism in the Indiana Quaker church over abolitionism.⁴¹ At the same time, Indiana had some of the toughest laws on black migration and a constitution that encouraged free blacks to leave. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the framework for understanding the racial culture of state in which the freeman and Quakers settled. The main sources used in this chapter are general Indiana history works, documents related to the development of Indiana law and customs. Most importantly, the work of Emma Thornbrough and other historians discussed earlier writing on the subject of African Americans in Indiana is used to gain a thorough

⁴¹The Free Produce Movement was an attempt by Charles Osborn and others to provide consumers with produce to consumers not derived from slave labor. The organization's largest retail outlet was in Cincinnati.

understanding of the state at the time of the migration from North Carolina.

Chapter Five discusses the Quaker settlement of Indiana and the unique form of activism and politics they brought to the State. The chapter also explores the schism within the Indiana Yearly Meeting and how this was a reflection of the variant views of individual Quakers about freemen and slavery. Additionally, this chapter introduces the reader to Parke County and the communities that played such an important role in the 1847 trials. Local histories, census records, and the minutes of the Quaker Church in Bloomfield are primary sources for the development of this chapter.

Chapter Six examines the court cases of six individuals indicted for 'Harboring Negroes' in the Circuit Court of Parke County and introduces to the African Americans who are central to the story. It also explores the other individuals involved in the case, paying particular attention to the motives of the state's prosecutor, James Cameron Allen. The discussion begins by exploring the event as recorded in Joseph Cannon's popular narrative of the event and how the facts are supported or

not supported by his telling of the story.⁴² Important to this portion of the chapter will be Dr. Horace Cannon, who is central to the Parke County events.

The African Americans, the reason behind the court cases, have largely been forgotten in the narratives on the Parke County trials. Based on existing evidence, this study reconstructs the lives of the people living in the black community in Parke County. Since little record of these people is currently available, the study relies on court cases, census records and other types of legal documents. A close study of these documents reveals the much about the motivations of the participants and the strategies they used to reach their desired goals in supporting or resisting the influx of African Americans into their community. An appendix to this work traces what happened to the principal players in the Parke County court cases.

⁴² L. White Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon: The Story of a Pioneer American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927). This book is an autobiographical work dictated to Busbey by Joseph Cannon who died before the work was completed. The Story of the Parke County incidents are recorded in a chapter titled "A Rank Injustice." Some local historians have used this narrative in articles and stories about the subject.

Chapter Seven, steps back to re-analyze the events discussed in relation to popular culture and popular historical beliefs from a public history point of view. The discussion includes how museums and other historic sites present difficult topics and offer suggestions on how tough subjects can be handled. The study further talks about why the Underground Railroad is popular today and what is often missing from the interpretation of this aspect of our history. A key element of discussion will be why certain aspects of history are left out by chance or by choice. The answer, I believe, is to be found in how we view ourselves and the history of our nation.

History is a powerful force; it shapes who we are and how we see our world. This fact is why history is so important to Americans, and why they often take offense when their view of history is threatened by those in the academic field. It may also be why history is the only profession that allows anyone who wishes to practice it the right to do so, without benefit of education or degree.

This dissertation highlights a single event that took place in 1840s Indiana and use it to illustrate a broader perspective of the role of blacks in a "free" society.

This study shows how influences outside the state shape events within the state, and how these events would affect the future. It is important that at least part of the story of the freemen who suffered great hardship in making a place for themselves in Indiana and elsewhere be told, giving them the agency they deserve. If the tale of the conflicting views of the role of African Americans in pre-Civil War Indiana has heroes, it is truly the freemen themselves.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION: NORTH CAROLINA

In the mid-1830s an event took place in central North Carolina that illustrates the risks that free blacks faced. In the northwest corner of Guilford County North Carolina, near the Stokes County line, a small community of free African Americans lived as farmers and tradesmen. The community existed near a concentration of Quaker settlements that supported the small population of freemen. This community prospered and grew, becoming a haven for free blacks in the area. The small settlement did not escape the notice of some neighboring poor-white communities who looked on the community with jealousy and greed. Many felt there were "a large number of good field hands loose in the county" who could be put to good use if they could be returned to slavery.¹ Some more vicious white elements of the area developed a plan to destroy the community and enslave its inhabitants. Man-stealing,

¹ Edward Thacker, "Stories of Town and Country 'around," *The Frankfort Times*, Frankfort, Indiana, November 3, 1929, 2.

kidnapping freemen and returning them to slavery, was a lucrative business in some areas of the South.²

Plans for the destruction of this small community were overheard by one of the population of Quakers living nearby. Leaders of the African American settlement and the Quakers decided that it would be best if the freemen left the area for the relative safety of a free state. With only three days notice, the small village packed itself up and moved to Hamilton County, Indiana, near an existing Quaker settlement.³

The planned raid that almost took place in that small community of African Americans in North Carolina was just one of the many events that stands as a testimony to the two visions of African American and white relations before the Civil War. Many historians consider the history of race relations in North Carolina before the Civil War as being unique in the annals of southern history.⁴ Some

² Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: The New Press, 1974), 99-100.

³ Thacker, 2.

⁴ The works of John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*, and John Spenser Bassett, *Slavery in the State of North Carolina*, and Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, are fine examples.

historians have even argued that North Carolina, like Virginia, seemed to be on the road to ending slavery had not internal and external circumstances created a political shift within the state.⁵

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the unique nature of race relations in North Carolina during the pivotal time from the early 1830s to the early 1840s. This period is critical in the understanding the monumental forces that shaped the cultural make-up of the state and motivated thousands of men and women to leave their homes for new opportunities and safety in other states. This decade is also important because of the influence it had on shaping the politics and policies of other states, especially the state of Indiana. In addition to exploring the radical forces at play in North Carolina this chapter introduces some of the individuals who played an important role in the events that took place after they migrated from North Carolina.

"In the Social Structure of the antebellum South there was no place for the free Negro," with these words

⁵ John Hope Franklin, "Slaves Virtually Free in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History*, 28:3 (July, 1943), 285.

historian Guion Johnson started his discussion in 1937 about free blacks in North Carolina before the Civil War.⁶ Although such sweeping statements are hardly ever accurate, the life of a free person of color in the South, including North Carolina, was extremely difficult. The problem lay in the vision of southern society held by most white North Carolinians, whose attitudes were governed by underpinnings of white supremacy. In the minds of many white southerners there was room in society for rich planters, common farmers, poor whites and even slaves, but the role of a freeman was hard to describe.

The struggle to define the freeman's place within colonial society began with the first settlement of the Carolina colony and continued throughout the antebellum period. Some historians have even argued that North Carolina was progressive when it came to emancipation and improved rights for the enslaved when compared to the

⁶ Johnson, Guion Griffis, *Antebellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 582. Electronic edition hosted by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Accessed at [Http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/johnson/johnson/html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/johnson/johnson/html). Accessed on 6 February 2009.

colonial history of other states.⁷ But as time moved on toward the middle of the nineteenth century changes in the southern economy and other outside forces by the early nineteenth century dashed any hopes for peaceful emancipation. As North Carolina traveled the timeline of history from statehood to the Civil War, the lives of free blacks and slaves became more difficult.

There were many reasons for this. First, new technologies, such as the introduction of the cotton gin, and new economic realities in North Carolina and other southern states changed the very nature of slavery. Outside forces such as the propaganda of abolitionist and internal strife in the form of slave revolts caused already fearsome whites to attempt to tighten their control over both the enslaved and free people of color. Complicating matters, the racism and petty jealousy of the poor whites of southern society also contributed to make life difficult for free blacks. All these factors built upon each other,

⁷ See Stephen Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History*, and John Hope Franklin, *John Hope Franklin, The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*, and Julius Yanuck, "Thomas Ruffin and the North Carolina Slave Law," *The Journal of Southern History*, 21:4 (November, 1955).

causing North Carolina to move closer and closer to a very restrictive climate for African Americans by 1840.⁸

African Americans in North Carolina generally fell into three categories: slaves, freemen and "quasi-free" slaves. Slaves were defined by law as property, living and working at the master's will. Freemen had no owner, and in theory were free to do what they wished. Quasi-free slaves, usually possessed a valuable skill and were afforded certain privileges, yet they was still enslaved. Quasi-free people may have been allowed to find their own work, live in houses that they owned and be able to keep some of their earnings. In some cases, all that the master required of them was that a certain percentage of their earnings be returned to the master. There were times when a slave might not see his master very often and may appear to neighbors as a freeman. This became such a concern that the North Carolina legislature passed a law that prevented quasi-free slaves from acting as freemen.⁹

It was not uncommon for slave owners to hire out their slaves, especially those who had considerable skills, such

⁸ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 4-6.

⁹ Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, 498.

as carpenters or masons. The law protected "hired" slaves and those that hired them were obligated to provide for their benefit, including medical needs. If someone hired a slave and failed in his obligations to provide for the slave's care, he could be held responsible in court.¹⁰

Quasi-free slaves could use the money they earned to purchase their own freedom or freedom for members of their family. In some rare cases, slaves would invest the money in real estate. In at least one court case in the state of Alabama the State Supreme Court debated the rights of a land owner who was also a slave.¹¹

The forces working against free African Americans living in North Carolina were many. The place allotted to blacks in North Carolina, both legally and culturally, was that of a slave. There was almost no room in society or

¹⁰ There are a number of court cases involving those who did not fulfill their obligations to a hired slave and were therefore liable in court. See Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Volume II* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 57, 59, 84.

¹¹ Shanklin vs Johnson, January 1846. The Court ruled against the slave, claiming that as a slave he had no right to enter into a contract. The fact that the case made it all the way to the State Supreme Court shows that the case was worthy of discussion. Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery, Volume III* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 158.

law for the role of a freeman.¹² Free blacks had few rights to make contracts on their own, and very few options when they were wronged.

Further, the slave-owning class often viewed a free person of color as being an evil influence on the slave population. Many whites believed that slaves would be negatively influenced by seeing free blacks, especially those who were successful. Slave owners and others feared that the site of black men free from bondage would give the slave thoughts about his place in the world. Such ideas would negatively interfere with the slave-master relationship, giving the slave the desire to be free.¹³

Further complicating the issue was that in the 1820s and 1830s a number of slave insurrections took place that popular rumors blamed on either free blacks or groups of black artisans.¹⁴ In 1822, Denmark Vesey led one of the more famous insurrections in South Carolina. Wild rumors circulated that had the Vesey insurrection not been

¹² In court matters in the State of North Carolina African Americans were to be assumed to be slaves unless otherwise proven.

¹³ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 211-212.

¹⁴ Joseph Cephas Carrol, *Slave Insurrections in the United States, 1800-1865* (Negro Universities Press, 1938), 104-106.

stopped, the streets of Charleston would have run with the blood of its white citizens.¹⁵ Making matters worse, there was also a rumor circulating that the only whites to be spared during the uprising would be young white women. These women would become the "wives" of the leaders of the insurrection.¹⁶ This myth likely built upon the racist fear of southern whites and exaggerated the rumors of conspiracy and mass murder, leading to widespread suspicions of free blacks.

Denmark Vesey, a free black who had been quite successful in his career, had many enslaved followers who enjoyed a quasi-free existence as skilled tradesmen. Suspicious whites pointed to these facts as a testimony that when given their freedom, or a taste of it, people of color could not be trusted. Although the facts and actual significance of the Vesey insurrection are disputed, the reaction of the white population is not. In the general view of most southerners, giving freedom to slaves could

¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁶ Ibid., 101. Using young white women as "wives" for the leaders of insurrections is a reoccurring theme in many slave insurrections. It is more of a reflection and production of white fear than actual reality.

lead to further insurrection. Additional slave insurrections will be mentioned later in this work.

In addition to the fears raised by slave rebellions, there were two additional problems that free blacks faced during this time in North Carolina. Successful free blacks often faced the wrath of poor whites who felt free and enslaved blacks posed an economic and social threat to their status in the southern hierarchy. Additionally, the growing price of a slave in the southern economy made any person of color an increasingly valuable commodity. Many southern white plantation owners looked upon a free black person as valuable property going to waste. The value of an enslaved human being in the South had grown steadily during the first half of the nineteenth century. The demand for new slaves constantly outstripped the supply.¹⁷ A healthy male or "likely" slave sold in 1820 for about 300 dollars; in 1850 the value was between 1200 to 1500 dollars.¹⁸ Most of the demand was in the western states of

¹⁷ James Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 147.

¹⁸ See Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: the Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974) and Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss, "Slave Prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722-1809." *The*

Alabama, Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi, where cotton could make men rich and land was cheap and available. North Carolina became a source not only for slaves, but also for entrepreneurs moving west. North Carolina was changing.

These external pressures caused by the change in southern economy brought social and political conflict within the State. The question of the rights of enslaved people seems to have always been just below the surface in the minds of many North Carolinians.¹⁹ This resulted in a political climate that was strongly divided over matters of race and slavery.

The study of North Carolina's record of slavery and the rights of free blacks is a study in contrasts. At approximately the same time that the freemen of Guilford County were encountering threats to their freedom, the state legislature was debating giving freemen the right to

Journal of Economic History, 61:3 (September 2001), 616-639. The above numbers are a calculation by the author of the numbers provided by the above works.

¹⁹ For a good example of this see Don Higginbotham and William S. Price, Jr. "Was it Murder for a White Man to Kill a Slave?" Chief Justice Martin Howard Condemns the Peculiar Institution in North Carolina, *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series Vol. 36. No 4 (October, 1979), 593-601

vote.²⁰ In 1835, North Carolina was the last state to officially deny black men the right to vote when it passed a new State constitution. North Carolina was clearly a state with extremely divergent views of the slave and the freeman. As history progressed through the first half of the nineteenth century in North Carolina the racilized landscape changed in a negative way towards the person of color. It is within this quagmire of varied opinions over place for freemen in North Carolina that freepeople tried to make a place for themselves.

²⁰ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1971), 116

CHAPTER ONE: COLONIZATION AND SLAVE SOCIETIES

Organized in 1819, the North Carolina Colonization Society was modeled after the American Colonization Society founded three years earlier. The North Carolina organization had one major objective, the peaceable removal of free people of African descent from within the boundaries of North Carolina, preferably to somewhere other than the territorial United States. The organization had two main, but seemingly opposite ideological supporters: slave owners and anti-slavery members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers.

The Society of Friends, better known as the "Quakers," is a religious movement founded by Englishman George Fox in 1652. A basic tenant of Quakerism is a belief in an "Inner Light," the Spirit of God that "gave forth the Scriptures" and is contained within all people.¹ This divine spark resides in all people—men, women, rich, poor, young, old,

¹ Howard H Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years: The History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends Since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement* (Wallington, PA: Pendle Hill, 1965), 16.

slave or free.² Stated simply, all people had the same divine spark of God and therefore are all equal in the sight of God. Extrapolating from this belief, the Quakers did not believe in a church hierarchy, since all are equal in the sight of God.³ They also did not advocate violence against their fellow human beings, even at times of war or even for self defense. Most importantly, the belief in an "inner light" brought the Quakers into moral conflict over the subject of slavery.

Quaker beliefs have put them at odds with others, especially in societies with established state sponsored church, as in England or Puritan New England. In Boston, Quakers had severe conflicts with the Puritan church. They spoke out against state taxes in support of the Puritan church and questioned the authority of the clergy. As a result, Quakers were fined, arrested and even executed.⁴ In other parts of the country Quakers were well tolerated, especially in Pennsylvania, founded by William Penn, a Quaker, as a refuge for all religious dissenters.

² Hiram H. Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All: The North Carolina Quakers and Slavery*, (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1984) page 2.

³ This tenant is still a fundamental Quaker belief.

⁴ Mary Dyer is a good example; she was executed in Boston in 1660.

The Quaker church is organized as individual congregations, their churches referred to as "meeting houses" where they meet weekly for services. The members of each church appoint a group of individuals to represent their meeting houses at area meetings. This group meeting is called a Monthly Meeting, which is designed to manage local church affairs. Such business includes normal church operations and special projects, such as building local schools or the managing of special committees for the poor. Their function also requires disciplining individuals who may have drifted away from the teaching of the church. Such violations of the Quaker Discipline may consist of non-church attendance, marrying a non-Quaker, or serious crimes like adultery or public intoxication. The Monthly Meetings may ask non-repentant individuals to leave the church, called being "disowned." Monthly Meetings usually take place at the primarily location among a group of Quaker meeting houses.

In addition to the Monthly Meetings, representatives are sent to Quarterly Meetings, where more important church business is discussed. Quarterly meetings are usually divided regionally within a state. Yearly Meetings take

place on the state level and are responsible for important church matters and relations with other Yearly Meetings in other states or other countries. In the case of North Carolina, for example, the meeting is called the North Carolina Yearly meeting. It is at this annual meeting that very important church business is discussed, including the setting of church policy and program. In the case of North Carolina during the antebellum period, it was the Yearly Meeting that established the church's policy on slavery. Since the Quaker Church does not believe in a church hierarchy, the individual yearly meetings serve as the voice for church.

Quakers began to establish themselves in North Carolina in 1671.⁵ In the 1740s and 1750s a great number of Quakers migrated to the North Carolina back country from Pennsylvania. The attraction was cheap land, which seemed to be available for the taking.⁶ One such Quaker family, including a young Daniel Boone, settled in what is now Davie County in west central North Carolina.

⁵ Hiram Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 3.

⁶ John Mack Farager, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of An American Pioneer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 26.

The western lands so attractive to the Quakers and others were hilly and wooded, very suitable for small family farms. These subsistence farmers usually owned less than one hundred acres and relied almost entirely on family labor.⁷ Farm production was small-scale and limited to food crops, pigs and cattle, which were sold locally. The ground was simply not suitable to grow large cash crops such as cotton, tobacco or rice. A farmer may own a slave or two, but slavery was not the backbone of the economy as it was in the flatlands to the east. It is therefore no surprise that the Quaker led opposition to slavery would be centered in the western part of North Carolina.

The saying that "politics makes strange bedfellows" demonstrates the nature of the North Carolina Colonization Society. The makeup of the organization brought together an unlikely pair of partners united in a cause. One group supported the continuation and perpetuation of slavery; the other, mostly on religious moral grounds, was dedicated to seeing the South's peculiar institution come to an end.

⁷ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 97.

What brought these two divergent groups together was the mutual goal of removing free blacks from American soil.

To many North Carolina slave owners and others, the freemen were a group of people that they did not like politically or intellectually. Fundamentally, the free person of color was a threat to the established social order that the slave owner depended on to maintain the slave system. This is not to say that the slave owner was particularly fond of the slave system; in fact, many felt the system was inherently evil. However in the mind of many southerners, slavery was a necessary evil - a required sin to keep the southern economy afloat.⁸

Slave owners used various arguments against allowing free blacks to stay in North Carolina. One argument was that free African Americans were a bad influence on slaves. Seeing free blacks would give slaves the hope of their own

⁸ For discussion on the ideas behind the "necessary evil" see George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Probably the most famous propionate of this idea was Thomas Jefferson who compared slavery to holding a wolf by the ears, one did not like it, but dare not let go.

freedom, thus turning content slaves into freedom seeking malcontents.⁹

Free blacks also influenced the slaves in other ways, according to slave owners. Many southerners believed that at the heart of many slave rebellions were instigators who were either free blacks or quasi-free slaves. Southern whites feared that free blacks would use their influence and ease of movement in slave communities to incite insurrection among the normally docile slaves. When word of slave revolts, either real or imagined, circulated among southern communities, officials would often look to free blacks as the cause. It was not uncommon for authorities, and sometimes angry mobs, to find abolitionist pamphlets and other writings in the hands of free blacks, which only strengthened slave owners' arguments against them. Ironically, in the few cases where rumors of revolts had substance, it was often free blacks who reported the planned insurrections to authorities.¹⁰

⁹ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 72-73, and Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina*, 585.

¹⁰ Franklin, 73.

Another issue that southern whites had with free blacks was the belief that freemen, especially successful ones, violated an existing social order. This was especially a problem for poor non slave owning whites who objected to competing with blacks for employment. Furthermore, the perception that a free man of color was more successful than a poor white man was offensive to some whites. The idea that a black man could somehow rise above his ordered place in society conflicted with many white's perceived nature of the way things should be. It undermined the belief in white supremacy held so tightly too by southern whites.¹¹ Especially offensive to some was a free black man who showed the slightest amount of arrogance or self assuredness. A person of color displaying impertinent behavior could often meet with "correction" supplied by vigilante justice.

In one such case in Wilmington, North Carolina, a black sailor was heard by a local community patrol using "impertinent" language with whites. He was promptly

¹¹ For a discussion of white supremacy as part of the southern class system see W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941).

whipped, jailed and whipped a second time to drive home the point that such actions would not be tolerated.¹² To make matters worse, the authorities saw to it that a slave passing on the street administered the whippings. The use of a slave to administer the punishment no doubt had a number of purposes. First, it reminded the free black sailor that he was only slightly higher on the social spectrum than the slave, further adding to his humiliation. Second, it served the purpose of reminding the slave of his place by humiliating someone he may be in a position to admire. The fact that the slave went about his task in a way described as "never done better" stands as testimony to his submission to the slave system.¹³ This event sent a clear message to all who looked on or would hear of the incident later that this was the punishment for freemen who aspired to improve their status. The message was also clear to those in bondage- aspiring to something greater than what they already had was fruitless.

¹² Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 578, also see, John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 93.

¹³ Quote from the *North Carolina Standard*, October 30, 1850 as quoted by Johnson in *Ante-bellum North Carolina: a Social History*, 578.

Both slaves and freemen knew that standing out in a crowd or not showing the proper humility when dealing with whites was to be avoided. African Americans in antebellum America, both North and South, learned early the importance of keeping a low profile. Freemen were especially vulnerable, since their social position was already suspect to many whites. A freeman who was successful and let that success show was often a target of violence.

The story of Lunsford Lane is a good example. Lane was one of the most successful freemen in North Carolina. He made his living selling cigars, pipes and tobacco to very wealthy white men, but he was always careful not to step out of place. He would pretend to be less intelligent than the savvy businessman he obviously was, and he dressed little better than a slave.¹⁴ He also avoided too much contact with slaves and worked hard not to be overheard discussing abolitionism. Unfortunately for Lane, the one time the necessities of his life required him to be a more

¹⁴ John Spencer Bassett, *Anti-slavery Leaders of North Carolina* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press) 1898, reprint, Kessinger Publishing, 2002, 66.

visible presence in the community, it nearly cost him his life.

Lunsford Lane had been born a slave to one of the wealthiest families in Raleigh, North Carolina.¹⁵ According to his biography, his master gave him opportunities to learn to read and hire himself out to others. Because of this, he was able to purchase his freedom and establish himself in business. His next task was to raise enough money to purchase the freedom of his wife and children, which he was able to do by the early 1840s. Unfortunately, North Carolina law at the time prevented slave owners from freeing their slaves without an act of the State Legislature.¹⁶ Although he had purchased his family, they were technically slaves and were therefore part of his estate. They would be returned to slavery in the event of his death. To further complicate matters, North Carolina law forbade freemen from entering the State. Lane had arranged to purchase his freedom while he was on a business

¹⁵ Bassett, *Anti-slavery Leaders of North Carolina*, 61.

¹⁶ See John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, reprint, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), see 20-34 for a discussion on North Carolina manumission laws.

trip with his master in New York. Perhaps he did this because it may have been safer to conduct the transaction in a free state. However, having purchased his freedom there, he was forbidden by law to re-enter North Carolina.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Lane reentered the state to free his family. Keeping a low profile and quietly going about his business, it worked well until he had to come forward and ask permission to free his family. Petitioning the state legislature required him to take on a more public persona, drawing attention not only to himself as a successful businessman but also as a black man violating North Carolina law.

Those in North Carolina who did not see a place for the freemen in the state moved quickly against Lane. Local authorities arrested him and ordered him to leave the State in twenty days.¹⁸ He reluctantly arranged to have his family freed in his absence and made plans to leave the state. Meanwhile Lane's increased visibility made him a favorite target for mobs. His friends warned him to be careful, as his safety was in danger. As a precaution,

¹⁷ Bassett, *Anti-slavery leaders*, 67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

Lane stayed in the town jail to avoid a run-in with the angry crowd, leaving only at night when he thought it was safe.¹⁹

One night, despite his precautions, he confronted a mob of young men who "were in the most cases the poorer classes, although some reckless sons of the leading families acted with them."²⁰ The mob was made up of a growing group of men who found Lane's success "exceedingly objectionable."²¹

As Lane left the safe haven of the jail, a mob seized him and carried him to the "old pine field" where the city gallows stood. Lane believed that he would soon be hanged, but much to his great relief, the mob only intended to intimidate him with a tar and feathering. Lane later wrote of the joy he felt when he realized that he would not be lynched.

After the deed was done, the laughing crowd returned his clothing and personal items, including his watch. A number of the crowd followed him home and watched him has

¹⁹ Bassett, 71.

²⁰ Ibid., 66

²¹ Ibid.

he cleaned the tar and feathers from his skin. Many in the crowd told him that as far as they were concerned, he could stay in town for as long as he wanted.²²

What was the purpose of this cruel event? It was clearly to intimidate Lane and to send a clear message about his place in North Carolina society. The mob's point was to show Lane that his position in North Carolina society existed completely at the will of whites. Fortunately for Lane, he was soon able to leave North Carolina with his family. His friends saw to it that he and his family were placed on a train and given provisions and some money for the journey. A hostile crowd also came to the station to insure that he was truly leaving.²³

It is important to note that mostly young and poor white men made up the mob that tormented Lane. Again, it was the poorest of the white working class that felt most threatened by the freemen because they were competing for the same jobs at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. Poor whites in the northern states probably had this same complaint against free blacks coming to, or living in,

²² Bassett, 72.

²³ Ibid, 73.

their communities. Perhaps it was the fact that Lunsford Lane had found his success as a provider of fine tobacco and cigars to the upper classes that saved his life. His specialized profession of supplying hand rolled cigars to an elite clientele was no direct threat to poor whites. His work did not deny poor whites work in the same manner as a laborer or blacksmith.

The American Colonization Society sought to remove the challenge of free blacks, like Lane, by removing them from society. Among the slave-owning elite, the strongest argument for the American Colonization Society was the belief that slavery was good for the slave. This argument was at the center of justification for the continued existence of slavery in antebellum America. Blacks were by nature uncivilized, and they needed the yoke of slavery to allow them to gain from the benefits of true culture. Many felt it was the "white man's burden" to improve the life of the black man.²⁴ According to this belief, benevolent white society had taken them out of heathen Africa and given them

²⁴ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), page 59.

the blessings of protestant Christianity. Without a master's guiding and nurturing hand, a slave would revert to his or her natural state. Such creatures, turned loose on society, would bring nothing but crime and chaos. They would be unable to live in a civilized society both mentally and physically. Their lives would be nothing more than continual misery.²⁵

One of the strongest proponents of this argument was South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun.²⁶ Calhoun argued before the United States Senate in 1837 that slavery was indeed not a "necessary evil" but instead a "positive good."²⁷ The Senator claimed that "negroes" were

²⁵ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 194

²⁶ Calhoun's defense of slavery as a "positive good" was supported by many. Soon after his statements on the floor of the Senate, he was appointed to the office of Secretary of State in 1844, replacing Abel Upshur who had been killed during a cannon demonstration aboard the *USS Princeton*. Calhoun used his office, which was in charge of the census at the time, to prevent an investigation of the 1840 US Census which, on the surface, seemed to support his claims. Investigation of the 1840 Census by Edward Jarvis proved that it was fundamentally flawed in its reporting of mental illness among free blacks. He proved that in some cases the number of "insane" free blacks greatly exceeded the whole population of people, both black and white, living in a given area. For more information on the flaws of the 1840 census see Opel G. Regan, "Statistical Reform Accelerated by Sixth Census Errors," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 68:343, (Sep. 1973).

²⁷ George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1917), 47.

intellectually inferior to whites and selected by nature to be subservient to the white race.

Calhoun's contention before the Senate was a culmination of arguments that had been circulating for a number of years.²⁸ They were a direct response to the growth in the abolitionist movements of the 1830s, such as Garrison's *Liberator* and Turner's rebellion that same year. A number of individuals brought forth the assertion of "negro" inferiority both in verbal argument and in scientific publications.²⁹ It was, however, Calhoun and others in leadership positions who were able to group the varied opinions into a package under the umbrella of "positive good."³⁰ Variations of this argument echoed throughout the Jim Crow era and even to the Civil Rights movement.

²⁸ Fredrickson, 47-51.

²⁹ For a study of the scientific publications on race produced in the nineteenth century see John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of race Inferiority, 1859-1900*, (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1971)

³⁰ Another proponent of the "positive good" argument may have been Thomas Jefferson, who seemed to support the idea of the natural inferiority of "negroes" although he died before the arguments behind "positive good" had come together in one package. See Ira Berlin's *Slaves Without Masters*, 86-88.

The "positive good" argument put forth by the supporters of slavery served a number of purposes. It justified the enslavement of others for reasons more than economic, and it answered the enlightenment critics who argued for the fundamental rights of all men. If the slave was indeed incapable of civilized self-determination, they argued, then slavery is a benevolent option. However, if freedom must come, it is better that the slave be removed than remain as a corrupting influence on civilized society. The North Carolina Colonization Societies were the answer to what to do with them.

Another factor may explain the popularity of the colonization movement in North Carolina and elsewhere; the Societies provided an economic incentive to slave owners and others by raising money to remove free blacks, thus saving individuals and government the expense of removal. One of the societies making the biggest financial contributions to solve the "problem" was the Quakers of North Carolina. To many of them, the success of the colonization movement was a mechanism which would bring about the end of slavery. Quakers and many others supported the American Colonization movement because they

perceived the organization as a means to a positive end. In their minds, colonization would lead to a gradual end to slavery.

Unlike slave owners and supporters of the slave system, Quakers did not believe in the institution of slavery. The official position of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting was that slavery was a sin and needed to come to an end.³¹ However, Quaker theology, in the minds of some, forbade any overt or direct action to end slavery. Instead, Quakers believed that a policy of "gentle persuasion" would eventually bring about the end of slavery.

The primary method for ending slavery as sought by the Quakers in North Carolina was "gradualism."³² Through quiet means and example, slavery would eventually die out on its

³¹ The Quaker church at this time is made up of a loosely affiliated group of Yearly Meetings, usually divided on along state or regional lines. Each Yearly Meeting was in turn made up of groups of quarterly meeting which in turn was made up of individual monthly meetings. The church does not believe in a ministerial hierarchy. Leadership is chosen by each monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting. In theory, this leadership was open to women as well as men. For further information on the makeup and beliefs of the Society of Friends please see Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years: History and Beliefs of Society of Friends Since George Fox started the Quaker Movement*, (Lebanon: Sowers Printing Co, 1964).

³² Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 114.

own, without hardship and violence. The goal of the Quakers in North Carolina was to pursue the emancipation transition peacefully.

The colonization movement fit well into the frame work of gradualism. This is why Quakers so strongly supported Colonization, even after it had fallen out of favor with many other anti-slavery groups. Quaker leaders were of the opinion that the two races, black and white, could not live together in harmony.³³ This is not to say that Quakers were of the opinion that blacks were somehow intellectually inferior or otherwise to the white man, although it is clearly true that some Quakers were no less prejudiced than their non-Quaker neighbors. The reason the Quakers believed that the freemen and the white man could not live together was because of existing prejudice. In short, they believed a black man could never be accepted as an equal and thus treated fairly in American society. He or she would be better off with other freemen in a place like

³³ Drake, 121-122.

Africa or off in a remote part of the United States populated exclusively by free people of color.³⁴

To the Quakers, the colonization of freemen made the emancipation of slaves a much easier pill to swallow than the mixing of the races. It removed the fear that the country would be overrun by large numbers of troublesome free blacks. This group included some Quakers whose hatred of slavery did not manifest itself in love for the slave. Fortunately, the colonization movement served the purpose for both those who wanted to help former slaves by removing them from the prejudices of society and those who just wanted them removed from society. "Colonization," according to historian Winthrop Jordan, "was an emancipationist scheme calculated primarily to benefit the emancipators. Essentially it was a means of profiting white Americans by getting rid of the twin tyrannies of Negroes and Slavery."³⁵ In other words, colonization's desired effect in the minds of some was the end of slavery and the removal of blacks from society.

³⁴ Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 17-18.

³⁵ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 549.

As North Carolina Quakers, anti-slavery advocates, and slave owners marched hand-in-hand along the path to colonization, happily envisioning a future without the black man, they ignored the one group vital to their success. African Americans almost universally abhorred the idea of colonization.³⁶ White colonization supporters and recruiters found it difficult to find freemen who were willing to leave their homes and move to foreign lands, even when the alternative would be to remain in slavery.³⁷

In the north, African American opposition to colonization is well documented in the words and writings of free blacks.³⁸ In Philadelphia, for example, free blacks organized against the idea of colonization soon after the American Colonization Society formed in 1816. In the minds of African Americans, the United States was their home as

³⁶ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 238.

³⁷ In North Carolina like many other states, Freemen were given a certain amount of time to leave the state after emancipation or run the risk of being returned to slavery. Even when offered a chance to immigrate to Liberia, many chose to stay rather than leave friends and family and the country they called home.

³⁸ African Americans living in the North had greater opportunity to speak out in opposition to things like the American Colonization Society's efforts than free African Americans in the South.

much as it was the home of the white man.³⁹ Their feelings were best summed up in the words of David Walker in his famous 1829 *Appeal*: "Do they think they can drive us from our country and our homes, after having enriched it with our blood and tears..."⁴⁰

African Americans resisted colonization both actively and passively. Black leaders spoke out in speeches and in writing. Black churches in the North refused to allow their buildings to be used by representatives of the Colonization Society to recruit freemen to emigrate to Liberia or anywhere else.⁴¹ Both black and white recruiters hired to find freemen interested in immigration resigned under intimidation. Freemen showing interest in

³⁹ Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas About White People, 1830-1925*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

⁴⁰ David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*. Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, accessed at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html> on 9 February, 2009. Page 71

⁴¹ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1760-1860*. 206-207, and Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 204-207.

colonization often were "persuaded" by other freemen to change their minds.⁴²

The most obvious sign of African American protest over the idea of colonization was seen in the low number of freemen who participated. Between 1817 and 1867 the American Colonization Society sent approximately 13,000 freemen to Liberia, this equates to 260 individuals a year.⁴³ Taking into account the hundreds of thousands of freemen qualified for immigration to Liberia in any given year, the total was extremely small. Between 1851 and 1860, only 517 freemen from North Carolina immigrated to Liberia with the help of the American Colonization Society.⁴⁴ Even this low number is not reflective of the unpopularity of colonization with African Americans in North Carolina. Many who left North Carolina went as a condition of their freedom when released by their masters, therefore they had no choice in the matter.⁴⁵ The numbers

⁴² Franklin, 207.

⁴³ Colonization: The African American Mosaic, (Library of Congress Exhibition) accessed at <http://loc.gov/exhibits/African/afam002.html>. Accessed on 2 February 2009.

⁴⁴ Franklin, 209.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 207

probably would have been lower if the formerly enslaved people had been given a choice.

Aside from the fact the freemen were being asked to leave the land of their birth, there were more practical reasons for rejecting the idea of migration. The mortality rate for immigrants was extremely high, especially in the first few years after immigration. Of the 4,571 freemen who migrated to Liberia between 1820 and 1843, only 1,819 were still alive by 1843.⁴⁶ Twenty one percent of all immigrants died within their first year.⁴⁷ Most of the deaths were caused by diseases such as malaria.

The high death rate did not escape the attention of the American Colonization Society, which took steps to minimize the problem and counteract the bad publicity. First, they recommended that immigrants who travel to Liberia should arrive early in the year to avoid the rainy season, and giving the freemen time to become accustomed to the African environment.⁴⁸ They also needed to explain the

⁴⁶ Tom W. Shick, "A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization from 1820 to 1843 with Special Reference to Mortality," *Journal of African History*, 12:1 (1971), 58.

⁴⁷ Shick, 57

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56

deaths in order to put the minds of possible future immigrants at ease. The Colonization Society issued propaganda claiming that the high death rates were the result of the immigrants themselves. They even claimed that the deaths were the result of immigrants over-indulging in fresh fruit and making other foolish mistakes.⁴⁹

If the fear of death was not enough to discourage potential immigrants, there were additional reasons. In the 1840s Lewis Sheridan, one of the Colonization Society's supporters and true believers, found the Society not living up to its ideals. Sheridan, a rich slave owner from North Carolina, freed his slaves and went with them to Liberia. There he found agents of the Society "fleecing" poor immigrants of everything they had.⁵⁰ He returned with his formerly enslaved freemen to North Carolina.

The American Colonization Society took great lengths to counter the negative reports. They published reports with glowing examples of successful colonists, a measure of

⁴⁹ Shick, 57-58.

⁵⁰ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 208.

their own concerns that bad publicity was hurting their recruiting efforts.

Free black opposition to colonization took different forms in the North and South. In the North, African Americans formed anti-colonization societies and produced publications against colonization. They also gained the support of white abolitionists in their efforts. In the South, freemen were not allowed to voice their opinions publicly, so they may have resorted to more subtle forms of opposition. This covert resistance certainly would include discussions between individuals and the possible harassment of Colonization Society agents. In both areas, North and South, free blacks overwhelmingly voted with their feet and chose not to participate in colonization. Ultimately this is what made the colonization movement a failure in America. It is also perhaps why it gradually grew out of favor with most abolitionists, some including Quakers.

At the time that the North Carolina Colonization Society was failing in its attempts to recruit freeman to immigrate to Liberia or elsewhere, the very nature of slavery in the state was undergoing a transition. Societies change over time in reaction to outside social,

economic and even environmental factors. Some leading historians also believe that societies with slaves evolve in reaction to changes in economics.⁵¹ As a society transforms from a "society with slaves" to a "slave society" the difference between the two societies is profound.⁵² During the period of 1820s to the 1840s North Carolina underwent such a change.

In a "society with slaves," slavery is one of many labor systems that come together to form a working economy. It is important to the economy but not the primary force behind the nation or region's economic success. In such a society, even though slavery is still unpleasant and cruel, it can be considerably more humane and flexible.⁵³ Although slavery can be put upon one class or race of people, it is not necessarily a permanent condition based on race.⁵⁴ Slavery is a condition of birth or fate, not a consequence

⁵¹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 9.

⁵² Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 8.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Although "race" in the minds of many historians is a non-existent construct used to describe a set of traits assigned to humans whose ancestry may have come from a given region or place, I use it here in order to define a group.

of one's genes. Therefore, in theory, slaves in a "society with slaves" have a greater chance of being freed and had an easier time making the transition into a free society. A former slave may even aspire to become one of the slaveholding class, since slavery is a function of condition, not race.

A "slave society" is much different. In a "slave society," slavery is a function of one's race or social class. It is perpetual and inherent to that class or race and cannot be changed by freedom. In the minds of some, it is a divine designation, part of the order of things established by God. A prime example of this kind of argument is the "positive good" position put forth by John C. Calhoun and his supporters discussed earlier in this chapter.

In the "slave societies" of the antebellum South, the purpose of the enslaved was to be slaves; it was inherent in their being. Slaves can be set free, but that does not change what or who they are. Following this train of logic, freedom was wasted on slaves because it was beyond their nature to understand it or benefit from it.

Extrapolating this way of thinking, slaves were meant to be slaves, as were their children and grandchildren.

Under such a system, slavery became increasingly cruel, as there was little or no chance to escape it. In addition, freedom offered little relief since the stigma of slavery and inferiority was seen as part of the person and not just part of his current condition. As a result, laws controlling slaves and freemen become harsher as members of the slave owning society felt the need to have greater control over the system.⁵⁵ Freemen in a "slave society" were seen by the slave-owning class as a threat to the system, best removed or returned to slavery, both for their own good and for the good of society.

Two separate Supreme Court cases in North Carolina clearly illustrate the difference in thinking between a "society with slaves" and a "slave society." The first occurred in 1772, during the late colonial period at a time when North Carolina was clearly a "society with slaves." At the time, agricultural economy of North Carolina was dominated by small, family farms. The cotton industry was

⁵⁵ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 9.

in its infancy and the cotton gin would not be invented for two decades. North Carolina was not dependent on slaves for the majority of its economy. The second case takes place in the 1829, in the middle of the State's transition into a "slave society." By this time, internal and external forces were changing the nature of the state's economy and slavery was most important. Incidentally, both cases deal with harsh treatment of a slave.

In 1771, Chief Justice Martin Howard charged a grand jury to contemplate the following question: "Was it murder for a white man to kill a slave?"⁵⁶ Justice Howard did not just ask the question and allow the jury to decide, but hinged the question on a foundation of humanitarianism. He also publicized his charge to the jury in print for the public to see.

"Slavery," he told the jury, "was not a natural state."⁵⁷ Bondage was not inherent to a race or class of people, and even people in bondage retained rights that are

⁵⁶ Don Higginbotham and William S. Price, Jr. "Was it Murder for a White Man to Kill a Slave? Chief Justice Martin Howard Condemns the Peculiar Institution in North Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 36:4 (Oct. 1979) 593.

⁵⁷ Justice Martin Howard quoted by Don Higginbotham and William S. Price, Jr. page 596.

"naturally unalienable."⁵⁸ Justice Howard's charge to the grand jury reflects the "natural rights" philosophy expounded by John Locke, one of the intellectual fathers of the American Revolution. Such thinking inspired many leaders of the American Revolution as reflected in the Declaration of Independence.

Despite living in North Carolina Justice Howard applied Enlightenment concepts to the rights of slaves. Even slaves, he contended, have basic rights and that their condition was not a result of fate. If indeed, all humans including slaves have rights that they cannot be separated from, then all people are owed basic considerations as human beings. Therefore slaves should be treated as humans despite their current situation.

Such a philosophy, according to historian Winthrop Jordan, "undercut the notion that the Negro was a brute."⁵⁹ It also allowed society to begin to see slaves as human equals. In the years immediately following the Chief

⁵⁸ Ibid., 596.

⁵⁹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1968), 365.

Justice's comments on slavery and the rights of all men, the North Carolina legislature passed laws in support of slave rights, including one law that made it a crime for a white man to kill a slave as it was a slave to kill a white man.⁶⁰

In contrast, a North Carolina the Supreme Court Case in 1829 clearly illustrates how North Carolina had transformed into a "slave society." Lydia, was an enslaved person belonging to Elizabeth Jones, hired out for one year to John Mann to provide domestic services. While working for Mann, Lydia, according to court records, "committed some small offense" and was called by Mann to receive some punishment for her transgression. Likely out of fear, Lydia turned to run from Mann, who shot her in the back. Mann was indicted and a lower court found him guilty of "assault and battery upon Lydia."⁶¹ He appealed his conviction to the North Carolina Supreme Court.

⁶⁰ Don Higginbotham and William S. Price, Jr. "Was it Murder for a White Man to Kill a Slave?", 596.

⁶¹ Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Volume II, cases from North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee* (New York: Octagon Books, INC., 1968.), 57.

At the Supreme Court, John Mann's conviction was overturned. Thomas Ruffin, writing the opinion of the court, stated that Mann was acting as the slave's owner or master. He therefore was not guilty because "the power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect."⁶² Ruffin continued by saying that slaves had no rights except those given to them by law or by their masters. The slave's owner has "uncontrolled authority over the body" of the slave.⁶³

If slaves had no rights except those given to them by slave owners, then they do not have rights that were inalienable. Ruffin lamented that he was reluctant with his ruling, but commented that this "constitutes the curse of slavery on both bond and free portions of our population."⁶⁴ To simplify Justice Ruffin's argument, the slave master must have total control over the slave in order to keep society's balances in place.

⁶² Justice Thomas Ruffin, as quoted by Julius Yanuck, "Thomas Ruffin and North Carolina Slave Law," *The Journal of Southern History*, 21:4 (Nov., 1955), 462.

⁶³ Yanuck, "Thomas Ruffin and North Carolina Slave Law," 462-464.

⁶⁴ Helen Tunnickliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, Volume II, 57.

According to Ira Berlin, in his work *Many Thousands Gone*, a change from a "society with slaves" into a "slave society" begins when slavery becomes the primary economic work force for a region or state.⁶⁵ In a "society with slaves" the work done by slaves is the same kind of work done by non-slaves. For example, a slave might be employed by his master to do a variety of tasks, from blacksmithing to farm work. The slave is one of many options that a slave owner can use to have a task done. In a "slave society" there are tasks that are almost exclusively reserved for slaves. These tasks are usually labor intensive and often require a large number of individuals to complete. The planting, harvesting and processing of cotton is a good example of such a labor intensive task.

In the South, the transition from a "society with slaves" may have begun with the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Almost overnight the cotton gin transformed a small industry into a full blown economic force. The influence of the cotton gin and the industrial revolution in England also increased the accessibility and demand for

⁶⁵ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 12.

cheap cotton. Suddenly the production of cotton went from a low profit, labor intensive agricultural sideline to an extremely profitable industry. With this boom in production came an increased demand for a different kind of labor force, one based on slave labor.⁶⁶ As cotton production expanded in the South, so did other industries which required large amounts of slave labor. These industries included tobacco, rice and indigo production.

The transition from a "society with slaves" to a "slave society" is not accomplished overnight nor is it a change that occurs universally. In the United States, the transition took place in some states faster than others. States such as Alabama and Mississippi, where slave heavy agricultural industries started early in their history, the transition was much faster.⁶⁷ In North Carolina, where there was a long history of a "society with slaves" prior to the coming of new industries, the transition was slower.

⁶⁶ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 407-415.

⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that prior to the "cotton industry" becoming a large economic force in Alabama, there was a law passed by Congress in 1798 that prevented the importation of slaves into the state of Alabama. See James Benson Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 15.

Much of the transition from one society to the other in North Carolina was due to a combination of both inside and outside forces. As noted before, many historians would argue that North Carolina was one of the last states to make this transition, because it was one of the last to enact restrictive black codes so prevalent in "slave societies." However, it was during this transition from a "society with slaves" to a full blown "slave society" that the Quakers of North Carolina began to have trouble in their antislavery efforts.

CHAPTER TWO: QUAKERS AND SLAVERY IN NORTH CAROLINA

The first sign that slavery was beginning to concern the Quakers of North Carolina was reflected in the Quaker Query of 1473. The annual Quaker Query was a method of self-examination Quaker congregations were required to use to insure they were following Quaker teachings. Each monthly meeting answered a set of questions dealing with a variety of subjects ranging from worship attendance and helping the poor, to the consumption of alcohol and the teaching of children. The questions were based on Quaker discipline handed down by the Quaker Yearly Meetings.

In 1743 the Query for the first time asked a question concerning slavery. It asked, "Do Friends observe the former advice of our Yearly Meeting not to encourage the importation of Negroes, nor buy them after imported?"¹ In 1765, the Yearly Meeting changed the Query and worded it in such away to say that the church frowned on the purchase of any slaves and that the only acceptable way to obtain

¹ Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 104.

slaves was through inheritance.² Eleven years later, in 1776, the Query asked if Quakers were refraining from "holding mankind as slaves?"³ The year 1776 was also significant in the Quaker struggle with slavery for another reason: The North Carolina Yearly Meeting in 1776 took steps to help slave-owning Quakers free their slaves and to provide legal aid for freemen being returned to slavery against their will.⁴

Many North Carolinians saw the potential growth of the free black population as a threat. In response the State Legislature passed laws in 1777 making it more difficult to manumit slaves only by requiring an action of the court.⁵ In "an act to prevent domestic insurrection," slaves who were illegally freed by their masters could be recaptured and returned to enslavement. In an act dating back as far as 1741, slave owners could free slaves only as a reward for meritorious service, but it was not universally

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hiram H. Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All: North Carolina Quakers and Slavery* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1984), 24.

⁵ Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery, Volume II, Cases from the Courts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee*, (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 4.

enforced. The legislature defined such a service as above and beyond the normal duties of a slave.⁶ A slave owner had to give convincing testimony of such service, either in written or oral form. Many slave owners attempted to free their slaves in their wills which was frowned upon by the State and often stopped by the State Supreme Court.

There were many cases in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century where slaves freed by Quakers were returned to slavery.⁷ According to North Carolina law, slaves who were illegally freed by their masters were at risk to be turned in by any freeholder and subjected to resale. As an added incentive, anyone turning in a slave "passing as a free negro" was to be granted one fifth of the slave's selling price as a reward.⁸

The Quakers had many options to avoid this problem and admonished members who freed their slaves and left them on their own.⁹ The easiest way to avoid legal restrictions was to move the freemen to another state, but this was

⁶ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 20.

⁷ For some examples see Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 37.

⁸ Caterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, Vol. II, 4.

⁹ Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 81.

expensive and often led to the breakup of families. Another popular technique for Quakers-and non-Quakers-to free their slaves without going to the State for permission, was to will them to the Quaker Yearly Meeting. Slaves left to the North Carolina Yearly meeting were slaves in name only. The Quakers found them employment and helped them obtain homes. They even worked to provide some basic education and worked with them their families still in bondage.¹⁰

The strongest organized effort to bring about freedom for enslaved Americans in North Carolina was the North Carolina Manumission Society, founded in 1816 by Quakers and led by Charles Osborne, a Quaker minister and abolitionist.¹¹ Osborne would later go on to be a leader in Indiana's free produce movement, which encouraged people not to buy food and other products made by slave labor. The Manumission Society sought to bring an end to slavery by peaceful and gradual means. They also supported the North Carolina Colonization Society.

¹⁰ Stephen B. Weeks, *Slavery Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1896), reprint, Kessinger Publishing, 2001, 239,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

However, not all Quakers supported the gradual approach to end slavery and took matters into their own hands. Many of these Quakers lived in the western part of the state where a more radical anti-slavery feeling ran strong.¹² Many of the Quakers here were followers of Joseph John Gurney, an abolitionist Quaker from England. Gurney was part of an evangelical movement in Quakerism that desired to move the church closer to mainline Protestant movements like the Methodists and Episcopalians.¹³

These more radical anti-slavery Quakers even went outside the law to free slaves. Quakers, such as the Coffin family of Guilford County, North Carolina, were a good example. The Coffins were well-known operators of the Underground Railroad, in both North Carolina and later Indiana when the family migrated there. According to Levi Coffin, the cruelty they witnessed when groups of slaves were transported through their community on the way to

¹² John Hope Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 25, and Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 18-19, and Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 84, 330-340.

¹³ Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 73 and Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 14.

southern slave markets influenced the family to take action.

In 1806, young Levi Coffin witnessed one incident that would haunt him forever. A runaway slave was desperately pursuing his family which had been sold south by their master. His owner captured him and brought the enslaved man to a local blacksmith, where he was put in heavy chains. The slave master then had the slave's hand placed on the blacksmith's anvil where he broke each finger with a heavy hammer in an unsuccessful attempt to get the poor man to reveal the names of the people who had helped him. He was then tied to the back of the slave owner's carriage and forced to run behind as the owner rode back to his plantation. The last image Coffin saw of the enslaved man was him running at full speed behind the carriage, trying not to fall and be dragged to death.¹⁴

Events like these that helped make the Underground Railroad possible. Quakers and non-Quakers alike supported fugitive slaves with food, shelter and even transportation. The Underground Railroad, although prohibited by law, seems

¹⁴ Richmond, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 6-7.

to have been tolerated by some members of the public. In Addison Coffin's autobiography about his life as an operator on the Underground Railroad in North Carolina, offers a clue about why this was occurring. He states that a strange part of his "business" was the "white slaves that came to us for help, and *those put in our hands to be sent away by their father-masters.*"¹⁵ [Emphasis added] Coffin suggests that the Underground Railroad in the South operated with at least the tacit knowledge and approval of the southern planter class who used it to get their mulatto children away from slavery.

Perhaps using the Underground Railroad network was a great advantage for some slave-masters. They did not have to justify freeing their "children" in court or before the state legislature, where laws in North Carolina and elsewhere required him to do so. They were saved from embarrassment of admitting to sexual relations with his slaves in public. They were also relieved of the guilt of watching their "children" sold to pay bad debts or for some other reason that was beyond their control. Lastly, if a

¹⁵ Addison Coffin, *Life and Travels of Addison Coffin* (Cleveland, Ohio: William G. Hubbard, 1897), 41.

master-father died, he could not be sure his children would be safe. Getting them out while he was still living was important, and removing them from the local area also removed the chance of possible embarrassment and other family complications. Levi Coffin, a cousin of Addison, notes a number of examples in his *Reminiscences* in which plantation owners or their friends needed his help in getting slaves out of the South.¹⁶

Planters may have turned more of a blind eye toward the Underground Railroad after the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831 in Virginia. The removal of "troublesome" slaves would certainly have allowed white planters to sleep better at night. It is clear that Turner's uprising caused southern states to curtail the freedoms of free blacks and made it more difficult for slave owners to free the enslaved.¹⁷ Sending them away in secret was much easier than trying to manage them at home, regardless of the financial loss.

Despite strict laws designed to limit the antislavery actions of the Quakers, the state of North Carolina

¹⁶ Richmond, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 300-310.

¹⁷ Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 244.

tolerated most of their actions. However, profound shifts in the economic base in the South and the influence of outside events in the 1820s and 1830s would make life increasingly intolerable for many free blacks and their Quaker supporters.

Economic changes within North Carolina certainly propelled this shift, but it was the economic transformation in the southwest frontier that brought real change. The poor enslaved man that Levi Coffin witnessed being abused by his master was only trying to reunite with his family that had been sold south. The opening of new lands in Alabama and Mississippi made possible by Indian concessions to the Federal government was a major factor in igniting profound change in North Carolina. For example, Alabama's appetite for slaves seemed nearly boundless. In 1820 Alabama had a population of approximately 42,000 slaves, by 1850 that number had grown by over 300,000 to a total of 342,844.¹⁸ Similar numbers were reflected in Mississippi and Georgia as well.

¹⁸ James Benson Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 147.

At the time of this incredible growth in the number of slaves in the Deep South, North Carolina's slave population was nearly stagnate. In 1820, before the draw of the Deep South began, North Carolina had a slave population of 205,000 individuals. By 1830 the number had grown to 245,601, but by 1840 the number had increased by only 216 to a total of 245,817.¹⁹ Clearly slaves in North Carolina were being sent elsewhere.

In 1808, the international slave trade was banned by the United States Constitution and by international treaty enforced by the British Navy. Although this did not stop the trade of enslaved Africans entirely, it greatly reduced the number of available new slaves. The American slave market was reduced almost entirely to the resale of existing slaves or new slaves provided by natural increase.²⁰

As this stagnation in the pool of existing slaves was taking place, the demand for them was increasing. In 1814,

¹⁹ Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, accessed at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>. Accessed on 4 June 2009.

²⁰ Roger L. Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 45 (note).

Andrew Jackson forced the Creek Indians to sign away millions of acres in Georgia and Alabama, and by 1835 the forced migration of Indians out of Mississippi and Alabama was complete. As new lands and new opportunities to get rich became available, "Alabama fever" swept the people living in Virginia and the Carolinas.

Even before the coming of the large cotton plantations, these new lands caused an increase in slave prices. The land needed to be improved before it could be divided and sold. Roads, bridges and railroads needed to be built, requiring a large amount of slave labor, thus driving up slave prices.²¹ Once the infrastructure of Alabama and Mississippi was established there was another increase in the demand for slaves as many cotton plantations became established.

The type of slave wanted in these new lands was the "prime field hand." As one might expect, the increased demand for prime field hands resulted in higher prices at slave auctions and in private sales. The price of a good

²¹ Mark a Yanochik, Mark Thornton, Bradley T. Ewing, "Railroad Construction and Antebellum Slave Prices" in *Social Science Quarterly*, 84:3 (Sept., 2003), 724-725.

field hand could be as much as three times higher than the price of an average slave. At the New Orleans slave market, the largest slave market in the country during the antebellum period, prices steadily increased throughout the first six decades of the nineteenth century. A review of the prices paid for field hands between 1800 and 1865 shows a number of significant spikes in the cost of slaves. Two of the most major increases take place between 1815 to 1825 and 1830 and 1845.²²

Although field hands were in highest demand in the Black Belt states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, the desire for slaves with other skill sets also increased. Slaves were needed to build structures and to provide for the requirements of plantation owners and their families. Masons, carpenters, tailors, cooks and other house slaves were needed to supply the growing demand. There was even a need for "fancy maids" to meet the sexual desires of the

²² Ransom, 41.

wealthy.²³ A slave owner could make money selling his or her slaves or keeping them and hiring them out to plantation owners for needed tasks, such as construction. A slave-owner could run a virtual slave employment agency hiring out the enslaved and simply collecting the money.

Because of the high demand and ever increasing price of slaves, slave auction houses sent men to Virginia and North Carolina to buy slaves and carry them south for sale.²⁴ These men attended estate and sheriff sales to obtain slaves. They even approached individual slave owners to purchase slaves, many of whom were eager to sell, especially when the local economy was in decline.

This increased demand and the corresponding increase in the price of slaves did not go unnoticed by the people of North Carolina. To many of those who saw African Americans as valuable commodities to be bought and sold, there were two potential sources of supply in North Carolina. The first was the existing slave pool; the other

²³ Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids' and 'One Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification and The Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *The American Historical Review*, 106:5 (Dec., 2001), 1619.

²⁴ Baptist, 1628.

was free blacks whose hold on freedom was tenuous at best.²⁵ This latter group included former bondsmen under the protection of the North Carolina Quakers.

The inevitable assault on the North Carolina Quakers holding slaves began in the courts. As one may imagine, relatives who felt that they lost out on their inheritance when slaves were left to the North Carolina Yearly Meeting were the first to raise the issue. By 1822 so many individuals had left their slaves to the Quakers of North Carolina that the yearly meeting ruled they could not accept more bequests from non-Quakers. The costs and time needed to manage the "slaves" was becoming too much of a burden on the organizations resources. Even with this "ban" on new bequests, slaves continued to be given to the church.

²⁵The lure of the money that could be made by selling slaves was so great that some people were drawn to do desperate things. During this time period there were a number of attempts to get freemen returned to slavery. Two unique court cases that went all the way to the North Carolina Supreme Court illustrate what can only be called "slave fever." In one case the relatives of a woman who had freed her slave in accordance of the law which allowed her to free her slave for meritorious service, went to court to have the former enslaved woman's two year old child returned to slavery, because she was too young to have performed meritorious service. The other case involved a group of men who wished to return a family to slavery, despite the fact that the family had been free for generations. The men claimed that the family's great grandmother had been improperly freed and therefore the family members were still slaves.

The bequest of slaves to the Quaker church in order to virtually free enslaved people often did not sit well with those who felt that they had been cheated out of their inheritance. At times such anger would end up in court; sometimes many years after the will had been executed.

In 1817 William Dickerson left sixteen of his slaves in his will to the Trustees of the Quakers Society of Contentnea in Greene County, North Carolina.²⁶ However when the Contentnea trustees went to claim the slaves as stipulated by the will, it was discovered that six of the slaves had already been removed by relatives of Dickerson. The Quakers, on behalf of the six slaves, filed suit against the trustees of the estate. Their goal was to regain ownership of the slaves and recover three that had already been sold by members of the family.

The defendants in the case, the family of William Dickerson, argued that ownership of the slaves by the Quakers was a violation of their own fundamental teachings. Therefore, they argued, Quakers could not and should not

²⁶ Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 66 and Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery and the American Negro*, Volume II North Carolina, 52.

own slaves. They further argued that since the slaves "owned" by the Quakers were allowed to earn their own money and live as freemen, the Quakers were in violation of the North Carolina laws on emancipation of slaves. The Superior Court of Wayne County ruled on behalf of the family, and the case was appealed to the North Carolina Supreme Court.²⁷

In 1827, the Supreme Court affirmed the actions of the lower court, stating that the slaves owned by the Quakers were slaves in name only.²⁸ In addition, according to the court, the Quaker ownership of slaves was clearly an attempt by the Society and its supporters to evade the law on the freeing of slaves.²⁹ Not only was this ruling a blow to this group of Quakers, but it also opened the door for an attack on the whole system that Quakers were using to free people of color.

However, it was the final statement by the court that revealed the attitude most white North Carolinians held toward free blacks. The biggest fear, summed up at the end

²⁷ It should be noted here that the senior judge in the Wayne County Supreme court who authored the ruling against the Contentnea Quakers was Judge Thomas Ruffin, who would later write for the majority in the State Vs. Mann case mentioned earlier in this chapter.

²⁸ Hilty, 67.

²⁹ Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, Volume II, 52.

of the case by the writer of the majority opinion, was that by "quasi" freeing so many slaves, a greater calamity may befall North Carolina. Judges feared that slaves, seeing so many of their brothers and sisters earning their own money, and acting as if free, would incite discontent. The result would increase the likelihood of a slave rebellion.³⁰

The dissenting opinion objected to such reasoning, stating that it was motivated by the majority's desire for "self-preservation." In other words, it was the fear of a possible slave uprising that prompted the court's decision, not the ruling of law. If North Carolina wanted to limit the way the Quakers and others treated their slaves, it should do so in the legislature, by changing the law, not in the courtroom.

It did not take long for the court's decision in the Contentnea versus Dickerson case to be used in other courts. In 1831, the case of Redmond (Redman) versus Coffin made it to the North Carolina Supreme Court. In this case, Thomas Wright willed a number of his slaves to the New Garden Monthly Meeting of Quakers in Guilford

³⁰ Ibid.

County, North Carolina, upon his death in 1816. The executors of the estate, following the bequest of the deceased, delivered the slaves to the New Market Quakers. A year later, William Wright, presumably a relative of Thomas Wright, challenged the actions of the executors and produced a power of attorney issued by the deceased.³¹ The power of attorney was given to Betsy Redmond (Redman) by her husband the deceased Thomas Wright. William Wright was acting on behalf of his mother, who claimed title to all the slaves in the estate.

Although the power of Attorney claimed by Wright would later be proven invalid, the executors of the estate decided to honor the Wright family claim and requested the return of the Quaker slaves.³² In fear of the pending trial over the settling of the estate, the Quakers allowed some of the former slaves to leave the state, where they would be safe from the North Carolina courts. The Quakers argued that the slaves had been given to the Society and that the Society would do with them as they pleased. They also

³¹ Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, Volume II, 62.

³² *Ibid.*

admitted that the slaves had been allowed to work for their own benefit.

Again the court ruled against the Quakers. Thomas Ruffin, now a justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court, wrote the opinion for the majority. Ruffin declared that although the desire of Wright to free his slaves was noteworthy, it was in direct violation of the law and therefore could not be justified for any reason.³³ He went further and added: "A stern necessity arising out of the safety of the commonwealth forbids it." This was a clear reference to the fear of a slave uprising referred to in the earlier case.

The court ordered that the Quakers return the slaves given them by the estate and compensate the heirs for the slaves who could not be found within the borders of the State. In addition, the Quakers were liable for the potential income the family lost while the slaves were in their care, \$3,621.71.³⁴

In 1833, the case once again appeared in the North Carolina Supreme Court. The Guilford County Quakers were

³³ Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, Volume II, 61-62

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

slow in returning the slaves and compensating the family, resulting in the family's suing the Quakers directly. In the case of Redmond (Redmen) Versus Coffin, Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin chastised the Quakers for "so gross a case of bad faith and willful resistance to the cause of justice, and the claims of property."³⁵ It was becoming obvious to many that the situation for both Quakers and freemen was more and more intolerable.

The Quaker Meetings needed to find a way to avoid having their "ownership" of slaves challenged in court. A temporary solution was to have slaves given to the Quaker church turned over to individuals. By doing so, the treatment of the slave could be argued to be actions of a single slave owner and not a policy of the church. This worked to remove the threat of a single lawsuit undermining the work of the church.

In one such case, Newlin versus Freeman, Sarah Freeman left her slaves to a Quaker named John Newlin. According to the court record she did so in order to free her slaves

³⁵ Ibid., 69.

without going through the process outlined in law.³⁶ The law required that slaves could only be freed after their master proved they had preformed "meritorious service," described as work over and above that expected in normal servitude.

Sarah Freeman was not a Quaker, but often spoke of finding "an old Quaker" to leave her slaves to, believing that she would not be able to free her slaves before her death.³⁷ Freeman's heirs sued Newlin in order to recover the slaves, but they lost the suit after the court ruled that her will was valid.³⁸ But this did not deter the family from bringing the case to trial again, this time under the name Thompson versus Newlin.

In this case, the heirs argued that a secret trust existed between John Newlin and Sarah Freeman in which Newlin agreed to give the slaves virtual freedom in violation of North Carolina law.³⁹ It was no doubt the hope of the family that the "secret agreement" would render the

³⁶ Hilty, 67,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, Volume II, 93.

³⁹ Ibid, 141-142.

bequest to Newlin void, thus returning the slaves to the family. Newlin admitted that he treated the slaves as virtually free, but not at the request of Freeman. In his testimony, he stated that it was her desire to see the enslaved people free and removed from the state in accordance with North Carolina law. The reason he had not done so up to this point was the continued litigation by the family in their attempts to contest the will. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Newlin and gave him a year to comply with the will by freeing the slaves and removing them from North Carolina. Although he won the case, it was clear that in order to comply with North Carolina Law, newly freed men would need to leave the state.

During this time of increased tension between free blacks, Quakers and the state of North Carolina, three events took place within a very short time that marked a low point in race relations in North Carolina. All three of these pivotal events started outside the state, but would heavily impact those living there. All three struck at the heart of the slave owning state's biggest fear—a slave insurrection. In their rulings against the Quakers, both the Contentnea versus Dickerson (1827) and the Redmond

(Redman) versus Coffin (1831) Supreme Court Cases, raised the specter of slave insurrection as a reason to control black freedom. The leaders of many southern states seemed convinced that if insurrection was to come, it would be the result of outside agitation.

The first of the three events was a resolution passed by the Vermont Legislature in 1825 and distributed to the slave holding states. The resolution read in part: "That slavery is an evil to be deprecated by free and enlightened people, and that this General Assembly (Vermont) will accord any measures which may be adopted by the general government for its abolition in the United States".⁴⁰ The resolution further called for the Governor of the state of Vermont to deliver the resolution to the legislatures of the southern states, including North Carolina.

Whether intended or not, the Vermont resolution was a severe challenge to slave owning states. North Carolina Governor Hutchins Gordon Burton and the state assembly took the resolution as an insult to the people of North Carolina. He stated that the "meddling" of outsiders in

⁴⁰ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 62.

the affairs of the state was a threat to the sovereignty and safety of North Carolina.⁴¹

Governor Burton's biggest fear was that outside influences might have a negative impact on the slave and free population of the state. As a result of the Vermont anti-slavery resolution, Burton called for a legislative review and tightening of laws restricting free blacks and slaves within North Carolina. Ironically, although the Vermont resolution was intended to help the plight of the enslaved people, it resulted in the worsening of conditions for them as well as freemen. The legislature, like many southerners, over-reacted to what they perceived as a threat from the outside, yielding more power to the abolitionist movement than it deserved.⁴²

The second event came in the form of a printed booklet released in 1829, David Walker's *Appeal in four Articles Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States if America*. It struck at the very core of

⁴¹ Ibid., 63.

⁴² Gara, *The Liberty Line*, 243-244.

slave owners' fear. The "Appeal" called for the end of slavery by extreme violence if necessary.

David Walker, a free black man living in Boston, was the son of a free mother and slave father. He made his living as a used clothing dealer and paid for the printing of his pamphlet out of his own resources. Walker argued that slavery in America was a violation of Christian principles, comparing the plight of the slaves to the children of Israel under the oppression of the Egyptians.⁴³ He called whites an "unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and bloodthirsty set of beings always seeking after power and authority."⁴⁴ A reasonable man, Walker concluded, could be expected to cut a slave owner's "devilish throat from ear to ear" rather than submit to having himself and his family placed in slavery.⁴⁵

⁴³ Walker's Appeal excerpts found at Africans in America/part4/Davis Walker's Appeal accessed at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2931t.html>, accessed on 4 April, 2009, 2.

⁴⁴ David Walker, *Walker's Appeal in for Articles Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States if America*, electronic addition, Documenting the American South, accessed at <http://docsouth.unc/nc/walker/walker.html>, accessed on 4 April, 2009. Page 20.

⁴⁵ Clemet Eaton, "A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South," *The Journal of Southern History*, 2:3, (August, 1936), 325.

The panic caused by Walker's *Appeal* started when a copy of the pamphlet was found in the possession of some freemen in Savannah, Georgia. The discovery sent officials in other states looking for the inflammatory publication and it was soon found in the possession of both free and enslaved people. Although found in the hands of slaves, it was freemen who were blamed for distributing the pamphlet. In Wilmington, North Carolina, the *Appeal* was found in the hands of "a well disposed person of colour," greatly alarming officials there.⁴⁶

The Governor of North Carolina, John Owen, issued a warning to thirty-two eastern counties of a possible slave revolt, and he presented a copy of the *Appeal* to the state legislature for action. He told the legislature that something had to be done to curtail the freedom of North Carolina blacks, whom he believed were being used as agents to distribute the document.⁴⁷ The Governor felt that somehow free blacks must provide some guarantee of their good behavior, thus keeping them in line.

⁴⁶ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 66.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

According to historian John Hope Franklin, this allowed a committee of the legislature to formulate a series of laws "rounding out the 'free negro code,'" thus taking away the last of the freeman's rights.⁴⁸ The legislature enacted laws to stiffen the penalties for teaching a slave to read and write and to increase control over the religious practices of slaves, since Walker had used Biblical references in his *Appeal*. The new laws restricted contact between freemen and slaves as well as the movements of freemen within the state. It also stipulated that freemen who left the state for any reason would not be allowed to return. Free black sailors who came with their ships into North Carolina harbors would not be allowed to leave the ship while it was in the state.

In addition to the hardships caused by the strict legislation, free blacks and their supporters had to deal with a general public that was becoming more hostile. North Carolina authorities hired agents to spy on freemen to determine if Walker's *Appeal* had been distributed to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68.

them and whether any were talking about insurrection.⁴⁹ Christian missionaries and black preachers were particularly suspect, since some pamphlets had been found in the possession of ministers.⁵⁰ The fact that missionaries and preachers were influential leaders and met with large groups of people was particularly troublesome to the authorities, who believed that in these meetings might spark rebellions and uprisings.

The authorities of slave states would not need to wait long for the realization of their greatest fear. In Virginia, the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831 provided the third and most important event in the decline of white and freemen relations in North Carolina. Legislation, economics, and now fear were all in place, making the lives of freemen in North Carolina almost unbearable, forcing them to leave the State if possible.

The details of Nat Turner's Southampton County slave rebellion are well documented as are the reactions of the slave-owning states. As news reports of the rebellion

⁴⁹ Cletet Eaton, "A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South," *The Journal of Southern History*, 2:3, (August, 1936), 330.

⁵⁰ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 158.

spread, narratives developed that allowed slave owners to make sense of the carnage. According to Scot French in *The Rebellious Slave*, two narratives of the crisis became prevalent during and immediately after the event.⁵¹ According to French, the rebellion required "the drafting of a historical narrative that would satisfy public curiosity, *restore public confidence* [emphasis added] and make possible the reconciliation of blacks and whites, slaves and masters, throughout the region."⁵² The key phrase is "restore public confidence." The southern slave states needed an explanation that would allow things to return to a normalcy that fit their world view. They were asking themselves how happy and contented slaves could undertake such a violent rebellion against those who cared for them?⁵³

One early interpretation of the event did not restore confidence in the existing system. In this version of the

⁵¹ Scot French, *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004)

⁵² French, 33.

⁵³ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 52.

event, the Southampton rebellion was a small part of a larger conspiracy that failed. This wider conspiracy version of the historical narrative did not sit well with the majority of the population. It left open the possibility of another slave rebellion on the horizon, since other possible conspirators were still at large. The specter of another Southampton massacre would always be a possibility. Worst of all, this version challenged the comfortable belief that their slaves were happy and content.

The second historical narrative was much more palatable to the people of the slave states. This narrative was supported by Nat Turner's own "Confessions,"⁵⁴ portraying Turner as a religious fanatic able to sway the minds of simple slaves and others to his violent plan. His actions were the result of misguided religious fervor brought on by a life that was both privileged and

⁵⁴ *The Confessions of Nat Turner; leader of the late insurrection in Southampton, VA., As fully and Voluntarily Made to Thomas C. Gray, in the Prison Where he was Confined, and Acknowledged by Him to be Such, When Read Before the Court of Southampton, Convened at Jerusalem, November 5, 1831, for His Trial.*

deprived.⁵⁵ He had used his charismatic influence on uneducated slaves and turned them to his cause. In the end, he was seen as a misguided fanatic, not a player in a larger conspiracy. Slavery was not the cause of the rebellion; it was the work of one man, and would not be repeated.

The "Turner as fanatic" narrative of the incident was much more palatable for slave owners, but it required a further explanation of cause. If the cause was not the slave system itself, then the cause must be found elsewhere. Conveniently there were already of number people to blame. These suspects include northern abolitionists, misguided religious missionaries, and free blacks.

According to John Hope Franklin, the Turner Rebellion did not have a greatly impact the number of new laws controlling the freemen of North Carolina.⁵⁶ While the state enacted laws that were designed to prevent slaves

⁵⁵ Scot French relates how in narratives involving Turner, he was given privileges such as limited freedom and the ability to read and write, at the same time being living a life of abuse. See *The Rebellious Slave*, 42-43.

⁵⁶ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 72.

from acting like freemen and to stop free blacks from preaching, the major effect of the Nat Turner Rebellion was in the everyday lives of freemen through violence. The fear white southerners felt about a slave insurrection manifested itself as violent actions against slaves, freemen and anyone thought to be helping them. As one historian put it, "White terror led to black terror as militia and patrol groups roamed the countryside looking for victims."⁵⁷

Local militia and slave patrols, common in most counties in North Carolina, were increased during times of rumored or real insurrections. Local authorities augmented the patrols with men who would not usually serve or be allowed to serve during normal times. These new recruits included some upper class gentlemen and "ruffians and poor whites who used their new found authority to abuse slaves and free blacks."⁵⁸ To add insult to injury, Quakers who

⁵⁷ Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Laws and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 146.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

were traditionally exempt from military service on religious grounds were taxed to support the added patrols.⁵⁹

Free blacks were particularly favorite targets, since they lacked the protection of slave owners and had almost no protection in law. Patrols raided the homes of freemen looking for abolitionist literature, runaway slaves, or any sign of involvement in a slave revolt. The patrols often raided without warning, ransacking homes and stealing belongings. Innocent freemen who resisted were often whipped, jailed or even murdered. In the days after the Turner Rebellion, white patrols beat and arrested free blacks in North Carolina without cause. In the western part of the State, mobs murdered at least fifteen freemen.⁶⁰

The patrol and militia raids were meant to intimidate free blacks and slaves. Slaves clearly had a place in southern society, but the freeman did not. The Turner rebellion intensified calls for the removal of the freemen.⁶¹ According to historian Steven Weeks, the emancipation movement in the South suffered greatly because

⁵⁹ Ryan Jordan, *Slavery in the Meeting House*, 20.

⁶⁰ Hiram Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All*, 56.

⁶¹ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 202.

of the Turner rebellion.⁶² Membership, even by Quakers, in the North Carolina Manumission Society declined greatly after 1831. The organization, which once boasted over forty branches in the late 1820s, was disbanded by 1834.⁶³ Not surprisingly, the American Colonization Society, whose purpose was the removal of freemen, experienced a renewed interest with an increase in donations in 1831.⁶⁴

Outside of North Carolina the reaction to the Turner rebellion was profound. Quakers found that free states no longer wanted to accept free blacks migrating into their boundaries. Ships transporting free blacks to northern ports, including those migrating to Liberia, were refused the right to dock in northern ports. Indiana and other states passed laws leveling heavy bonds on freemen entering their states from the South.

Despite this, the tide of migration from slave states like North Carolina to northern states could not be stopped. The growing limits on the rights of freemen,

⁶² Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1896) Kessinger publishing reprint, 244.

⁶³ Hilty, *Freedom for All*, 43 and John Hope Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 25.

⁶⁴ Franklin, 204.

combined with the increasing demand for slaves in other states and the resulting threats to free people because of this demand made many desire to leave North Carolina. At the same time, the Quakers also feeling the pinch of restrictive laws and the changes in southern society in the 1830s and 1840s created a similar desire to move away from what many called the corrupting influence of slavery. The time was right for a mass movement to the free states.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MIGRATION

Now I think that you had better come here than for me to move back to you for I do prefer a free state so far before a slave one that I think I could not move back and settle there with my children satisfied. . . . Consider that if you stay there and bring up your children where there are so few friends and so many slaveholders that they may marry among them and become slaveholders themselves.¹

In 1822 the Deep River Quarterly Meeting of Quakers approached the North Carolina Yearly Meeting with a proposal. The Deep River Quakers of Guilford County asked for an investigation of the laws of free states governing the migration of free persons of color.² At the time, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois had no laws preventing freemen from entering their respective states.

Beginning in the 1820s, it was becoming more and more obvious to both freemen and Quaker that North Carolina was quickly becoming an undesirable place to live. There were many reasons for wanting to migrate out of the state: soil

¹ Avis Woodward, New Garden, Indiana to Miriam Cox, Waynesboro, North Carolina, September 20, 1832, Cox papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library.

² Hilty, *Freedom for All*, 75.

depletion, a government dominated by the planter class, and the lack of investment in internal improvements.³ For blacks and Quakers, however, the main reason for wanting to leave was the expansion of slavery and the increasing restrictions on the rights of freemen, including the rights of free movement, assembly and worship. Ironically, one reason for the increasing power of the slave owning class and thus the greater infringement on the rights of freeman was the migration of Quakers out of the State.⁴ There were simply fewer and fewer Quaker leaders willing to fight against the interests of slave owners.

The two main destinations for Quakers and free people leaving North Carolina before 1850 were Ohio and Indiana. Both states offered abundant rich land at reasonable prices. Compared to the rocky and often depleted soil of North Carolina, the fertile lands of Ohio and Indiana seemed able to grow anything with little effort. Quakers marveled at the crops they could produce; one Quaker traveler commented that on one ear of corn in Ohio he

³ James W. Patton, ed. , "Letters from the North Carolina Emigrants in the Old Northwest, 1830 - 1834, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 47:2, (Sept., 1960), 263.

⁴ Stephen B Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 244.

counted 1200 kernels and that there were two such ears on each plant. "The land must be good that can return two thousand times the quantity of seed sown," he concluded.⁵

The Quakers often referred to leaving North Carolina as the coming out of "Egyptian darkness," in biblical reference to the Jews fleeing slavery in the Old Testament.⁶ However, as uncomfortable as living in a slave state was for Quakers, it was much worse for slaves and freemen. For free blacks, there was always the threat of being re-enslaved as well as the continuing reduction of their legal rights by legislation and by threat of violence. The northern free states offered at least the opportunity of a better life and legal recourses that the slave states did not provide.

One of the biggest challenges facing both Quakers and freemen wishing to leave North Carolina was paying the costs of migration which typically took six weeks. Poor freemen often had to make the difficult choice of sending

⁵ *A Friendly Mission, John Candler's Letters from America, 1853-1854* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951), 37.

⁶ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988), 13.

individual family members north as money became available rather than traveling as whole families. However, this action was very risky. The increasing price of slaves in the South greatly increased the threat of kidnapping, individual or small groups of freemen traveling north were especially vulnerable.⁷

The North Carolina Yearly Meeting seems to have been aware of this threat, and in 1826 encouraged Quakers moving to northern states to take free blacks with them. They also decided in 1833, perhaps in response to the Turner rebellion and the church's continued legal losses, that all slaves held in trust by Quakers in the state should be moved out as soon as possible.⁸ Many free blacks took advantage of the Quaker's kindness and moved with them to the new lands, establishing small settlements of blacks near Quaker communities in Ohio and Indiana.

It is estimated that during the peak years of Quaker migration out of North Carolina, 1830 to 1850, approximately sixty percent of North Carolina Quakers left

⁷ Ira Berlin, 99-100 and Steven A. Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900*.

⁸ Hilty, 81

the state.⁹ It is unknown how many African Americans migrated from North Carolina during these decades, but the number was significant. In 1850 the state of Indiana reported a total of 11,262 African Americans, of which over 1,400 reported their birth place as North Carolina, more than any other state.¹⁰ Despite its outward hostility to incoming freemen because of its antagonistic legislation, Indiana remained a preferred destination for Quaker and freeman families alike, perhaps because of the abundance of available land and Indiana's continued dedication to internal improvements.

Thomas Woodward and Britton Bassett

Britton Bassett was a freeman living in Greene County, North Carolina, who earned a living as a tailor, and his wife Esther was a seamstress. His successful trade provided certain advantages to his family, including access to education, and in the case of his sons, carpentry skills. The 1830 United States census shows Bassett had a

⁹ Ryan Jordan, *Slavery in the Meeting House*, 20.

¹⁰ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana before 1900*, 32.

growing young family of twelve. He and his wife were in their early forties, surrounded by men of wealth and stature, no doubt adding to Bassett's business success. Another factor in his success was that, according to the 1830 census, Britton Bassett was a white man.¹¹

By 1840, Britton Bassett must have felt the world coming down on him. The United States census for 1840 listed him and the rest of his family as "free colored persons."¹² At a time in North Carolina history when it was not good to be a free person of color, Britton Bassett was no longer passing as white.

It is unknown what caused this change in Bassett's race and fortune, but there are a number of possible explanations. The simplest is a reporting error by the census taker, however, this seems unlikely, due to the complexity of the error. In addition, the 1816 tax register for Greene County North Carolina listed Bassett as "one white pole." A "pole" was a white man above the age

¹¹ United States Census for Greene County, North Carolina, 1830, 245.

¹² United States Census for Greene County, North Carolina, 1840, 207.

of twenty-one but younger than fifty. It is more likely that there was a change in the way the state classified Bassett and his family.

In 1826, the North Carolina legislature further defined who would be considered a "free negro." The statute read in part, "all free mulattoes descended from Negro ancestors, to the fourth generation inclusive, though one ancestor of each generation may have been a white person, shall come within the provisions of this act."¹³

It is not known if this strengthening of the definition of a "person of color" changed anyone's social ranking. However, John Hope Franklin noted an increase in the number of free blacks in North Carolina during the decade of the 1830s from 14,612 in 1820 to well over 19,000 in 1830.¹⁴ He attributes this increase to a boost in manumissions, despite new legislation and stronger

¹³ Revised code - No. 105, *Slaves and Free Persons of Color, An Act Concerning Slaves and Free Persons of Color*, Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, call number: FCp326.1 1831 (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002) Accessed at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/slavesfree/slavesfree.html> on 28, April, 2009.

¹⁴ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 16.

enforcement of existing laws designed to make freeing of slaves more difficult.¹⁵

This thesis seems flawed. Is it possible that some of the large increase in the number of free blacks reported between the 1830 and 1840 censuses was due to a re-categorization of existing individuals? If this is true, what would be the purpose? Certainly, intimidation and control are good reasons that are well documented by historians as reasons for the creation of such a law. Historical studies of the antebellum South provide much evidence showing how much the ruling classes feared the freemen. A further redefinition of this class of people certainly allowed those in power to gain a tighter grip on freemen. But was there something more?

Southern legislators passed a number of laws during the 1820s and 1830s designed to restrict the rights of both freemen and slave. Historians refer to these laws as "black laws" or "black codes," passed between 1826 and 1831 in response to outside forces such as slave rebellions and the fear of abolitionist influences. Most of the laws

¹⁵ Ibid., 29-32.

tightened emancipation laws and punishments given to freemen for violating various statutes. Some of the punishments returned freemen to enslavement or sentenced them to forced labor for a given period of time.¹⁶ Often, this sentence of time lasted five to ten years, depending on the alleged crime. At the end of the sentence, freemen could petition the court to regain their freedom, but as John Hope Franklin points out, there are few records, if any, of the freemen being set free once sentenced.¹⁷

During the 1830s and 1840s North Carolina essentially offered two options for the freeman: leave the state or stay and run the risk of becoming enslaved. Perhaps this was the intent of the law after all. While the North Carolina legislature may have wanted free people to leave the state, it did nothing to replenish the declining labor pool supplied by the freemen. Combine this fact with the continued decline of the slave pool caused by the Alabama-Mississippi land expansion, and it is apparent that North Carolina needed to expand its potential labor pool. Re-

¹⁶ Often the statutes call for a heavy fine that often a freeman could not pay. The court would then sell the freeman's labor to the highest bidder for a set time until the fine was paid.

¹⁷ Franklin, 89.

categorizing whole groups of people like Britton Bassett and his family into a regulated sub-class created just such an increase in the potential labor pool.

A quick review of laws and court cases supports this interpretation.¹⁸ These laws applied only to free persons of color, not white North Carolinians. As stated before, in 1826 North Carolina expanded its definition of a "person of color." That same year, it passed a law authorizing local authorities to put "idle freemen" to work, selling their time to the highest bidder. In addition, freemen who entered the state had to leave within twenty days or be fined 500 dollars. If the freeman could not pay the fine, he or she was to be "hired out" for ten years. Also in that same year, 1826, the legislature passed a law stating that the children of freemen could be bound out by the court to tradesmen who would take them if the court ruled that their parents could not support them. The design of

¹⁸ For a list of the following laws see: *Slaves and Free Persons of Color. An Act Concerning Slaves and Free Persons of Color: Electronic Edition*. Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2002. Call number: FCp326.1 (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) Accessed at [Http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/slavesfree/slavesfree.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/slavesfree/slavesfree.html). Accessed on 30 April, 2009.

these 1826 laws was to both discourage freemen from staying in North Carolina and expand the manual labor force.

In 1830, North Carolina took further action. First, the state redefined and tightened the procedures required for slave owners to free their slaves and stated that slaves could not be freed by any other means other than that outlined by the statute. Slave owners who wished to free their slaves in their wills were prohibited from doing so. Formerly enslaved people whose master had freed them by will or by some other unlawful method were subject to re-enslavement. Even if freed legally, the formerly enslaved had ninety days to leave the state or be re-enslaved. Having once left the state, a freeman who re-entered North Carolina would be sold as a slave.

In 1831, the North Carolina legislature passed two additional laws that made life even more difficult for free people. The first stated that any freeman unable to pay a fine leveled by the court was subject to be hired out by the sheriff of the county. A second law stated that no slave should be allowed to "go at large as a freeman," meaning that person who was not legally free by the State's

definition was still a slave and therefore could not act as a freeperson.

Since 1816, any person who apprehended and delivered to the sheriff a runaway slave or a slave acting as a freeman was rewarded with twenty percent of the value of the slave. The constantly increasing value of an enslaved person further threatened the tenuous hold of many freemen on liberty. The new laws only added to this threat, a fact that is clearly revealed in court records.

In the case of Stringer vs. Burcham, the son of a slave owner who had freed one of his female slaves in 1807 tried to re-enslave her grandchildren, claiming that they had not been properly freed. Fortunately for May Stringer and her family, the Supreme Court ruled in her favor, because she and her family had been presumed free for over thirty years.¹⁹ Therefore, Burcham's claim of ownership was not valid.

In an even stranger case, the grandson of a slave owner claimed ownership of the daughter of a woman freed by his grandfather. The grandfather had properly freed the

¹⁹ Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 51.

woman for "meritorious service" as required by law. However, according to the grandson, the woman's daughter, who was an infant at the time the mother was freed, could not have performed such service. Since she was born while her mother was still a slave, she, according to law, was still a slave. The lower court ruled against her, but the Supreme Court reversed the decision since she had been presumed free for over thirty years.²⁰

In the case of Cully vs. Lovick Jones, executor for the estate of Jane Thompson, Reuben Jones, was charged with the task of making the arrangements to free an enslaved woman by the name of Phebe.²¹ In 1846 Phebe was freed, but Jones did not post the required bond of \$500 dollars outlined by the law. Two years later Jones attempted to claim that Phebe was not properly freed, because the proper bond was not posted. Jones claimed Phebe as his property. The court ruled against him, claiming that he could not benefit from his own negligence. However, the court did not

²⁰ Ibid., 51-52.

²¹ Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, Volume II, 130.

rule that Phebe could not become the property of someone else with a legitimate claim.

Not all the cases contesting the freedom of people of color in North Carolina ended happily for the freeman. The two previously mentioned cases involving Quakers and the slaves left to them in wills are good examples. In both cases the ruling returned some former slaves to enslavement because they had not been freed by the method outlined in law. Other Supreme Court Cases, including Lemmond vs. Peoples (1844) and Cresswell vs. Emberson (1848), also end with Americans being returned to slavery.²² In the latter case, the Justices expressed the opinion that they hoped this was the last case of its kind to be heard by the court.²³

In the early 1840s Americans like Britton Bassett living in North Carolina were seeing their options and opportunities slipping away. Laws and courts and even his neighbors, seemed to be turning against him, especially after well-publicized events like the Turner Rebellion.

²² Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery*, Vol. II, 127-128.

²³ *Ibid.*, 128.

Bassett's choices were limited. He could stay and continue to see his few rights whittled away, or he could leave and seek opportunities elsewhere. Sometime during the mid-1840s, North Carolina became too much to bear for Britton Bassett and his family; they left for Indiana along with some of their neighbors of color.

Thomas Woodard

In 1815 Thomas Woodard had a difficult choice to make. He was a Quaker living and working with his family in Wayne County, North Carolina, and was about to be married. His bride-to-be was twenty-two year old Zelpha Cook, the daughter of a neighbor and longtime family friend. Zelpha was not a Quaker, and that certainly did not sit well with the other members of his faith. More troublesome was the fact that Zelpha brought into the marriage a dowry of two enslaved Americans.²⁴

Woodard's dilemma was not uncommon. Many Quakers had struggled with the issue of slavery since the Quaker Query

²⁴ United States census for Wayne County, North Carolina, 1820.

of 1776, when the church asked its members not to hold "mankind as slaves."²⁵ However, slaves represented wealth, and in early nineteenth century North Carolina slaves were valuable. It was difficult for anyone, even Quakers, to walk away from assets. Many Quakers, including Thomas Woodard, could not simply let valuable property walk away. He also could not sell the enslaved people, since the Quaker church condemned the selling of slaves even before it had fully condemned slavery.²⁶

Soon after his marriage to Zelpha Cook, the Quaker church in North Carolina disowned Thomas Woodard for marrying "contrary to the discipline."²⁷ Woodard would not rejoin the Quaker church until he and his family moved to Parke County, Indiana. By that time, Zelpha had passed away, Thomas was newly remarried, and his slaves were free.

At about the same time Woodard was starting his family in Wayne County, North Carolina, a relative set out with

²⁵ Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years: the History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement*, 104.

²⁶ See the Quaker Query for 1755, Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 104.

²⁷ Guilford College archives, correspondence with Gwen Gosney Erickson, Librarian and Archivist, September 8, 2008, correspondence in the collection of the author.

his slaves for Alabama. It is quite probable that this slave-owning entrepreneur was a relative of Zelpha Cook. A likely candidate, Nathan Cook, was a cousin or brother of Zelpha who was disowned by the Quaker Monthly Meeting in Wayne County for continuing to deal in slaves.²⁸

It is not known how many slaves Woodard's relative took with him to Alabama. However, two of the enslaved may have been Ephraim Cook and his mother Dinah Cook. Both Dinah and Ephraim were born in North Carolina and shared the surname Cook. In addition, Ephraim's wife Maria and three of his five children were all born in Alabama.²⁹ It appears that Ephraim was allowed to marry Maria when he came of age in Alabama. At any rate, by the time Thomas Woodard inherited the plantation it had grown to nearly fifty enslaved Americans. It is doubtful that they knew at the time that their next home would be among Quakers in Indiana.

²⁸ Guilford College archives, correspondence with Gwen Gosney Erickson, Librarian and Archivist, September 8, 2008, correspondence in the collection of the author.

²⁹ United States Census for Parke County, Indiana, District 85, 1850, 332 (141).

SECTION II: INTRODUCTION: INDIANA

In 1830 Big Leg was having trouble with his slave, so he did what he thought he had the right to do; he killed her. Ne-we-ling-gua, or Big Leg, was the leader of a group of local Miami Indians living near Fort Wayne, Indiana. He lived with a half black and half Native-American woman whom he owned as a slave. Despite his continued warnings that he would kill her, she often snuck into his home while he was away and stole his meat. After one such incident, she ran away and found refuge with some people in Fort Wayne who employed her as a washerwoman.¹

As promised, he hunted her down and viciously killed her with a knife in front of a number of witnesses. He was arrested and tried for murder in the Allen County court. Big Leg argued before the court that, since she was his property, he should be allowed to treat her as he pleased. To his astonishment, Big Leg was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. In response, the tribe offered "in exchange a worthless rascal of their number, who, they said

¹ Dewitt C. Goodrich and Charles K. Tuttle, *Illustrated History of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Richard S. Peale & Sons, 1875), 361-363.

would answer admirably for the hanging purposes, as he was no account anyway."² Fortunately for Big Leg, and no doubt to the great relief to his "no account" tribe member, the Indiana Governor James B. Ray stepped in and pardoned the Miami leader.

The Fort Wayne incident is a reflection of the divergent and complex views of slavery and freemen in the State of Indiana. Big Leg clearly murdered another human being, which he felt, based on his concept of the institution of slavery, he had the right to do. Those who gave his slave refuge and employment likely felt differently about slavery. The law of the state clearly defined Ne-we-ling-gua as a murderer and ordered a punishment to fit that crime. However, the Governor of the state issued a pardon, feeling that the crime did not merit the hanging of Big Leg, and fearing the ill feelings it would create with the Native Americans in the region. With moral, economic, legal and political issues at stake, the people of Indiana were clearly divided over the contested institution of slavery.

² *Illustrated History Atlas of the State of Indiana* (Chicago: Baskin Forster & Co., 1876), 258.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the social climate which the migrants from North Carolina and the enslaved people from Alabama entered when they came to Indiana. The Indiana they found was divided by regional, political and cultural differences over slavery and race. Like North Carolina, freemen often found it difficult to make a place for themselves in a society that could be as racist as any found in the South. The difference in Indiana was that there was no question of freedom or slavery, since the institution was explicitly banned by law. In theory, living in a free state meant a person finding social or economic injustice in one community could go elsewhere.

In addition to the racism and injustice faced by freemen, Indiana added something that the newcomers had not faced in North Carolina: freemen became pawns in a wider regional and political battle within the state. Freemen often became the excuse and the opportunity for one party to attack another as both parties; Whig and Democrat, tried distance themselves from people of color. In North Carolina slavery and freemen was not a core issue between Whigs and Democrats, and therefore it was not used as much as a pawn between the opposing parties.

To better understand the complex politics of slavery in Indiana one must comprehend the historical context of slavery and freedom in early Indiana history. Slavery was banned in Indiana even before attaining statehood by Article XI of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which forever banned involuntary servitude in the territory that would later become six states including Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota.

The ban of slavery in the Northwest Ordinance passed with little discussion and few objections. Historians have argued that the reason slavery-supporting delegates to the Northwest Ordinance convention voted to include the anti-slavery legislation was because they wanted something in return. What the slave state delegates wanted, and were willing to give up slavery in the Northwest Territory for, was a favorable compromise on the counting of slaves when it came to representation in Congress.³ As deliberation was taking place, many of the same delegates were debating a new Constitution to do away with the Articles of Confederation, the governing system of the United States since the Revolution. In a Constitutional Convention compromise, slaves would be counted as three-fifths of a

³ Staughton Lynd, "The Compromise of 1787," *Political Science Quarterly*, 81:2 (June, 1966), 231.

person, thus significantly adding to the congressional representation of slave-owning states.

The banning of slavery north of the Ohio River may seem like a loss for pro-slavery forces trying to plan the future settlement of the United States, but it actually reassured many people. By specifically banning slavery in the Northwest Territory, many believed that it implied that slavery would be unmolested in the South.⁴ When Congress passed the Southwest Ordinance in 1790, the document did not directly refer to slavery, stating only that the inhabitants of the territory would "enjoy all the privileges, benefits and advantages" outlined in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.⁵ Perhaps another reason the anti-slavery article of the Northwest Ordinance passed so easily was that there was a general belief among many delegates that the region would be settled by people from Pennsylvania, New York and other eastern states, where most people opposed slavery anyway or at least did not own slaves.⁶

⁴ Roger L. Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation, and the American Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27.

⁵ The Southwest Ordinance of 1790, <http://www.tngenweb.org/tnletters/territories/sw-terr.html>, accessed on 5 May, 2009.

⁶ Lynd, "The Compromise of 1787," 229.

Although the Northwest Ordinance and its anti-slavery article passed Congress under the Articles of Confederation by a unanimous vote, its acceptance in the territory was not universal. In 1803, 1807, and 1809, residents sent petitions to Congress asking for a repeal of Article VI. It should be noted that Congress received all these petitions after Ohio became a state on March 1st 1803. Indiana was at the time the seat of government for the Territory. The capital of what was then called the Indiana Territory was Vincennes, Indiana, and the territorial governor was William Henry Harrison. Harrison was a slave owner and did not actively enforce the Ordinance's antislavery provisions.

Harrison, like many slave owning territorial residents, simply switched the status of their enslaved people from slaves to indentured servants in order to be compliant with the law. In Indiana territorial law there was little difference between a slave and an indentured servant. Often, in exchange for a small token or some other trifle, a slave pledged his service for life. In one case, recorded in the Gibson County courthouse during the territorial period, a person of color became an indentured

servant for a mere twenty dollars.⁷ Indentures ranged from ten to ninety nine years with most lasting between twenty and forty years.⁸ By the time most indentured servants gained their freedom, they were well beyond their productive years.

In 1805 the Indiana Territory had a large enough population to warrant a territorial legislature. One of the first orders of business of the new legislature was to codify laws regarding indentured servants. The new law stated that slave owners bringing slaves into the territory who were fifteen years old or older must make an indenture contract with the slave for some years of service. If the slave refused to enter an indenture, his master had to remove him from the state within sixty days. A male slave under the age of fifteen was required to serve until the age of thirty-five; a female until the age of thirty-two. Children born of slaves would be required to serve until age thirty for boys and twenty eight for girls.⁹ Slaves already living in the territory before the passage of the

⁷ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Press, 1957) reprint (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

Northwest Ordinance were exempt from the slavery prohibition and therefore were slaves for life.¹⁰

The fact that the Indiana Territory was "free" did not escape the attention of slaves living on the other side of the Ohio River. Many believed that all they needed to do was to cross the river into Indiana and they would be forever free. In Christian teachings, slaves could easily see themselves as modern examples of the Jews held in bondage in Egypt. Crossing the Ohio River into one of the free territories was similar to the Jews crossing the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land. The "Jordan" became a euphemism for the Ohio River as many saw the river as a passage to their freedom.¹¹

Unfortunately for some runaway enslaved people, crossing the Ohio River did not guarantee their freedom. Although many people living in the free territories held anti-slavery beliefs, it did not mean they were pro-black.¹² Indeed, enslaved people making their way "across the

¹⁰ These people included slaves belonging to the former French colonists living along the Mississippi River in the areas that would become Wisconsin and Illinois.

¹¹ Darrell E. Bingham, *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 30.

¹² Thornbrough, *The Negro Before 1900*, 20.

Jordan" were often forcibly sent back by settlers or delivered to the territorial courts. In one example in 1815, eight formerly enslaved African Americans appeared in a Gibson County courthouse to argue for their freedom before the court. Alexander Carson claimed the freemen as his property claiming they had recently escaped from him in Kentucky. The court first ruled that all but one of the blacks were indeed Carson's property and should be returned to him. However, there was an appeal which took some time. In the interim, two of the freemen died, and when some neighbors purchased the freedom of the child in the group only two of the freemen were eventually returned to slavery.¹³

Other runaway slaves and freemen fared much worse. Slave catchers in the counties bordering the north side of the Ohio River operated almost without control. They recaptured runaway slaves and kidnapped freemen, often with the help of local officials who operated as accomplices of the slave catchers.¹⁴ In order to put an end to this type of abuse, the territorial legislature passed a law in 1810

¹³ Thornbrough, *The Negro Before 1900*, 19.

¹⁴ Bingham, *On Jordan's Banks*, 42.

requiring that anyone wishing to remove a person of color from the state must have a writ from a court to do so, or be subject to heavy fines. The law even gave freemen the right to sue an attempted captor for damages if the captor was unable to prove his case.¹⁵

Despite the risks faced by freemen living in the Indiana territory, the appeal of freedom brought many into the state. This influx of blacks into the state did not go unnoticed by those opposed to such emigration. In 1813, some citizens of the territory sent a petition to the Territorial Legislature asking for a ban on the migration of blacks into the state. The petition read in part that farmers' corn cribs, smoke houses and kitchens would not be safe from the "Africans." It also stated that blacks posed a threat to wives and daughters.¹⁶

That same year the legislature quickly passed a measure calling for a ban on "negroes," "mulattoes," and "slaves" entering the territory. Governor Thomas Posey, who was a slave owner himself, vetoed the law.¹⁷ Perhaps

¹⁵ Thornbrough, *The Negro Before 1900*, 93.

¹⁶ Clarence E. Carter, Ed. *Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 8, The Territory of Indiana, 1800-1816*, page 235 as quoted by Thornbrough, *The Negro Before 1900*, 20.

¹⁷ Governor Posey's slaves had been grandfathered in since he owned them before the passage of the Ordinance of 1787.

the governor vetoed the law because he knew, as proven in later such laws, that it was unenforceable. But more likely, because he was a slave owner himself, he did not wish to limit his own ability to add to his wealth by the addition of more "indentured servants."

In 1813, in preparation of attaining statehood, the Indiana Territorial Legislature officially moved the site of the territorial capital from Vincennes to the more centrally located Corydon. Three years later, forty-three delegates met in Corydon to frame a state constitution. Central to the debate at the convention was the issue of slavery and involuntary servitude. Some delegates argued that slavery was a right that individual counties should be allowed to make and that banning it would limit the economic opportunities of the new state's citizens. Others argued that the Northwest Ordinance had banned slavery from the state forever.

The anti-slavery element at the convention, largely made up of delegates from the eastern portions of the territory, was victorious. Slavery would be forever banned from the State of Indiana. The new state constitution was emphatic that in the new state of Indiana, there "shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude," because such

institutions can bring only "usurpation and tyranny," to the people of Indiana.¹⁸ On December eleventh 1816, Indiana, with its new constitution banning slavery, became the nineteenth state in the Union. The fight over slavery was over, but the fight to define a place for the free person of color was just beginning.

¹⁸ Donald F Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 467.

CHAPTER FOUR: LAW AND POLITICS

I would say—and I say it with all sincerity, and without any hard feelings toward them—that it would be better to kill them off at once, if there is no better way to get rid of them. We have not come to that point yet with the blacks, but we know how the Puritans did with the Indians, who were infinitely more magnanimous and less impudent than the colored race.¹

The preceding quote is from a speech given at the convention to draft a new state constitution for the State of Indiana in 1850. The quote reflects one end of the political debate concerning free people of color in Indiana. Unfortunately, it was not seen as an extremist view, but one held by many living in the Hoosier state.

The quotation is from a speech by James Rariden, a delegate from Wayne County, who was listed in the 1850 census as a lawyer born in Kentucky.² Ironically, Wayne County was the home of the largest Quaker settlement and the largest black population in the state in 1850.³ It was

¹ Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 66.

² *Debates and Proceedings, Journal of the Convention of the People of the State of Indiana to Amend the Constitution, assembled in Indianapolis, October 1850, Volume 1*, 574.

³ The black population of Wayne County in 1850 was 1036. United States Census browser, hosted by the University of Virginia, accessed

also the home of Levi Coffin, reputed president of the Underground Railroad. Rariden's speech is a reflection of the attitude of white communities over the place for people of color in the state of Indiana.

Despite the anti-slavery victories of the state constitutional convention of 1816, the death of slavery written into the constitution was not reflected in any warm feelings for the rights of the person of color. After Indiana became a state, the debate over the place of freemen in Indiana would continue for generations. Much like North Carolina, Indiana's tolerance of free blacks was friendlier in the early statehood period but became harsher as the country moved to expanded slavery. The low point of racial tolerance in Indiana was the passage of the 1851 constitution with an amendment calling for the banning of blacks entering the state and the removal of those already in residence.

When Indiana became a state, there were approximately 1,400 free persons of color living within the state.⁴ An immediate concern to some Hoosiers was the issue of slave

at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/county.php>. Accessed on 20 May, 2009.

⁴ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 31. According to the United States Census for 1820 Indiana had 1420 black residents.

owners and slave catchers entering the state from Kentucky to return freemen to slavery, placing both runaway slaves and freemen at risk of being kidnapped. Not only were such raids by slave catchers violent but they often captured any person of color, runaway or free. The problem had grown to such critical proportions that Governor Jonathan Jennings' first address to the new state legislature in 1816 was on the subject of man-stealing. He called for legislation to protect free blacks while providing a mechanism for legitimate slave owners to retrieve their human property.⁵ The legislature promptly passed a unique bill called "an act to prevent man stealing."

Political action on fugitive slave issues at both the state and federal level was nothing new. Indeed, in 1793 George Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act, the first federal law dealing with runaway slaves. The act stated that a slave owner had the right to retrieve his property from any state where the runaway had fled, with the full cooperation of the local authorities. The act further stated that anyone harboring or aiding runaways could be subject to a fine of five hundred dollars. All the slave

⁵ Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 93-94.

owner or slave catcher needed to do was provide evidence before a judge or magistrate that the person in question was indeed his slave and obtain a writ that would allow him to leave the state with his human property.⁶ The 1793 Fugitive Slave Act was the primary federal law governing fugitive slaves until a new law was written as part of the Compromise of 1850.

The Indiana law of 1816 echoed the Fugitive Slave Act except for one major difference that benefitted the freemen. The Indiana law called for a trial by jury instead of just an appearance before a judge. This gave a person of color the opportunity to plead his case before a jury of citizens and to appeal if the ruling went against him.⁷

This seemingly small difference between the two laws offered considerable advantages to the freeman for several reasons. Now, a slave owner had to prove ownership of his human property before a jury instead of one person. A jury

⁶ *Proceedings and Debates of the House of Representatives of the United States at the Second Session of the Second Congress, Begun at the City of Philadelphia, November 5, 1792., "Annals of Congress, 2nd Congress, 2nd Session (November 5, 1792 to March 2, 1793)," 1414-15* <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=003/llac003.db&recNum=702>, accessed on 19 May, 2009.

⁷ Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 468.

could be persuaded by emotion, friendship, or even a strong dislike of slavery, things that may not influence a judge. The accused person of color would now have the opportunity to obtain council and have someone plead his case for him, thus improving his chances of maintaining his freedom. Most important, a jury trial took time and money, which causes a burden to the slave owner. It is not known how many slave owners found the restrictions placed by the new law prohibitive, but soon there were calls to amend the law.

A prime example of the challenges caused by the new law took place in 1818.⁸ Susan was a runaway enslaved person belonging to Richard Stephens, a legislator from Bardstown, Kentucky.⁹ Stephens captured her and brought her before a Clark County court jury that ruled that she was indeed his property. Susan's lawyers appealed and were granted several delays. Stephens, frustrated with the actions of the court, sent his son to retrieve his slave. The son kidnapped Susan, and with the help of others brought her back to Kentucky. Officials of the Clark

⁸ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 96.

⁹ Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 469.

County court indicted the young Stephens and demanded his return for trial, appealing to the Governor of Kentucky to help. The Kentucky governor refused, claiming that the Indiana law was unconstitutional because its requirement of a trial by jury conflicted with the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act.¹⁰ While the Kentucky governor demanded the Indiana law be changed, the Indiana governor refused, demanding the extradition of Stephens instead. This caused considerable tension between the two states and set the stage for a challenge of the Indiana law in federal court, eventually leading to a change in Indiana law.

While the war of words raged between the two governors, another case involving a different slave named Susan came to trial.¹¹ John Chasteen claimed that she had run away from him in Kentucky, and he had captured her in Jefferson County, Indiana. A trial was set to determine the ownership of Susan in that county, but Chasteen refused and instead took the case to federal court.

¹⁰ Thornbrough, 97.

¹¹ Donald F Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 469, and Thornbrough, 97.

Sitting on the bench to hear the case was Judge Benjamin Parke. Parke, considered one of the founding fathers of Indiana, had served as attorney general for the territory and was the Indiana Territory's representative to Congress between 1805 and 1808 and senior judge of the territorial court between 1808 and 1817.¹² A friend of both Thomas Jefferson and William Henry Harrison, he was appointed to be the first judge of the United States Court for the Indiana District in 1817.¹³ While in congress Parke had unsuccessfully lobbied his fellow congressmen to repeal the slavery ban in the Northwest Ordinance. At the time of the trial over the fate of the enslaved person named Susan, Judge Parke was a slave owner living in Vincennes, Indiana.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, Judge Parke ruled in favor of John Chasteen. Parke stopped short of ruling that Indiana's 1816 law regarding man stealing was unconstitutional because it conflicted with the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act.

¹² Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, accessed at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>, accessed on 19 May, 2009.

¹³ William R. Leslie, "The Constitutional Significance of Indiana's Statute of 1824 on Fugitives from Labor," *Journal of Southern History*, 13:3 (Aug., 1947), 340.

¹⁴ United States Census for Knox County Indiana, 1820.

Instead he ruled that the national law took precedence over the state law, but allowed the Indiana law to remain.

Therefore a slave owner could take advantage of both the state and federal law to his own advantage.¹⁵ There were aspects of both laws that a slave owner could find helpful in his quest. The Indiana law made it easier to capture a runaway, but the Federal law made it easier to remove the runaway from the state by bypassing the jury requirements of the Indiana statute.

The Indiana state legislature tried to make the use of the jury trial portion of the law more palatable to slave owners by speeding up the process.¹⁶ However, there were still problems with the Indiana law. Indiana General Assembly appointed Judge Parke to review and correct certain Indiana statutes, including the 1816 law regarding fugitive slaves.¹⁷ The result was the revised code of 1824, which greatly reduced the protections given to free persons of color in the 1816 law.¹⁸

¹⁵William R. Leslie, "The Constitutional Significance of Indiana's Statute of 1824 on Fugitives from Labor," *Journal of Southern History*, 13:3 (Aug., 1947), 345.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 346.

¹⁷ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 98.

¹⁸ Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 470.

The biggest change removed the right of trial by jury, making it only available on appeal. The law went further, to state that the appeal to the jury could only be made if the cost of the appeal was paid for in advance by the party making the appeal. This alteration of the law made it nearly impossible for impoverished persons accused of being runaway slaves to defend themselves. The revised code of 1824 marked the end of the Indiana legislature's efforts to support the rights of people of color for nearly forty years. The protection of the rights of freemen would now mostly depend on the actions of individuals and communities.

In 1831 the rights of the freeman were further restricted with the passage of a number of legislative actions collectively referred to as the "1831 Black Law." The law required African Americans settling within the boundaries of Indiana after September 30th of 1831 to post a bond of five hundred dollars. The purpose of the bond, according to the legislature, was to guarantee the good behavior of the freeman and insure he or she did not become a ward of the state.¹⁹ The bond was to be collected by the

¹⁹ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 58.

Keeper of the Poor in the county where the freeman resided. If the freeman did not post a bond, it was the responsibility of the Keeper of the Poor to hire out the freeman until the bond was paid. The law further stated that anyone employing a freeman who had not paid his or her bond was liable to be fined between five to one hundred dollars.²⁰ At the same time, the legislature passed laws that prohibited blacks, mulattoes, and Indians from testifying in court when one of the parties in the case was a white man. Indiana did not repeal the ban on black court testimony until 1865.²¹

The passage of the 1831 Black Law was a response to many different factors primary racism or what some historians have called "Negrophobia."²² Negrophobia was an irrational fear in some people that persons of color bring

²⁰ Indiana Slave Law Summary and Record, accessed at http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geography/slaves_laws_IN.html, accessed on 20 May, 2009.

²¹ James H. Madison, "Race, Law and the Burden of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard, eds. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 43.

²² Many historians have used the term Negrophobia to help explain the actions of white legislatures and individuals both north and south. These historians include, John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, Emma Lou Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900* and Eugene H. Berwanger, *Negrophobia in Northern Proslavery and Antislavery Thought*.

with them crime, violence and community decay. In Indiana, as in other states, this fear resulted in the passage of laws restricting the rights of freeman, often causing violence against them.

The "official" reason behind Indiana's adoption of the 1831 Black Law was the fear that Indiana would become a "dumping ground" for useless and unwanted persons of color from southern states. Authorities in Indiana, especially those in southern counties, feared that Kentucky slave owners wishing to unload the burden of taking care of old and decrepit slaves would take them north of the Ohio River and set them free.²³ The fear of some Hoosiers was that these formerly enslaved people, unable to take care of themselves, would become a burden to the people of Indiana. There is little or no evidence that the "dumping of Negroes" into the state of Indiana was a significant event worthy of such sweeping legislation.²⁴

The passage of the Indiana law was also greatly influenced by forces outside the state. According to

²³ Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 38.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 38, Additional research of census records for southern Indiana counties supports the contention that the wholesale dumping of old and infirm did not happen.

historian John Hope Franklin, by 1830 the North Carolina legislature had put the finishing touches on a group of laws he referred to as the "Free Negro Code."²⁵ The "Free Negro Code," like similar laws in other southern states, made life difficult for freeman and often encouraged them to migrate north. The Turner Rebellion in 1831 only increased the desire of southern authorities to hasten the removal of freemen from their states.

Indiana legislators felt they had to pass the restrictive 1831 law to meet a threat they thought would be coming. They also saw neighboring states, such as Illinois and Ohio discussing or passing similar laws, and they did not want to leave themselves vulnerable.²⁶ If Indiana did not pass such laws, they feared, it would be an invitation for every freeman moving north. The law's desired effect would be to convince freemen heading north of the Ohio River that Indiana was not a friendly place to settle.

It is impossible to tell how many freemen were persuaded not to migrate to Indiana because of the 1831

²⁵ John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina 1790-1860*, 70.

²⁶ Leon F. Litwack, *The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 70.

legislation since personal accounts and written records are almost nonexistent, but overall the law seems to have had little effect. Between 1830 and 1840 the black population in Indiana nearly doubled from 3,629 to 7,165, a 97.5 percent increase.²⁷ During the same period, Indiana's neighbors Ohio and Illinois experienced similar growth despite their own "Black Laws." The black population of Illinois grew from 1,637 to 3,598 individuals, a growth of 120 percent. Ohio's population increased from 9,568 to 17,342, an increase of 82 percent. In the 1840s, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio experienced increases in black population of 57 percent, 51 percent and 45 percent respectively.²⁸

Simply reviewing census data does not take into account factors such as natural increase in black population, errors in census data, or the effectiveness of the laws in neighboring states. Nevertheless, in the two decades between 1830 and 1850, Indiana kept pace with its neighbors in the percentage growth of its black population.

²⁷ United States Census for 1830 and 1840 found in the Historical Census Browser hosted by the University of Virginia, accessed at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/state.php>, on 21 May, 2009.

²⁸ Census data gathered from the United States census Browser hosted by the University of Virginia, percentage growth figures are the work of the author.

Two possible conclusions can be drawn from this. Either the three states were equally effective in keeping the same level of control on the growth of their black population, or the laws established in the three states were equally ineffective.

The answer to this conundrum is found in a review of the prosecution of the law in Indiana. According to Indiana historian Emma Thornbrough, despite some limited enforcement the 1831 Law requiring freemen to post a bond was "a dead letter."²⁹ There is little evidence of freeman posting bonds or of individuals prosecuted for not posting them. In short, the law had little effect on black immigration and was largely ignored.

In the few cases where the law was used to prosecute offenders, it was primarily to punish those who pushed a community's sensibilities too far. Many, if not the majority, of those prosecuted were white men who employed those who had not posted bond. It appears that the prosecutions were motivated more by politics than legal or criminal jurisprudence. What seems to be on trial in these

²⁹ Thornbrough, 62.

cases is the variant opinion of the place of the freeman in Indiana, and not whether a bond had been posted or not.

According to Thornbrough, the Indiana Supreme Court tested and upheld the 1831 law in three different cases. The first involved a black man living in Vigo County, Edward Cooper. It is not known why Cooper was prosecuted, but he was the only one among a large population of African Americans living in Vigo's Lost Creek Township. Cooper's lawyer, Amory Kinney, seems to have wanted to make Cooper's trial a test case on the constitutionality of the law.³⁰ Perhaps this was the motivating factor in pushing the case forward.

The next Supreme Court case involved George Baptiste from Madison, Indiana, an important port on the Ohio River. According to Thornbrough, Baptiste "probably was prosecuted because of his suspected activities on behalf of run-away slaves".³¹ Madison, being just across the river from Kentucky, depended heavily on cross-river trade. Undoubtedly strong proslavery attitudes ran in Madison, as it did in many towns along the Ohio. Baptiste's activities

³⁰ Thornbrough, 59.

³¹ Ibid., 60.

would have made him unpopular with men on both sides of the Ohio. Even if his enemies could not prove his Underground Railroad activities, intimidating him by prosecuting him under the law would clearly send him a message. The intimidation must have worked because, after the trial was over, George Baptiste moved to Detroit.³²

The last case mentioned by Thornbrough involved Thomas Hickland of Jennings County accused of hiring a freeman who had not posted his bond.³³ According to Thornbrough, Hickman was a member of a vocal anti-slavery family whose lawyer, Stephen C. Stevens, would later run for Indiana governor as a member of the Liberty Party.³⁴ Thornbrough hints that it was Hickman's anti-slavery stand that brought the prosecutions against him. His indictment was probably for political reasons rather than for the crime of hiring a black man.

There were also a number of local county court cases that illustrate how the 1831 law was applied against people for political reasons. "Slave hunters having lost their

³² Thornbrough, 61, note.

³³ Ibid., 61.

³⁴ Ibid.

chattels and been defeated in their attempts to recover them, the slave owner and his sympathizers resolved to take advantage of a state statute then supposed to be in force in Indiana."³⁵ Luther A. Donnell and Levi Coffin were both accused of violating the law in cases brought by those in sympathy with slave owners who had lost their property.³⁶ In both cases the human property was long gone, but the trials went forward as a form of punishment and intimidation.

In Lawrence County in 1841, David Mitchell, Kip Brown and John Barnett were indicted for "Harboring Negroes." However, their true crime seems to have been that they were successful operators on the Underground Railroad. Whatever the reason, the case never made it to trial, being quashed by the circuit court judge in Lawrence County.³⁷ This case serves as another example of the conflicting views Hoosiers had on the subjects of slavery and freeman.

³⁵ *Underground Railroad: "The Invisible Road to Freedom Through Indiana," As Recorded by the Works Progress Administration Writer's Project*, Reprint, The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, IN, November 1, 2000, page 24.

³⁶ *Ibid*, and Ben Richmond, *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 127-133.

³⁷ *Underground Railroad: "The Invisible Road to Freedom Through Indiana," As Recorded by the Works Progress Administration Writer's Project*, Reprint, The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, IN, November 1, 2000, 130.

The portion of the 1831 Black Law that required African Americans to post their bond remained the law in Indiana despite attempts to have it repealed by many groups, including the Indiana Quakers. Still others objected to its lack of enforcement and called for a tightening of the legislation to increase its use. They feared that the lack of vigorous enforcement of the law only encouraged the freeman to stay and compete with poor white men for the lowest jobs, bringing crime to Indiana cities.³⁸

Both sides of the debate called for something to be done about the future of the freeman. The opportunity would come in the form of a new state constitution. The 1850 state constitutional convention became a referendum on the subject of the freeman in Indiana. As in North Carolina, Indiana politics at the time of the 1850 constitutional debates over rights of freemen brought together some strange political pairings. The freeman was the political casualty at the convention as neither party wanted to be seen as being supportive of free blacks.

³⁸ Thornbrough, 62.

With little else to debate, since both parties agreed on many topics, the question of the freemen became a target for the delegates at the convention. In the late 1840s Indiana, like the rest of the nation, was suffering from an economic depression. The state was nearly bankrupt from over spending on internal improvements, and as a result, taxes were high and jobs were scarce.³⁹ Freemen coming to the state and, in the minds of many, competing for what few jobs were available, made them logical targets.

The two main parties involved in the convention, the Whigs and Democrats, agreed on nearly every issue.⁴⁰ The two main objectives of the convention were to check the power of the Governor and to restructure the work carried out by the Legislature. Under the 1816 state constitution, the Governor had the right to appoint many state offices which led to corruption and patronage. Both parties saw this as a problem needing correction. The other main concern of the convention was the problem of the state legislature getting tied up in debate and passage of

³⁹ Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1850*, (Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart Co., 1915), 455.

⁴⁰ Michael F. Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983). This political crisis was a national phenomenon as the differences between Whigs and Democrats became blurred in the 1840s and 1850s.

private and local legislation.⁴¹ The Indiana legislature found itself getting involved in divorce cases and debates over local ordinances, which prevented the passage of needed state laws. Without so much legislation being debated and passed, it was believed, the Indiana legislature could meet only every other year, rather than continually.

Once they addressed these issues, the two parties turned to subjects they could debate and petty politics took over. One step was to reaffirm the ban on slavery in place since the passage of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which passed easily.⁴² However the almost universal condemnation of slavery did not translate to any warm feelings toward the freeman. Debates and speeches were focused on how to keep persons of color from entering the state and the removal of those already in residence.

The arguments ran the gamut from outright acceptance to outright expulsion, by force, if necessary. At least one delegate used the argument that the two races, white and black, could not live together. He argued that blacks

⁴¹ Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 451-454.

⁴² Esarey, 462.

were a race "under the ban of heaven-a curse pronounced upon them by Almighty God."⁴³ Still others argued that blacks should not be excluded from the state because they should have the full rights of citizens to live where they pleased and that banning them set a bad precedent.⁴⁴ The arguments against the anti-black amendments to the new constitution did not stop the legislation from being passed on a convention vote of ninety-three to forty. The majority of votes against the anti-black amendments came from representatives of districts with large Quaker populations or from the northern parts of the state. Delegates from the southern portions of the state voted almost entirely for the legislation.⁴⁵

Almost all of the anti-black legislation in the new constitution was contained in Article XIII. Under the article, no persons of color would be allowed to enter the state after the adoption of the new Constitution in November of 1851. Those already in the state would be required to register with the county clerk in the county

⁴³ Thronbrough, 66

⁴⁴ Ibid., 67

⁴⁵ Ibid.

where they resided, to document their right to remain in the state. The clerk then would issue a certificate to the freeman proving that he or she had the right to remain. All contracts made with persons of color who were in violation of the law were null and void. Persons employing freemen who entered the state illegally or encouraging them to stay in the state could be heavily fined. The fines collected for violating the law would be used to colonize free blacks to the nation of Liberia.⁴⁶ In addition to this amendment, Article II, Section Five officially denied African Americans the right to vote.

Ironically, the creation of Article XIII may have been due in large part to an alliance formed between Democrats and abolitionists. The abolitionists wanted strong anti-slavery language, making it clear that Indiana opposed slavery and always would, while the Democrats wanted strong anti-black legislation supported by their districts and the new German and Irish immigrants they were courting politically. Whigs attempted to break this coalition by asking for an endorsement of the Compromise of 1850.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Thronbrough, 68; Carmony, 447-448; and Eserey, 462.

⁴⁷ Eserey, 457 note.

The Compromise of 1850 included a complete restructuring of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law that most abolitionists found abhorrent and most Democrats supported. The Whigs believed that there were such strong feelings on both sides of the Compromise of 1850 debate that calling for an endorsement would permanently drive a wedge between the abolitionists and the Democrats at the convention. Unfortunately for the Whigs, the political ploy was seen by the Democrats as an underhanded trick and it failed.⁴⁸ The freeman became a casualty of the political alliance that made the 1851 Indiana constitution possible.

The one thing that the supporters of the freeman were able to do was to force a separate vote on the ratification of Article XIII. In order to make the 1851 constitution the law of the land, it had to be accepted by a majority of the voting public. Article XIII had to stand its own vote on the same ballot. The people of Indiana would need to stand up with their racism exposed and vote for the anti-black article, rather than have it hidden inside the larger constitution.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 458.

If it was the intent of some of the framers of the 1851 Constitution for Hoosiers to vote down Article XIII separately from the constitution, their plan failed. The constitution passed with 80.3 percent of the 140,868 votes cast, and Article XIII passed with 83.88 percent of the vote.⁴⁹ Only four Indiana counties voted down the anti-black article, including Randolph, which had the largest black population at the time. The other three were northern counties with little or no black population.⁵⁰ Other counties with large black populations voted overwhelmingly for Article XIII, including Wayne and Parke Counties, heavily settled by Quakers.

Like the 1831 Black Law before it, state and local authorities did not strictly enforce Article XIII. The majority of the African Americans already living in Indiana never bothered to register with their respective county clerks, nor were many freemen prosecuted for violating the law.⁵¹ However, the law may have had a chilling effect on migration into the state. According to the US Census the total number of African Americans living in Indiana in 1850

⁴⁹ Donald F Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 450.

⁵⁰ Thronbrough, 68.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

was 11,262. In 1860, the number was 11,428, a net increase of only 166 individuals. This number does not even reflect what could be expected from natural increase.

It is possible that the reason the population growth leveled off was that there was a nearly equal out-migration as in-migration in. Indiana had made it abundantly clear that it was not a hospitable place for free blacks. Many newcomers as well as some older residents found their hopes of freedom and prosperity lay elsewhere. After the passage of the Compromise of 1850, many freemen made Canada their destination of choice. Canada offered permanent escape from the slave catcher, eliminated the likelihood of being kidnapped and offered the hope of equal rights not available in the United States. Other places available to freeman were Michigan, Iowa, and Ohio, all of which sustained a sizable growth in African American population during the same ten year period.⁵²

The Indiana that freemen migrated to during the first half of the nineteenth century was a land of contradictions. A ban on slavery was written into the

⁵² United States Census Browser, hosted by the University of Virginia Library, accessed at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/state.php>, accessed on 28 May 2009.

founding documents of the State, yet true freedom was elusive. The State Legislature passed laws and even constitutional articles that sought to limit the rights of the freemen and to punish people of color for migrating to Indiana. Although not universally enforced, the laws made a statement to both freemen and their supporters that Indiana was not a friendly place to settle. It is to this environment that the immigrants from North Carolina came to establish themselves in the land of Indiana.

If the atmosphere of uncertainty towards persons of color in the state, combined with the changing political landscape created an unfriendly landscape for African Americans in Indiana, the political climate of the 1840s was still ripe with opportunities to challenge the laws. Supporters of the rights of persons of color, African Americans, Quakers and others worked hard to meet this challenge.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUAKERS AND FREEMEN IN INDIANA

It would be gratifying to me, to be present and witness the earnest and determined spirit with which the sons of North Carolina breast up to power and denounce its abuse and usurpations, I would tell them, that North Carolinians had not, or would not degenerate, by being transplanted to Indiana. Half my district is from your State, and bracer or more determined spirits never charged upon an invading host.¹

Despite laws established by Indiana to keep freemen from settling within the state's borders, they continued to come in the 1830s and 1840s. Many settled on the fringes of communities and attempted to establish themselves in whatever work or profession they could find. Some found limited success on their own, but many were helped by kind individuals and communities in various places around Indiana, especially by Quakers. At this same time, the mass migration of Quakers out of the slave-owning South to

¹ Letter from Honorable James Rariden, United States Congressman from Indiana, to the People of North Carolina regarding the upcoming 1840 election, *Raleigh Register and North-Carolina Gazette*, Raleigh, North Carolina, October 27, 1840. Ironically the author of this letter praising the quality of North Carolina immigrants to his district in Indiana is the same man who suggested that it would be better to kill off people of color coming into the State if nothing better could be found to be done with them. He suggested this during debates over the 1851 Constitution. It seems that Congressman Rariden had high regard for immigrants from North Carolina as long as they were not black.

the free states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois aided the traveling freemen.

Although far from perfect, the Quaker record in aiding people of color in the State of Indiana was better than any other religious group. Quakers established themselves in small communities that often provided areas of relative tolerance for freemen and their families. It is therefore no great surprise that many black settlements in antebellum Indiana could be found near Quaker communities. Other areas of Indiana were not as welcoming, as the following joke of the period reflects:

An elderly black man was in his death bed surrounded by his friends and loved ones, when someone asked him where he wanted to be buried. He answered that he wanted to be buried in Tipton County, Indiana, since that is the last place the devil would ever look for a black man.²

The Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends held its first meeting in 1821, officially establishing the Quaker Church and thus becoming the official voice of Quakers in the State.³ That year, the Quakers of Indiana boasted five

² *Frankfort Morning Times*, "Stories of Town and Country 'around" 3 November 1929, 2.

³ John William Buys, *Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished dissertation, The University of Florida, 1973, 17 and 30.

Quarterly Meetings made up of twenty-nine individual Monthly Meetings. The majority of these Quaker Monthly Meetings existed in a band running east to west across the middle of the State. There were few Monthly Meetings in the southern or northern portions of the State.

Almost immediately, the Indiana Yearly Meeting began to receive inquires from North Carolina Quakers about the possibility of sending freeman to the State.⁴ Indiana had considerable appeal to migrating Quakers and freeman. As a newly established state, travel within the state was relatively easy due to the flat terrain when compared to other overgrown prairie in states like Illinois. More important, land was plentiful, fertile, and cheap. Indiana became such a favorite place for North Carolina Quakers to send freeman that by 1826 some Indiana Quakers were beginning to resent the imposition.⁵

The primary areas of settlement for African Americans and Quakers in the state of Indiana were Wayne and Randolph counties in the east, Hamilton and Howard Counties in the middle of the state, and Vigo and Parke Counties in the

⁴ Hiram Hilty, *Freedom for All*, 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

west. The largest settlements of African Americans were the Greenville, Cabin Creek and Snow Hill Settlements in Wayne and Randolph Counties. These two counties boasted a combined black population of 1,130 individuals, approximately sixteen percent of the state total in 1840.⁶ The Lost Creek settlement in Vigo County was the largest in the western part of the state, hosting a black population of 425 in 1840. Interestingly, the Lost Creek settlement may have had less dependence on the Quaker community living nearby than other black settlements.⁷ Perhaps this is because the settlement was founded in the 1830s, earlier than most settlements in the state. In addition, it was populated by a larger percentage of individuals, whose families had been free for generations, including the Artis and Bass families from North Carolina and Virginia.

The African Americans living in Indiana communities near Quakers usually came from three distinct and significant backgrounds. First, there were those who were

⁶ Indiana had a black population of 7,165 in 1840. Information found at the Historical Census Browser hosted by the University of Virginia, accessed at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/county.php>; on 1 June, 2009.

⁷ Thornbrough, 51.

free long before they came into the State of Indiana. These people had never been slaves, and many of their ancestors had never been enslaved. These individuals included the previously mentioned Artis and Bass families of Vigo County as well as the Bassett families that settled in Parke County.⁸ Many individuals may have traveled to Indiana in the company of Quakers, but they did not necessarily owe their freedom to Quakers.

The second group of freemen in these settlements were individuals who had previously been slaves, but had been manumitted prior to their coming to Indiana. It included slaves who had been freed by Quakers in North Carolina who did not migrate to free states right away. Many of these former slaves had been free for years.

The third group of people were those who were still enslaved upon their coming to Indiana. This set of African Americans would include people fleeing enslavement in other places and those who were set free by their masters upon arrival to the state. This sub-set of African Americans

⁸ George A. Smith, "Bloody Bananas: One African American's Search for His Roots," *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, Indiana Historical Society, 21:1 (winter, 2009), 29-33, and the United States Census for Parke and Vigo counties, 1840.

included, but would not be limited to, those owned by the Quaker Church in North Carolina. As laws in North Carolina and other places began to make it more difficult to free slaves, it became easier to free them by simply moving them to a new location where slavery was prohibited.

Evidence suggests that the different backgrounds of these African American groups led to a quasi-class system within black communities in Indiana and elsewhere. This class system may have been similar to those found on plantations and in Southern communities with free black populations as described by historian Eugene Genovese.⁹ The individuals whose families possessed long-term freedom comprised a higher class within a free black community, in part because they were more likely to have an amount of wealth, education and skills. Also it was this class of individuals that was most likely to offend the racist sensibilities of the white population. Because they often had skilled trades, such as blacksmithing or carpentry, they were often in direct competition with white men for jobs.

⁹ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 325 and 409.

It appears that Quaker communities of Indiana tolerated and utilized African American skills much more than other white communities. For example, in the Quaker community of Bloomfield and the neighboring community of Annapolis, African Americans in the 1850 census are listed in various skilled professions including masons, carpenters, and tailors.¹⁰ However, this tolerance was not universal, and often there was not enough work within smaller Quaker communities to entirely support free blacks in their trades. The freeman would therefore need to turn to the general population for work, where competition with white tradesmen could lead to tension and even violence. But, when moving away from the limited shelter of a Quaker community, freemen often found their only option was to become a common laborer.

In addition to providing some level of employment for freemen in northern states, Quakers communities also had the reputation of helping African Americans in other ways as well. One aspect of history that is very commonly associated with Quaker and black communities in the North,

¹⁰ United States Census for Parke County, Indiana, 1850.

including those in Indiana, is the Underground Railroad. There are two things that can be safely said about the Underground Railroad in The United States; it did exist, and much of what is said about it, according to historian Larry Gara, "belongs to the realm of folklore, rather than history."¹¹ Historians have struggled over the real truth of the Underground Railroad for nearly fifty years since the publication of Larry Gara's seminal study *The Liberty Line*.¹² However, whether it is fact or fiction, the Underground Railroad and its accompanying "myth" has played a significant role in the development of American history.

From the time of its operation to the present day, the biggest impact of the Underground Railroad is from its legend. Today many museums and historic sites interpret the Underground Railroad despite little evidence that their sites or communities were involved. In the past, the slave owning south believed the greatly exaggerated claims by abolitionists that tens of thousands of slaves escaped by

¹¹ Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, 2.

¹² Fergus Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: Harper and Collins, 2005), and Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

the Underground Railroad each year.¹³ Indeed, because abolitionist propaganda was so strongly accepted it was a major cause of tension between the North and the South before the Civil War. The fact remains that the number of slaves fleeing the southern states was at most one tenth of those claimed by abolitionists.¹⁴ Oddly enough, as discussed earlier in this work, some of these runaways left with the tacit approval of their masters. In some cases it was done to remove a slave owners own children from slavery; in other cases it was to remove troublemakers and ambitious individuals, thus making the rest of the enslaved population easier to work with.¹⁵ Some runaways were able to escape, according to Senator Henry Clay, because their owners never bothered to chase them, because they were not worth the trouble to the slave owner.¹⁶

The Underground Railroad also had significant impact on the lives of those who traveled on it, or operated it, as well as those communities where it existed. In Indiana

¹³ Gara, *The Liberty Line*, 38.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

there is plenty of evidence that the Underground Railroad operated, but its full extent remains a mystery.

Underground Railroad sites throughout the state were divided roughly into three main routes.¹⁷ The most famous site of Underground Railroad activity in Indiana was a "station" operated by Levi Coffin in Newport (Fountain City) in Wayne County. Coffin's operation was so widespread and so public that he was given the nickname "President of the Underground Railway" by slave catchers unable to recover their property. Coffin's home was part of a large Quaker community located on the eastern route of the Underground Railroad through Indiana.

A central route started in Madison or Jefferson, Indiana, and went through the Quaker communities of Salem in Washington County and Westfield in Hamilton County. The western route crossed the Ohio River at Evansville, Indiana

¹⁷ Underground Railroad: "The Invisible Road to Freedom Through Indiana," as recorded by the Works Progress Administration Writers Project, reprint The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2000, 333, and Marlene K. Lu *Walkin' the Wabash: An Exploration into the Underground Railroad in West Central Indiana* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 2001.)

and followed the Wabash River north.¹⁸ It included the Quaker settlements in Parke and Vigo Counties. In Parke County in particular, there were Underground Railroad safe houses in the city of Coloma operated by Thomas Morris and one outside Bloomfield run by Alfred and Rhonda Hadley.¹⁹

Underground Railroad operators throughout the state usually operated with little fear from government authorities. Prosecutions of actual conductors or safe house owners were rare unless someone in the community or frustrated slave owners pushed forward the prosecution. A good example is the famous case involving Levi Coffin mentioned earlier in this work.²⁰ Another reason for the prosecutions of Underground Railroad participants was when they offended the sensibilities of the community by encouraging the runaway to stay.²¹ In some places, helping freemen was acceptable as long as they were just passing through a community. Since Quaker communities had the reputation of being more tolerant of freeman who wished to

¹⁸ Thornbrough, 41.

¹⁹ *Underground Railroad: The Invisible Road to Freedom Through Indiana*, 196-198.

²⁰ Richmond, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 126-130.

²¹ Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 233; and Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 22, 78-80.

stay among them, they were more likely to face prosecutions.

Although Quakers were generally more tolerant of the freeman, life was far from open and equal in some Quaker communities. Quakers demonstrated the same prejudices toward freeman as the general population.²² Quakers encouraged the education of black children, but usually saw to it that it was conducted separately from white children. Quakers, who allowed freeman to worship within the Quaker meeting house, often set aside a separate place for them to sit, commonly referred to as the "Negro Pew."²³ Even in some Quaker communities the activities of whites and blacks were strictly segregated. However this varied between communities and even within communities, depending on the philosophical leanings of each Monthly Meeting or individual people. Some communities were more accepting of the freed people, just as some individuals were more accepting than others.

This conflict between degrees of tolerance and acceptance became acutely manifest with the Quaker Church

²² Ryan Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 71.

²³ *Ibid.*, 67.

in Indiana, resulting in a split within the church. The schism within Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends is unique, because it is the only Yearly Meeting within the United States to split over the issue of slavery, the rights of black individuals, and the methods acceptable to bring slavery to an end.

In 1843 the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends split into the "orthodox" Indiana Yearly Meeting and the Anti-Slavery Friends. Historians disagree over the actual cause of the split.²⁴ Some argue that the split was a result of individual ego among the Quaker elite at the 1842 Yearly Meeting. Some members of the yearly meeting left the church because their efforts to control the conversation on slavery within the Yearly Meeting were not supported and they were therefore humiliated. Other historians argue that it was a fundamental break in the church over methodology when it came to attempting to end slavery.

Basically, the difference between historians is how they view the Indiana Quaker's motives and their actions in

²⁴ Thomas Hamm argues in, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, and *A Great and Good People*, the split was over ego and Ryan Jordan in, *Slavery and the Meetinghouse*, 41-50 argues that the cause was about method.

regard to the freeman. Some modern historians argue that the Quakers are generally overrated by the public as abolitionists and friends of the black man. Quakers, they argue, overwhelmingly supported "gradualism" as opposed to immediate emancipation, to ending slavery, and they supported separation of the races.²⁵ In addition, some argue, the Quaker view of the freeman was that of parent to a child needing a guiding hand.²⁶ According to these historians, the relationship between Quakers and freemen was far from one of mutual respect.

Supporters of this argument point out that racism and anti-black feelings were common in the deeds and writings of Quakers. There is certainly enough evidence to support this claim. Some Quakers were as racist as their non-Quaker neighbors. One of the strongest points of this argument is the fact that very few freemen joined the

²⁵ Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 75.

²⁶ Arguments summarized by Thomas Hamm, April Beckman, Marissa Florio, Kristi Giles, and Marie Hopper in "'A Great and Good People': Midwestern Quakers and the Struggle Against Slavery," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 100 March 2005, page 5. Arguments found in Ryan P. Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House: The Quakers and the Abolitionist Dilemma, 1820-1860* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007) and Stephen A. Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), Henry J. Cadbury, "Negro Membership in the Society of Friends," *The Journal of Negro History*, 21:2, (April, 1936).

Quaker Church.²⁷ When blacks did attend a Quaker meeting they were often segregated in separate seating in designated pews or in the back of the church. Some Historians see this as a sign that freed people were not welcome within the church.

This argument seems to assume that the freemen would naturally gravitate to a belief system of the people who supported them or saved them from bondage. The desire to join the Quaker church becomes an act of gratitude for some benefit rendered, rather than an act of faith. Therefore, according to this argument, the reason the freeman did not join the church in large numbers was because they were prevented from joining by the Quakers themselves.

This argument seems flawed. It assumes that a paternalistic relationship existed between freeman and Quaker. Clearly many Quakers held such views of the black members of their communities; however, for there to be such a relationship, there must be two parties willing to take part. The proceeding argument ignored the freed people's side of the equation and denies their agency.

²⁷ Cadbury, "Negro Membership in the Society of Friends," *The Journal of Negro History*, 21:2 (April 1936), 151.

To many freemen, the Quakers were a means to an end and not an end in itself. To the freemen, Quakers offered opportunities not available in other communities, and free people of color took advantage of these opportunities to move ahead economically and socially. It is therefore not surprising that they did not join the Quaker church in large numbers; they were determined to find their own way.²⁸ If racism had been the deciding reason why freeman did not join the Quaker church, then there should be a "African Quaker Church" as there was the African Methodist Church.

The degree to which freemen depended on the Quakers may be in direct proportion to the 'condition' the freeman arrived in a Quaker community. If fresh out of bondage, extremely poor and uneducated, a freeman would naturally require more assistance and perhaps develop some sort of dependence. On the other hand, if the freeman had been free for an extended period, had obtained some education and skills, his need and dependency on the Quakers would be

²⁸ Interestingly, the same phenomenon can be seen in studying the refugees coming to the United States from Southeast Asia during the 1970s and 1980s. Although many were helped by Methodists and other protestant American denominations, they did not join these denominations and instead joined others or created belief systems to which they were already accustomed.

considerably less. A good example of this is seen in the lives of two family groups, the Basses and Cooks, who arrived in Parke County approximately the same time in the 1840s. A closer look at the lives of these two families will be explored later in this work.

Opposing the argument that Quakers were less than praiseworthy when it came to race relations are the historians who assert that Quakers should be lauded. These historians argue that despite the words of some Quakers, when one looks at the actions of Quakers within the context of their time, their work is remarkable. Some of these historians go further to argue that the Quakers under the leadership of the Indiana Yearly Meeting were unique. These Quakers of Indiana are especially praiseworthy in the service of freeman when compared to Quakers living elsewhere.²⁹

Supporters of this argument are quick to point out that Midwestern Quakers provided more for their black neighbors than other Quakers. In 1821, the year that the Indiana Yearly Meeting was established, a committee was

²⁹ Thomas D. Hamm et al, "A Great and Good People:" Midwestern Quakers and the Struggle Against Slavery," 100.

formed "On the Concerns of the People of Color."³⁰ This committee was a very active and powerful voice within the Yearly Meeting.³¹ It oversaw a number of projects to resettle freemen, educate black children, and raise money for legal aid to help freed people threatened by slave hunters and kidnappers. Indiana Quakers were more likely than Quakers in other states to provide schooling to the children of freeman, in both integrated and non-integrated facilities. In addition Quakers under the guidance of the Indiana Yearly Meeting did not segregate their meeting houses, cemeteries or schools as Quakers did in other states.³² Quaker paternalism, according to this argument, was more of a reflection of the dependency bred by slavery rather than on the belief that the freeman was somehow innately inferior.³³

These historians paint a picture of Midwestern Quakers as being unified in their support of the freeman despite minor fractures within the church. To them, the Hicksite

³⁰ Hamm et al, page 6 and John William Buys, *Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century*, Unpublished Dissertation, University of Florida, 101.

³¹ Buys, 101.

³² Hamm, 7

³³ Ibid., 7-8

Quakers, the Anti-Slavery Friends and the orthodox Quakers were little different when it came to relations with the freeman.³⁴ The small intellectual differences between the divisions within the church were minor and had little effect on their actions in support like anti-slavery activities. In other words, all three divisions supported the same basic beliefs.

Clearly there is strong evidence supporting the argument that Indiana Quakers were distinctive in their relationship with freeman. In Indiana there seems to be an activism and independence not found elsewhere. But if they were truly different as some historians argue, are they different in ways other than in their relationship with blacks? If so, what could be the cause of this difference? And if it is true, as some argue, that the Quakers of the Indiana Yearly Meeting were united on the subject of anti-slavery and the rights of the freeman, then how does one explain the 1843 schism between orthodox Quakers and the Anti-Slavery Friends?

³⁴ The Hicksite Quakers split from the orthodox Quaker Church in 1827. Elias Hicks was a traveling Quaker minister who questioned the divinity of Christ and believed that revelation of the "Inner Light" was more important than the Holy Scriptures. Supporters of his philosophy split from the Church and were known as Hicksite Quakers.

To address this question we must first answer how Indiana Quakerism was different than other Quakers and why. Indiana Quakers were more likely to be involved in politics than their brothers under the leadership of other Yearly Meetings. In Indiana Quakers ran for and held political office both on the local and state level. This was very uncommon elsewhere, where involvement in politics was highly discouraged by individual Yearly Meetings.³⁵

Quaker involvement in Indiana politics implies two things. First, it shows a level of activism and independence not found elsewhere. Second, it requires the ability to work with others to achieve certain goals. This latter point is important when considering the schism within the Indiana Yearly Meeting, since part of the conflict was over whether or not Quakers should associate with non-Quaker abolitionists.

The political involvement that distinguished the Indiana Yearly Meeting may have been the influence of Quakers from North Carolina. In North Carolina Quakers were politically active but did not run for office, working

³⁵ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 26-27.

behind the scenes diligently to keep the proslavery forces at bay. Historian Stephen Weeks credits the passage of North Carolina "negro code" in the early 1830s to the fact that so many Quakers had left the state. There were simply not enough politically active Quakers left to successfully lobby against the laws.³⁶

Another possible reason for the strong political activism, especially on the subject of slavery may have been the influence of Quaker evangelist minister Joseph Gurney. Gurney was the son of a prominent English banker who counted among his friends the great abolitionist William Wilberforce. Gurney brought to Quakerism a new approach to theology more in line with other evangelicals of his day, yet he held fast to many traditional Quaker beliefs.³⁷ He also strengthened the Quaker role in social reform, especially in the areas of capital punishment, temperance, and slavery. The one thing that was truly different was his approach to others outside the church when it came to social reform. Gurney and his followers

³⁶ Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 244.

³⁷ Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, 20-21.

believed it was important to work with those outside the faith if it advanced a social cause, like the fight to end slavery.³⁸ This included becoming involved in politics and working with non-Quakers to achieve a desired goal.

According to prominent Quaker Historian Thomas Hamm, Gurney was "the most important figure in an intellectual movement that transformed both British and American Quakerism."³⁹ His influence on the Quaker church in America was profound and shaped part of its philosophy far into the future.

In 1837 Joseph Gurney came to the United States and made a three-year tour of Quaker Meetings throughout the nation. His visit was a triumph, and he made a considerable impact on those who saw him. Slavery was the primary focus of his visit, although he was cautious to not attack the institution during public speeches or lectures.⁴⁰ He reserved his attack on slavery in private meetings with other Quakers and with American political powerhouses, including John C. Calhoun, Martin Van Buren, Henry Clay and

³⁸ Hamm, 32.

³⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰ James A Rawley, "Joseph John Gurney's Mission to America, 1837-1840," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 49:4 (March, 1963), 656, 662.

John Quincy Adams. Despite working behind the scenes, his reputation as an abolitionist was well-known.

Gurney's influence seems to have been quite strong among some North Carolina Quakers, especially those from Guilford County. Many of these Quakers followed the "Gurney-ite" example by looking to others for aid in the anti-slavery cause. It is therefore no great surprise that the majority of the leadership of the "Anti-slavery Friends" who split from the orthodox Indiana Yearly meeting were from North Carolina. A majority of the leaders of the split, including the famous Levi Coffin, Benjamin Stanton, and Charles Osborn, were from Guilford County.⁴¹

The Schism

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the "official" Quaker stand on the subject of emancipation and slavery was in favor of "gradualism" and colonization. As discussed before, this philosophy called for a gradual end of slavery and the removal of free blacks to

⁴¹ It should be noted here that according to noted Historian Thomas Hamm, Charles Osborn was not a supporter of the teachings of Joseph Gurney, finding his teachings unsound. See Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, 32.

territories outside the United States. Although this was the "official" stand of the church, it was far from universally accepted by Quakers. There were many who desired an immediate end to slavery and supported the rights of the freemen. To many who believed this way, William Lloyd Garrison was a champion, because he called for immediate freedom and full rights for the freeman. He and others believed that gradual emancipation and colonization were not bringing slavery to an end. Among those who believed in immediate emancipation were some strong leaders within the church. The Quaker supporters of immediate emancipation had their strength centered in the Indiana Yearly Meeting's Committee on the Concerns of the People of Color.⁴²

Individual Quaker meeting houses became a battleground for those who supported immediate abolition and those who sought a gradual end to slavery.⁴³ Immediate abolitionists within the Quaker church sought to use the Quaker meeting houses as forums for getting their type of abolitionist message out. They used the unique format of the Quaker

⁴² Jordan, *Slavery and the Meeting House*, 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26.

church meeting to express themselves; additionally, they utilized the meeting houses outside meeting time to host lectures and rallies in support of abolitionism.⁴⁴

Orthodox Quakers felt this was an intrusion into worship, especially since immediate emancipation was not endorsed by the Quaker Yearly Meeting. In addition, some felt that close ties with radical abolitionists would damage the faith. Many pointed to the death of Elijah Lovejoy as an example of what could go wrong. Lovejoy, a Quaker, died with a gun in his hand as he attempted to defend himself against an angry mob that had destroyed his abolitionist printing office in Alton, Illinois in 1832. Many Quakers condemned him for resorting to a gun for his own safety in violation of Quaker pacifist beliefs.⁴⁵

Those calling for immediate emancipation were clearly in the minority among Indiana Quakers. Many outside the radical abolitionist movement, including the majority of the leadership of the Indiana Yearly meeting, felt that immediate freedom for slaves would result in a cultural and

⁴⁴ The Quaker meeting is unique in that anyone attending the meeting can speak on any subject. This is because the church has no establish clergy.

⁴⁵ Jordan, 34.

economic disaster for America. In Indiana, as in many northern states, white Hoosiers feared a great influx of freemen if enslaved people were suddenly set free.⁴⁶ To mainstream America, radical abolitionism, indeed abolitionism in any form, was not a popular movement during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In northern states, including Indiana, Quaker Yearly Meetings began to take action to limit the abolitionist strife that was building the Quaker Meeting Houses. The church censured and even disowned members who spoke out in favor of radical abolitionism in Quaker meetings. Yearly Meetings also took steps to ban abolitionist meetings at individual meeting houses. In 1837 Quaker Yearly Meetings in Philadelphia and New England advised their members to keep free from association with people and organizations whose beliefs were different from that of the established Quaker view on abolition.⁴⁷ Other Yearly Meetings soon followed suit. Indiana's Yearly meeting issued prohibitory

⁴⁶ Jordan, 50.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

statements about using meeting houses for anti-slavery meetings in 1841.⁴⁸

In response, many Quakers and non-Quakers felt that the orthodox Quaker approach to abolition, gradualism and colonization, could not be reconciled with their own beliefs in immediate emancipation. As a result, these individuals withdrew from the Quaker church, as did members of other denominations who felt their beliefs diverged from the teaching of their own churches. Such people were known as "comeouters" because of the biblical passage in Revelations which stated, "Come out of her, my people, that you may not partake of her sins and receive her plagues."⁴⁹ Most major United States Protestant denominations split over the issue of slavery in the 1830s and 1840s.

The split in the Quaker Church in Indiana began at the 1842 Indiana Yearly Meeting over a confrontation with Henry

⁴⁸ Walter Edgerton, *A History of the Separation in Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends; Which Took Place in the Winter of 1842 and 1843, on the Anti-Slavery Question; containing a Brief Account of the Rise, Spread and Final Adoption by the Society its Testimony Against Slavery; Together with a Record of Some Principal Facts and Circumstances Relating to that Separation; Embracing the Documents Issued by Both Parties Relative Thereto; and Some Account of the Action of other Yearly Meetings of Friends touching the Controversy, Especially that of London, etc.*, (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, Printer, 1856), 48.

⁴⁹ Jordan, 45, Revelations, (18:4), Revised Standard Version.

Clay. Clay, heir to the leadership of the Whig Party after the death of William Henry Harrison, was traveling the country making political appearances before the party faithful. His plan was to build party support for a presidential bid in 1844. While touring Indiana, Quaker leaders invited Clay to address the Quaker Yearly Meeting. The Quakers of Indiana were traditionally Whigs and were overwhelmingly supporters of Henry Clay, despite the fact he was a slave owner.

Some strong abolitionist Quakers at the meeting put together a petition requesting Clay free his slaves immediately. After Clay addressed the crowd at the meeting, Hiram Mendenhall presented the petition to the Senator.⁵⁰ Clay was firm in his response, telling Mendenhall that "slavery is our misfortune not our fault, but whether our misfortune or our fault it is none of your business."⁵¹ Clay continued, attacking those calling for immediate

⁵⁰ Jordan, 52-54.

⁵¹ Henry Clay quoted by Benjamin Stanton in the *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, October 15, 1842, (New Garden, IN., 1842) found in Ryan P. Jordan, *Slavery and the Meetinghouse: Quakers and the Abolitionist Dilemma, 1820-1865* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2007), 52-53.

emancipation by claiming that it would lead amalgamation of the races.

The presentation of the petition greatly embarrassed the leaders of the Yearly Meeting, who denied they knew anything about it. Apologizing to Clay, Elijah Coffin, a distant cousin of Levi Coffin and chairman of the Yearly Meeting, stated that although the presenters of the petition looked like Quakers, they did not have the love of the Gospel.⁵²

After the breakup of the Yearly Meeting that day, a call went out to supporters of the abolitionist cause to remain in the meeting house for a conference. Before all the interested parties could gather, John Maxwell announced to the assembling crowd that by order of the Yearly Meeting Trustees they must vacate the building. "He (Maxwell) first called them 'Friends,' then, as if correcting himself, he said he did not know whether they were friends or not - he would call them people."⁵³ The leadership of the Yearly Meeting had spoken; the church

⁵² Jordan, 54.

⁵³ Edgerton, *A History of the Separation in Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends*, 61 and 101-102.

would not tolerate the "incorrect" beliefs of some abolitionist "people".

Before the abolitionist Friends left the meeting house, they agreed to meet the next morning in Newport, Wayne County, a center of anti-slavery efforts in Indiana. Newport was also the home of Levi Coffin, one of the leaders of the abolitionist movement within the Indiana Quaker Church. Participants at that meeting decided that the immediate emancipation and anti-colonization beliefs of the group could not be reconciled with the beliefs of the orthodox Quakers in Indiana. For this reason the group became "comeouters" and formed an independent Quaker association called the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends.⁵⁴

The Anti-Slavery Friends tried to align themselves with the Yearly Meetings of London, England and Dublin, Ireland, looking to these meetings for support. Although sympathetic to the Anti-Slavery Friends, the British Quakers were hesitant to get involved and be a part of a

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62.

schism in America.⁵⁵ The Anti-Slavery Friends were on their own, claiming approximately ten percent of the Quaker population in Indiana as members, including individual Monthly Meetings in Iowa and Michigan.⁵⁶

The Anti-Slavery Friends may have chosen their name to show they were officially associating themselves with the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society founded in Wayne County in 1838.⁵⁷ A number of branch anti-slavery societies had formed in the late 1830s and early 1840s, the majority of which could be found in east central Indiana. Not surprisingly, Quakers populated many of these organizations.

The majority of the Anti-Slavery Friends lived in the Quaker communities in the eastern portion of Indiana, centered in Newport just north of Richmond, the site of the orthodox Quaker Yearly Meeting. Both groups continued to do their work in support of slaves and freemen, with the Anti-Slavery Friends perhaps a little more zealous in their actions. Popular history has given credit to the Anti-

⁵⁵ Jordan, 60.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁷ Carmony, *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, 566.

Slavery Friends for more involvement in the Underground Railroad than orthodox Quakers, largely because of the well-known activities of Levi Coffin. However, many orthodox Quakers were just as active in the movement as individual Anti-slavery Friends.⁵⁸

The one major effort undertaken by the Anti-Slavery Friends but not shared by the Orthodox Quakers was the free produce movement. Founded by Charles Osborn in 1826, the purpose of the free produce movement was to boycott the goods produced in the South with slave labor. This included cotton, rice, indigo and other items made or grown with slave labor. Instead, the movement encouraged people to purchase goods made by a paid labor force. The focus of the movement was the creation of a store that sold only goods made by free labor. Levi Coffin managed the store and moved his home to Cincinnati, where it was believed there would be a large enough market to support the enterprise.⁵⁹ However, the project was a failure, because some free labor goods were scarce and expensive, making it difficult to compete with slave-made products on price.

⁵⁸ Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, 59-61.

⁵⁹ Richmond, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 196.

Rank and file Quakers may have been more concerned with the schism in the church than the reasons for the split. Quaker philosophy prided itself on its brotherhood and unity with other Quakers. This desire to maintain unity and brotherhood was likely the reason why the London Yearly Meeting did not side with the Anti-Slavery Friends in the split. Individual Quakers may not have joined in the schism, although they sympathized with the beliefs of one side or another. They instead reserved their actions to individual acts outside the endorsement or condemnation of the Yearly Meeting.

An example of this reticence occurred during a visit to Bloomfield in Parke County, Indiana, by Benjamin Seebohm, an English minister touring the United States in 1850. During his visit, Seebohm attended a meeting of the committee for the Concerns of the Colored people of the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting. At that meeting, a discussion on the free produce movement took place:

Friends were encouraged to attend to their own sense of duty in regard to it, without yielding to a judging and condemning spirit in regard to those who, with equal conscientiousness, might not be able to see their

way so clear as to the necessity of entirely abstaining from the use of slave labour produce.⁶⁰

Although the free produce movement was a function of the Anti-slavery Friends and was not endorsed by the Orthodox Quaker Church, the Bloomfield Quakers were asked to make up their own minds. Choices on such matters would be left to individuals to make. Many of the acts of kindness given to freemen by Quakers were acts of conscience performed by individuals without direct sanction other than a strong belief in doing what was right.

Examples of work conducted by Quakers outside direct sanction of the Yearly Meetings included Underground Railroad operations and special projects to emancipate slaves. These actions were undertaken by people who felt they were following the tenets of their church even though their actions were not officially approved. Individuals undertaking such actions were solely responsible for their behavior, thus removing the church's liability. As discussed earlier in this work, when the Quakers of North Carolina began to have legal problems with the State over the ownership of slaves, the church simply transferred

⁶⁰ Benjamin Seebohm, *Private Memoirs of B. and E. Seebohm*, edited by their sons, (London: Provost and Co., 1873), 327.

ownership to individuals thus limiting the amount of potential damage from family lawsuits. Perhaps some techniques worked in the case of individual actions in Indiana. The church could not be held responsible for the actions of individuals.

However, the most likely reason why individuals conducted non-sanctioned projects on behalf of freemen was to limit potential conflict within individual Monthly Meetings. Indiana Quakers on the individual meeting-house level were often no more uniform in their opinions than those at the Yearly Meeting. Limiting debates within the church served the purpose of keeping peace within the church. Schism was a luxury that could only be afforded on the Yearly Meeting level, as smaller church groups needed each other to survive.

One such Monthly Meeting that needed to stay together was the community of Bloomfield in Western Indiana. In the mid-1840s a group of Quakers in Bloomfield took it upon themselves to take action not sanctioned by their congregation. The result was a community divided on the

subject of race and tolerance on the edge of the Indiana frontier.

The Quakers involved in the incident and resulting prosecutions were all from North Carolina. They were all members of the Orthodox Quaker church, although they supported and had ties to the Anti-Slavery friends. At least one individual, Dr. Horace Cannon, was influenced by the teachings of Joseph Gurney; indeed he named his son Joseph Gurney Cannon. All the Quakers involved in the rescue of the Alabama slaves and the following trials acted as they believed they should, based upon their individual convictions. Their community will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: 'HARBORING NEGROES'

The following is a story that has both elements of fact and fiction, heroes and villains, as well as triumphs and tragedies. Like most stories, it is an attempt to put human understanding on a series of complex events so that it is both entertaining and comfortable. Although the story exists in many forms and in many places, its primary source is the autobiography of the son of one of the principle players, Joseph Gurney Cannon. Joe Cannon, a Republican politician from Illinois, rose to the position of Speaker of the United States House of Representatives 1903 to 1911.

In a chapter of his autobiography, *Uncle Joe Cannon: The Story of a Pioneer American*, titled "A Rank Injustice," Joseph Cannon relates the tale of his father, Dr. Horace Cannon, and his struggles on behalf of a group of newly freed slaves sometime in the mid-1840s.¹ A family in the

¹ L. White Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon: The Story of a Pioneer American*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), 50-62. This book was intended to be Cannon's autobiography as told to his personal secretary, L. White Busbey. Cannon died in 1926 before it was complete. The summary of the story of Horace Cannon and the newly freed slaves is taken from this work.

Quaker community at Bloomfield, Indiana, received news that a relative had died. The letter they received informed them that they were now heirs to an Alabama plantation and about fifty enslaved human beings. Joseph Cannon identifies this family simply by the last name of "Woodward."

The family, being good Quakers, took the news of their inheritance to the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting to get advice as to what to do from their fellow Quakers. After discussion in several committees including both the women and men's committees, they passed a joint resolution and decided that the plantation must be liquidated and the human property brought north to freedom. They decided to use the money from the sale of the plantation to buy small farms for the former slaves in Parke County. Horace Cannon quickly volunteered to manage the task and, after acquiring the proper legal documents, headed south to Alabama. After selling the plantation, Cannon packed up the slaves and traveled north.

On the last leg of the journey he placed his human cargo on two steamboats and traveled up the Wabash River to Montezuma, in Parke County. In Montezuma, his plans were

to disembark the steamboats and march the former slaves approximately five miles to Bloomfield. Unfortunately, he met a hostile crowd who refused to allow the freeman to leave the boat. Taking a pistol handed to him by the captain of one of the boats, Dr. Cannon took his place at the head of one of the gang planks and marched the freeman off the boat. While doing so, he warned the gathered crowd that he would not be responsible for what happened if anyone tried to stop him. According to Joe Cannon, the crowd parted, perhaps stunned by the sight of a Quaker with a gun, and the freemen departed.² Cannon argued that his father would not have used the gun in his own defense but would not have hesitated to use it in protection of those in his care and in defense of what he thought was right.

Joseph Cannon describes the freemen as "a high type of American Negro" with skilled trades such as masonry, carpentry, tailoring, and blacksmithing.³ Upon their arrival in Bloomfield and Annapolis, the freemen established small farms, where they quickly started new lives. Joseph Cannon continued his narration: "I doubt if

² Busbey, 53.

³ Ibid., 54.

there ever was a more prosperous Negro settlement made by manumitted slaves."⁴

However, there were those in the community who did not welcome the newcomers and did not like those who had brought them into the state. According to Cannon, "The cry was raised by *Democrats* that the bringing of Negroes in to the Quaker settlement endangered the peace and safety of the County and those who brought them should be prosecuted if a law could be found to reach them."⁵[Emphasis added]

Cannon's enemies found that Dr. Cannon had not paid the required bond of \$500 dollars for each person when he entered that state with the freed people as required in the 1831 Indiana Black Law. Those who objected to their arrival used the law to punish that "damned abolitionist Cannon" by prosecuting him for breaking the law. According to Joseph Cannon, his father was solely responsible for bringing the slaves into the state and therefore was the only one prosecuted. According to the story, he was convicted and heavily fined refusing the aid of his fellow Quakers and political friends who offered to help him pay

⁴ Busbey, 54.

⁵ Ibid., 55-56.

the judgment against him. Instead, he refused to pay the fine, forcing the local sheriff to take out the penalty against him in livestock and other produce from his farm. The fine was a heavy and unjust punishment that, according to Cannon, his father bore with classic Quaker stoicism. All of this played out despite a brilliant defense by a Terre Haute attorney named Thomas N. Nelson, who pointed out that the black barber that the judge had used on the morning of the trial also had not posted his bond. The judge, therefore, as well as many members of the jury who also had used the services of the local black barber, was just as guilty under the law.

This was the way Joseph Cannon, a boy of twelve when these events occurred remembered what happened to his father many years later. To him his father was a martyr to the cause of freedom and human dignity. The lessons a young Joe Cannon took away from the event would shape him for the rest of his life, including his role as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

Unfortunately for Joe Cannon and the some local historians who used his memories of the trials and tribulations of his father to write a history of the event,

his memory was faulty. Evidence shows there are many significant omissions in the story that reveal much about the political terrain and racialized landscape of Indiana.

One of the largest omissions from the story is the fact that Dr. Cannon was not the only person indicted and tried for the crime of employing freemen who had not paid their bond. Another significant point not made clear in the Joseph Cannon narrative is that the freemen who are mentioned in the indictments were for the most part established blacks already living in the community, not newly freed slaves. Perhaps the coming of the "50 or so" former slaves was the trigger for the retaliation against those who brought them, but they were clearly not the focus of the prosecutions. Lastly, it is important to note that the punishment placed on Dr. Cannon, and others, was not heavy or especially difficult to pay. Part of the drama over the extraction of the fine on Dr. Cannon was of his making. He desired to make a point against what he felt was an unjust law.

It also should be noted here that there are a number of facts and tantalizing clues in Joe Cannon's version of the story that seem to ring true. There is evidence of the

arrival of some formerly enslaved Americans from Alabama in the mid-1840s, although the exact number is unclear. There is also a strong connection to a family named Woodard, although it is spelled differently in Cannon's story. In addition, Joseph Cannon's comment that the prosecution of was motivated as much by a desire to punish him for bringing blacks into the community as it was to enforce the law is certainly reflective of other legal cases in Indiana. It is also apparent from the evidence that, although only white men were indicted for the crime of "harboring Negroes," the true target of the prosecution was the freemen themselves. To better to understand the events we are exploring, it is important to be aware of some background on Parke County, where the trials took place.

Parke County is located in the far western portion of Indiana near the center of the state. Created by the Indiana State Legislature in 1821, the county was named after Benjamin Parke, a prominent territorial judge and slave owner living in Vincennes, Indiana.⁶ (See figure 7) The county seat was established at the city of Rockville. The relatively inexpensive land and access to

⁶ Judge Parke was responsible for rewriting Indiana's fugitive slave law which ended the fugitive's right to trial by jury.

transportation brought many families to settle the area. Settlers were mostly northerners from Ohio and Pennsylvania and southerners from Kentucky and the Carolinas. Quakers, under the leadership of Adam Siler, established a presence in the County in 1825.⁷ The majority of Quakers settling in Parke County during the 1830s and 1840s were from the Quaker communities of North Carolina, especially Guilford and Wayne Counties.

During the 1840s, Parke County was undergoing considerable change. Like the rest of Indiana, the county was suffering from a financial crisis brought on by poor economic times combined with the state's overspending on internal improvements. One such improvement was the long anticipated Wabash and Erie Canal, which was designed to pass through Parke County. The Canal promised easy access to new markets for the farmers of Parke and other Indiana Counties, but with it came new and unwelcomed faces-rough and unruly men who came to dig the canal.

Particularly in Parke County, change also meant a sizable influx of freemen. In 1830, the United States census reported that there were sixteen African Americans

⁷ H. W. Beckwith, *History of Vigo and Parke Counties*, 1880, reprint, (Rockville: the Parke County Historical Society, 2005), 282.

living in Parke County. By 1840 that number had risen to sixty-three and by 1850, the population had risen to two hundred and twenty-eight.⁸ There are many reasons why Parke County was a popular destination for freemen. The same landscape features that attracted white settlers-inexpensive and fertile land and good access to roads and rivers-also attracted blacks. The Quaker settlement in the county was also a strong reason for freemen to settle in the area and Quakers migrating to the area often brought blacks with them to the settlement. In addition to all this, a large African American settlement already existed in Vigo County, located directly south of Parke County. The black population on Vigo County in 1840 was 425 and 748 in 1850.⁹ It was older and larger than the black community in Parke and contained a number of the same surnames, including Bass, Artis, and Ellis, of people who would later settle in Parke County. Perhaps these people were relatives

⁸University of Virginia Historical Census Browser, accessed 1 June, 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

of the Parke County freemen, suggesting an added incentive to migrate to the area.¹⁰

In the mid-1840s Indiana was experiencing considerable political change, not the least of which was the election of James Whitcomb in 1843 as the first Democrat elected as governor, an office which here to fore dominated by Whigs.¹¹ His election was a sign of a major political shift in the state as the power of the Whig Party declined. The power base for the Democratic Party in Indiana at the time was comprised of farmers and merchants who had migrated to the state from the south. The Whigs, on the other hand, drew the bulk of their support from people who had emigrated from northern states.¹² Voters blamed the Whigs for the economic woes of the state, and Democrats took full advantage. The rise of the Democrats to power and the steady decline of the Whigs in the state meant a change in political patronage and the replacement of many political

¹⁰ Although it is outside the purview of this study, evidence suggests that the free blacks living in the Vigo and Parke County settlements may have had familial ties, even if the settlements took place a generation or two apart. This brings up many intriguing questions about the nature of black settlement in the antebellum North.

¹¹ Esarey, *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1850*, 470.

¹² Nicole Etcheson, *The Southern Influence on Midwestern Political Culture: Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois from Frontier to Disunion*, Unpublished dissertation, Indiana University, 1991, 361-367.

appointees. It also opened the door for more Democrats in traditionally Whig-held offices such as state prosecutors and circuit judgeships.

It is not surprising that local politics reflected the conflicts between the two political parties. On a state level the important issues of the 1840s were internal improvements, state debts, tariffs, and a state-chartered bank, as well as national issues such as annexation of Texas, War with Mexico, and the ever-building tension over slavery.¹³ At the local level, where the larger issues had less importance, the conflicts often dealt with more tangible issues such as the migration of people of color. Blacks were an easy target. They were a minority with no political power, and neither party wanted to be seen as their champion. In places like Parke County, political tensions manifested themselves in the trials involving Dr. Cannon and others. As noted by Joseph Cannon, it was members of the Democratic Party who raised complaints against his father.¹⁴ The Whigs of the County, and indeed the state, seemed to be more tolerant of the newcomers.

¹³ Esarey, *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1850*, 478.

¹⁴ Busbey, 55-56.

While the Whigs could be just as racist as the Democrats, they seemed more willing to let the freeman make their own way in the state.

Parke County in the mid-nineteenth century was largely a Whig County. The only surviving newspaper from the period is the *Parke County Whig*, which became *The True Republican* in the mid-1850s. The newspaper carried extensive discussions about the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the trial of a freeman accused of being a runaway slave in Indianapolis, but little about local freemen.¹⁵ One exception was the report of a black man stealing the horse of a local official.¹⁶ This was just one of the clues that provide insight into the mindset of the people of Parke County.

There are other clues that indicate the mindset of Parke County citizens during the 1830s and 1840s available in local archives. In the early months of 1838, the Rockville Debating Society met to debate two important issues. The first debate that took place that year was to decide which was a greater evil in America, intemperance or

¹⁵ Freeman vs Ellington, *The Parke County Whig*, Feb 10, 1854, 1.

¹⁶ "Horse Thief in Limbo," *The True Republican*, Sept. 20, 1855, 1.

slavery. After a heated debate, it was decided that slavery was the greater evil but by only one vote of the members.¹⁷ A month later the group asked itself the question whether the "aborigines of America" had more right to the soil than white Americans.¹⁸ The debating society voted overwhelmingly against the rights of the Native Americans. Like the rest of the nation, the community clearly had strong opinions over issues of race.

The Quakers of Parke County were similarly divided on the place for and the rights of the freeman in their community. Some members of the Quaker meeting in Bloomfield actively sought to aid free blacks and bring them to Parke County; others were not so supportive. In 1836, the Quaker Monthly Meeting appointed Alfred Hadley, Jeremiah Siler and Timothy Johnson to find a way to help some "people of color" leave Virginia. The enslaved Americans were the property of Pleasant Winston, who wished to see them free. The members of the Freedman's Aid Committee decided they would seek power of attorney from

¹⁷ Minutes of the Rockville Debating Society, 1838, *History of Parke County Organizations*, gift of Sam Swope, Rockville Public Library, Local History Collection, Rockville, Indiana, 270.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 276

Winston, which would allow them to bring the slaves to freedom in Indiana.¹⁹ It is not know if the effort was successful. A few years later, in September of 1840, the committee lamented over their inability to liberate a similar group of enslaved Americans in North Carolina.²⁰

At almost the same time, the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting disowned Ezekial Bishop, a Quaker man living near Honey Creek, for engaging in the "sale of some colored people into slavery." A committee sent to discuss the matter with him found him unrepentant and recommended his removal from the church. James and Jeremiah Siler informed him the Quaker Church had disowned him.²¹

Whether freemen, slave, or Quaker, anyone new to the Parke County community found a society divided over race, religion and politics much like the rest of the nation. It is within this conflicted landscape that our story takes place.

¹⁹ *Minutes of the Bloomfield Freedman's Aid Committee, February 1836 -February 1837*, Friends Collection, Earlham College Library, Richmond, Indiana.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1840.

²¹ *Men's Bloomingdale (Bloomfield) Monthly Meeting Record, Volume II, 1837-1847*, February - March, 1841.

The Story as Revealed by the Evidence

In the late fall of 1842 Dr. Horace Cannon and his family arrived in Bloomfield, Parke County, Indiana, and were admitted to membership in the Quaker Meeting.²² Cannon had left the New Garden Monthly Meeting in Guilford County, North Carolina, in 1840, stopping briefly at the Westfield Monthly Meeting in Surry County, North Carolina, perhaps for the birth of his son, William, born September 18, 1841.²³

Born in 1806, Horace Cannon was adopted by a Quaker family after the death of his parents. He did not formally join the Quaker Church until 1831, when he married Guliema Hollingsworth.²⁴ At New Garden, North Carolina, Cannon was immediately given positions of authority, including headmaster at the Quaker school, keeper of the Quaker's library, and member of various committees, including the Meeting of Sufferings. He studied medicine from books and

²² Minutes of the Bloomfield Women's Monthly Meeting, 1840-1845, November 11, 1842, unpublished, Friends Collection, Earlham College Library, Richmond, Indiana.

²³ Dorothy Lloyd Gilbert, "Joe Cannon's Carolina Background," *North Carolina Historical Review*, October 1946, 471.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 472-473.

eventually earned a diploma to practice medicine from the Cincinnati Medical College.²⁵

The arrival of Dr. Cannon could not have come at a better time for Parke County residents. In the two years prior to the doctor's arrival, the small community suffered from consecutive years of epidemic illness. Before the epidemics, the death rate in the county averaged between eight and ten individuals a year. The cause of most deaths was old age, farm accidents and a variety of illnesses. In the years 1841 and 1842 the number of deaths more than doubled, with whooping cough and "fevers" being the main culprits. After Cannon's arrival in late 1842, the death rate returned to the levels seen before 1841.²⁶ Another thing that is notable about the arrival of Dr. Cannon is that the causes of death mentioned in the Quaker record books became more specific, with the names of diseases listed and not just terms like "fits" or "fevers." This is evidence of a better educated physician working in the community.

²⁵ Busbey, 46.

²⁶ Information on death in the Quaker Community taken from *Bloomfield Preparative Meeting Record of Internments, 1827-1928*, and the *Bloomfield Monthly Meeting Record of Births and Deaths from 1766*. Friends Collection, Earlham College Library, Richmond, Indiana.

Within the Quaker church in Bloomfield, Dr. Cannon and his wife quickly assumed important positions. Guliema Cannon served on the local Committee of Sufferings, and Dr. Cannon was given a leadership role in the development of a new Quaker school. In 1844 Dr. Cannon played a central role in settling a dispute within the Siler family over the settlement of the estate of Jeremiah Siler-an extremely important task considering the important members of the community who were involved.²⁷ By the mid-1840s, Dr. Cannon had clearly emerged as an important member of the community.

Notice of the Woodard inheritance of the Alabama Plantation probably arrived sometime in the summer or early fall of 1845.²⁸ The Woodard mentioned in the Joseph Cannon narrative was Thomas Woodard, patriarch of the Woodard family in Parke County. Born in 1793, Thomas Woodard and his family migrated from Wayne County, North Carolina, to

²⁷ *Bloomfield Monthly Meeting Minutes*, 1837-1847, November 30, 1844.

²⁸ John T. Campbell, *The Rockville Republican*, January 13, 1909, Reprinted by historian Charles Davis in "Annapolis and its Wabash and Erie Canal Connections", published in *The Hoosier Packet*, November 2003, 6-13.

Parke County in 1833. It appears that he arrived with his brothers Zachariah, Silas and William.²⁹

Thomas Woodard married Zilpha Cook in 1815 and was immediately disowned by the Quaker Monthly Meeting in Wayne County because Zilpha brought thirteen slaves into the marriage. Zilpha was likely a relative, maybe even a sister, of Nathan Cook, who was disowned the same year by the Contentnea Monthly Meeting for dealing in slaves.³⁰ The evidence suggests that a relative of Zilpha's, perhaps even Nathan Cook himself, left North Carolina and took his slaves to Alabama to establish a plantation there. This is the most likely explanation of how Thomas Woodard and his family would eventually inherit the plantation and its human property.

After Zilpha died in 1827, Thomas married Sarah Mayo in the following year while still living in Wayne County, North Carolina. According to family folklore, Thomas migrated to Indiana and brought the slaves with him in order to free them. When the Woodards and their slaves

²⁹ Willard Heiss, ed. *Abstracts of the Records of the Society of Friends*, Part 5 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 266.

³⁰ Personal Correspondence with Gwen Gosney Erickson, Librarian and Archivist, Friends Historical Collections, Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina, September 18, 2008. Coorespondence in the collection of the author.

attempted to cross the Wabash River into Indiana local authorities stopped and prevented them from proceeding further. This may be because Thomas failed to post bond for each person of color he was bringing into the State in compliance with the 1831 Black Law. Thomas obtained a lawyer and went to court to free the slaves at considerable expense to himself. After freeing his slaves he continued on and settled in Parke County, where he was living when he received word of the inheritance.³¹

According to Joseph Cannon's narrative, Woodard took notice of his family's inheritance to the Quaker Meeting, where they developed a formal plan of action and passed it as a resolution.³² Unfortunately no record as described by Cannon has ever been found in the Bloomfield Quaker Monthly Meeting records. Perhaps this is because the small community was divided as to what to do, and therefore no

³¹ Woodard Family story provided by Frances Kennedy Fink of Hutchison Kansas, date unknown, accessed at Ancestry.com, Thomas Woodard family tree found at <http://trees.ancestry.com>, accessed on 17 April 2009. This court case could not be found in any of the counties surrounding Parke County with access to the Wabash River. It is possible that the trial took place in Vigo County where the Woodard slaves may have remained after being freed. It is also a possible explanation why the Lost Creek Settlement in Vigo County and the black settlement in Parke County have some of the same surnames although they were founded at different times.

³² Busbey, 51.

formal action could be taken. If this was true, then the action to sell the plantation and bring its human property to Indiana was the work of a few individuals, not a sanctioned action of the church. This would be similar to the operations of the Underground Railroad in Parke County and other locations run by Quakers. The Quaker Church did not sanction the Underground Railroad, but practicing Quakers nonetheless engaged in it.

In the minutes of the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting, there is a tantalizing clue that provides insight into what was going on within the church at that time. In August of 1845, about the time of the notification of the Woodard inheritance, the minutes of the Monthly Meeting recorded the annual Quaker Query. Eight of the nine answers to the questions were routine, giving positive responses to local efforts regarding education, temperance and relations between fellow Quakers. The answer to the question on slavery contained a curious comment. The response read in part: *"Most friends appear to be careful to bear a testimony against Slavery; yet there appears to be some amongst us that are somewhat prejudice against the African,*

on account of which some care has been extended. . ."³³

[Emphasis added]

There are two significant parts of this record worth noting. First, the use of the word "Most" instead of starting the sentence with the traditional "Friends," indicates that support for the testimony against slavery was not universal within the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting. Second, the admission that some Quakers living in the community were "somewhat prejudice[d]" against people of color was a significant statement. It was a powerful confession that there was disharmony in the church over the vision of freemen in the community. This could explain why a formal resolution as to what to do about the Woodard legacy is not found in the record. Perhaps even in the Quaker church, welcoming one or two freemen into the community was acceptable, but a whole scale invasion of "50 or so" was intolerable, even for Quakers.

On April tenth of 1845 Dr. Cannon buried his only daughter, Sarah, in the Quaker Cemetery in Bloomfield. She had died of a fever he could neither prevent nor cure. Perhaps the death of his baby daughter affected him in such

³³ Bloomfield Monthly Meeting Minutes, August 6, 1845. Friends Collection, Lilly Library, Earlham Collage, Richmond, Indiana.

a way that encouraged him to take a leadership role in the helping of the Alabama slaves when the opportunity arose. That October, Dr. Cannon prepared his will in the parlor of his home in Annapolis, perhaps in anticipation of his journey to Alabama. Two of his best friends, Alfred Hadley and Jeremiah Kemp, witnessed the document.³⁴ Jeremiah Kemp and Alfred Hadley were strong abolitionists, active participants of the Underground Railroad.³⁵ They would have logically been a part of any Quaker action on behalf of the slaves of Alabama. Hadley was also the older brother of Washington Hadley, who would later be indicted with Cannon for "Harboring Negroes." Cannon named William Maris, an Annapolis merchant and Nathan Pickett, a local farmer, as executors of his estate. Both men were from North Carolina.³⁶

The writing of a will would have been a logical step in the preparation of a journey that Dr. Cannon and his

³⁴ Last Will and Testament of Horace Cannon, *Common Pleas Complete Record book* Vol. 3, 421.

³⁵ *Underground Railroad: The Invisible Road to Freedom through Indiana* as recorded by the Works Progress Administration, reprinted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 2000, page 191. There is a monument to the Underground Railroad activities of Alfred Hadley and his wife Rhoda located off US Highway 41 near Bloomingdale, Indiana.

³⁶ United States Census for District 85, Parke County, Indiana, page 125.

companions were anticipating. Even in the mid-1840s, travel in much of America outside large cities was difficult. The newly settled lands of the South did not have good roads, canals or even railroads that travelers in the North were accustomed to. In addition, Cannon and those traveling with him needed legal documents from members of the Woodard family and enough money to finance the project. It is also likely that Cannon did not take this trip alone, as described by his son in his autobiography. It would have been too difficult for one person; therefore he likely had companions help during this trip. A clue to who might have gone with him may be found in the court cases discussed later in this chapter.

Based on several sources of evidence, it appears that Dr. Cannon and his party headed south in very late 1845 or early 1846.³⁷ The real challenge facing Cannon and the others was bringing the enslaved people out of Alabama to Indiana. If traveling with "50 or so" individuals who needed to be fed and rested during the long journey was not

³⁷ Cannon is not mentioned in the Bloomfield Monthly Meeting Minutes between December of 1845 and August of 1846, where he and others are appointed to a committee to acquire land for a new school. This may be explained by his trip south.

difficult enough, the poor travel conditions would have made it much worse. In the mid-1840s Alabama only had two small railroads. A short line, the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, ran between Decatur and Tuscumbia, a distance of approximately forty miles.³⁸ The other railroad was another short line, the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, running from Montgomery to Opelika, a distance of about sixty miles.³⁹ Neither route would have been helpful to Cannon as he attempted to bring the slaves north.

The mostly likely place for the plantation would have been in the section of Alabama known as the "black belt," a region of dark, fertile soil that runs through the middle of both Alabama and Mississippi and into Georgia. Because of the value of this land to grow crops, it became a segment of the South known for large plantations and an equally large slave population. A likely location for the plantation may have been Lowndes County. The 1840 census records a Nathan Cook owning thirty-nine slaves in the

³⁸ John R. Stover, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of American Railroads* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 15 and *Travelers Official Railway Guide of the United States and Canada*, 1868, reprint (London: Routledge, 1999), 221.

³⁹ *Travelers Official Guide*, 256.

county, but courthouse records for the period are lost to researchers.⁴⁰

If the plantation was located in this segment of Alabama, the likely route home to Indiana would have been south to Mobile, Alabama. From there they would have purchased passage on ship to New Orleans then taken a steamboat up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to the mouth of the Wabash River. This stop may have been at Shawneetown, Illinois, the largest port city in the area on the Ohio River.⁴¹ From here it is possible that the party chartered two smaller steamboats to bring them up the Wabash River to Montezuma, Indiana. The Wabash River is smaller and shallower than the Ohio or the Mississippi Rivers and therefore required smaller boats. Joseph Cannon describes how his father and the former slaves arrived in Montezuma, Parke County, Indiana, on two steam boats.⁴² Depending on how long it took Dr. Cannon and

⁴⁰ United States Census for 1840 Lowndes County Alabama, 239.

⁴¹ Shawneetown is now called "Old Shawneetown" and is the site of the Shawneetown Bank State Historic Site in Illinois.

⁴² Busbey, 53.

others to settle the estate, they probably arrived back in Parke County sometime in the spring or summer of 1846.

Members of the Quaker community as well as non-Quakers stepped forward to help the newcomers. The 1850 census shows a number of white families living next door to freemen. In some cases the freemen were living in the homes or on the farms of their white hosts, perhaps employed as farm hands.⁴³ Occupations of freemen listed in the census include carpenter, farmer, laborer, tailor, and laundress.

Although some welcomed the new free people, clearly not all people living in Parke County felt the same way. Political pressure was beginning to build in the small community for something to be done about the influx of blacks and to discourage those who were giving them aid. The opponents of the freemen had the 1831 Black Law on their side; all they needed was someone willing to enforce it.

Fortunately for them they did not have to wait long. That someone they had been waiting for came in the form of a twenty-two year old Indiana State Prosecutor named James

⁴³ United States Census for district 85 Parke County Indiana, 1850.

Cameron Allen. Allen replaced James M. Hanna, who had left the position to run for the office of State Representative for the district in the election of 1847. Allen took office on December 12, 1846.⁴⁴ At the time he was a practicing attorney in Sullivan County, southwest of Parke County.

It is not known why Hanna, also a Democrat, chose not to prosecute the freemen or their supporters. Perhaps a clue can be found in his background. James McLean Hanna was born in Franklin County, Indiana, and was part of a active political family. Two of his uncles and his father served in the Indiana House of Representatives and his Uncle Robert was a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention of 1816.⁴⁵ His father, David Graem Hanna, was a War of 1812 veteran who came to Indiana from South Carolina during the State's territorial period. The entire Hanna family did not own slaves or black servants in Indiana. James Hanna's family ties as well as his own background were strongly tied to Indiana. This may have given him

⁴⁴ Correspondence with Charles Davis, local historian, Parke County, Indiana. Correspondence in the collection of the author, January 30, 2009.

⁴⁵ Biography of James M. Hanna found at <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/hanna.html#RM516QE0S>, accessed on June 20, 2009.

antislavery leanings, which explains why he did not prosecute persons for 'harboring Negroes.'

James Allen's background was quite different. Born in 1825 near Shelbyville, Kentucky, Allen migrated with his family to Parke County at the age of eight. His father, Benjamin Allen, had migrated from Virginia as an orphaned boy of sixteen with nothing to his name but the blacksmith tools he carried with him on his horse.⁴⁶ Benjamin Allen struggled to establish himself as a blacksmith in Shelby County, Kentucky, on the north side of the main road between Frankfort and Louisville.⁴⁷ As a blacksmith, Allen would have had competition from both slaves and freemen plying the same trade. Likely making matters worse, the 1830 census indicates that Allen had a large family of eight children to support, six of whom were girls. He also owned a female slave between twenty-four and thirty-six years old. Her role may have been to care for a sick Mrs. Allen and the six girls.

Sometime after 1830 Benjamin Allen migrated to Parke County and took up farming. Strangely the 1840, census

⁴⁶ William Henry Perrin, *History of Crawford and Clark Counties, Illinois*, 56-57.

⁴⁷ United States Census for Shelby County, Kentucky, 1830, 277.

shows a greatly reduced family of only three members.⁴⁸ A biographical sketch of James C. Allen found in the *Biographical and Reminiscent History of Richland, Clay, and Marion Counties, Illinois*, states that Allen's mother died in 1832 and that James was away at school in 1840.⁴⁹ However, this does not explain what happened to Allen's five sisters, all younger than him. If the children had died in Kentucky, this may be a possible reason why the family left.

Whatever the reason, James Allen seemed to bring with him a strongly southern view of the role of blacks in the United States. This view would be reflected not only in his actions as a State's Prosecutor in Indiana, but in his later career as a powerful Illinois politician. Allen's attacks on the Parke County freed people and their supporters began almost as soon as he took office. As a prosecutor, young James Allen planned his assault with precision, but as a politician his plans were a disaster.

⁴⁸ United States Census for Parke County, Indiana, 1840, 191.

⁴⁹*Biographical and Reminiscent History of Richland, Clay, and Marion Counties, Illinois* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1909), 84-85.

The office of State's Prosecutor in mid-1840s Indiana did not include the role of investigator. Instead, a grand jury investigated an accused individual who was not arrested for a crime by a sheriff or other similar public official. A prosecutor would empanel a grand jury to hear testimony in regard to the guilt or innocence of an accused person. If the jury decided that there was enough evidence for the case to proceed to trial, the prosecutor would then issue a warrant for the arrest of the accused. In mid-nineteenth century Indiana, individuals or groups of individuals could bring their complaints to a prosecutor and, depending on the merit of the case and the political clout of the accuser, a grand jury would be empanelled.

A good example of this procedure was used on Levi Coffin mentioned earlier in this work. In the Coffin case, the famous abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor, the prosecutor seemed to be overtly supportive of the defendant. The indictment of Coffin occurred soon after one of his most famous and celebrated fugitive slave adventures. Coffin and his Newport, Indiana, allies had helped a group of seventeen fugitive slaves who had escaped from Kentucky. A community of supportive abolitionists

surrounded Coffin, who carried out his Underground Railroad operation in the open. The slave catchers, frustrated in their attempts to recapture the slaves, ended their day at a local inn and tavern. The man who owned the tavern, identified by Coffin only as "LB," was "sympathetic" to the slavery cause.⁵⁰

Weeks after this particular fugitive slave incident, Coffin appeared before a grand jury in Centerville, the county seat of Wayne County, Indiana. He was being investigated by a grand jury, charged with the crime of helping fugitive slaves in violation of Indiana's 1831 law. It was clear to Coffin, as he was called before the jury, that the tavern owner "LB" had gotten the district prosecutor to press the case against him. In addition, "LB" had used his political influence to have himself put on the jury, further insuring that the investigation would go his way. One can easily imagine a conversation between the slave owner and the tavern keeper where "LB" offered, or was encouraged to bring a prosecution against, Coffin and his allies.

⁵⁰ Richmond, *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 124-126.

The Kentucky slave owner would not have the local political clout to encourage the local state prosecutor to bring the case forward. "LB" as a local business owner would certainly have that influence. The indictment of Coffin and his supporters would have done nothing to advance the returning the Kentucky slave owner his human property. Instead, the prosecution was likely meant to intimidate Coffin in the hopes that he would think twice before he continued his Underground Railroad activities. To Coffin it must have seemed clear that the summons before the grand jury was an opportunity for those who opposed his work to get even.

One other thing was also clear to Coffin upon his arrival at the courthouse; the prosecutor had packed the jury with friends of Coffin, who knew immediately that an indictment on the crime of "harboring negroes" would be very unlikely. It is not known why the State's prosecutor packed the grand jury with supporters of Coffin; however, it is likely that the prosecutor's actions were politically motivated. Coffin, like many of his supporters, were powerful business people, and Wayne County, Indiana, was heavily populated with abolitionist-leaning Quakers. The

prosecutor must have known that vigorously prosecuting a case for the sole purpose of harassing a man who represented a large segment of his community would have been politically unwise, especially if he wanted to be reelected to his office. He may have felt pressured by "LB" and others to bring the case before the grand jury, but he saw to it that it went no further.

At the grand jury hearing, the prosecutor asked a few softball questions of Coffin then turned the questioning over to the jury foreman, "LB." "LB" quickly took the initiative and attacked Coffin. Bolstered by the fact he had a "friendly" audience, Coffin quickly turned the tables on his interrogator. When "LB" asked if indeed he had given food, shelter and comfort to a group of runaways, Coffin answered that his Bible told him to help those in need, and then asked if "LB's" Bible said the same thing. "LB" responded that his did and further asked if Coffin knew that these people were fugitive slaves. Coffin's response was that they had told him so, but since Indiana law stated that a black man's word is not good in court, he did not believe them. Further questioning by the jury

foreman only further undermined "LB's" case, and he finally gave up in frustration.⁵¹ Coffin was never indicted.

In the Coffin case, the prosecutor had considerable power to move the case forward or stop it dead, depending on who he decided was on the jury. The prosecutor in the Coffin case packed the jury with abolitionists and friends of Coffin. In Parke County, Allen, on the other hand, seems to have populated his jury with those who would give him the indictments he wanted.

As a rule of law, grand jury records are sealed and not open to the public even more than 160 years later. Therefore, the names of the jurors are not known. However a piece of tantalizing evidence to at least part of the makeup of the jury is found in the public files of the Parke County Clerk of Courts. Every term of the court, the sheriff's office was required to turn in an accounting of the expenditures of the court. One of the responsibilities of the sheriff's office was to pay the expenses of any juror who had to travel more than a given distance to the courthouse. In the records of the April 1847 term of the court, there is a partial list of grand jurors who were

⁵¹ Richmond, *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*, 129.

paid by the sheriff's office. From this list we can deduce some of the individuals who were on the jury that indicted those who had "harbored Negroes" in violation of the 1831 Black Law.

The hand-written document lists four names connected to the grand jury with a list of costs approved by Sheriff Houghman.⁵² The names are Robert Gilkison, Phillip Day, Josh L. Boyer and Joseph Hendriss. Robert Gilkison was a 41 year-old physician living in Helt Township in Vermillion County.⁵³ The 1850 census indicates that he was born in Virginia and his wife was born in Tennessee.⁵⁴ Records show that Gilkison moved around the area frequently but ended up in Montezuma, Parke County, Indiana, in 1860 where he helped found the Masonic Lodge.⁵⁵

There are many factors that may have influenced Dr. Gilkison as he sat on the grand jury. His southern roots may have given him a particular view of freemen that was

⁵² Sheriff's Bailiff Account Record for April Term, 1847. Found among case files for 1847-1848, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana. Copy of the document can be found among the illustrations in the appendix.

⁵³ The name is often spelled Gilkeson.

⁵⁴ United States Census for Helt Township, Vermillion County, Indiana, 1850, 23.

⁵⁵ History of Parke County, 176.

different from the ones held by the Quakers. Since he was also a physician, a rivalry with Dr. Cannon cannot be ruled out. If such a rivalry existed, it could be rooted in the fact that Cannon never attended medical school and received his diploma by mail. Lastly it cannot be ignored that Dr. Gilkison was a Mason, a secret fraternal organization condemned by Quakers.

Phillip Day was a successful farmer from North Carolina. In 1850 he lived in District 85 of Parke County which included both Bloomfield and Annapolis.⁵⁶ In 1860 he was wealthy enough to have moved his family residence to the county seat of Rockville while maintaining a farm in the county.⁵⁷ Like Dr. Gilkison, Day's background was from the South, which may have influenced his perceptions of freed people. In addition, at the time of the trials he lived in the area where the majority of the African Americans had settled, which may have affected his actions.

No record of Josh L. Boyer or Joseph Hendriss could be found; however, there is a Hendriss or Hendrix family from Kentucky. It is possible that sheriff Houghman may have

⁵⁶ United States Census for Parke County, 1850, 275.

⁵⁷ United States Census for Parke County, 1860, 210.

spelled the names incorrectly. There are some families in the area with similar sounding names. The most likely is J. Hendrix from Kentucky and John Boyer of Virginia; however, further evidence is needed to form a strong conclusion. At least two of the four men mentioned in the document have strong southern ties. This may had been the reason Allen placed them on the jury to begin with.

The Grand Jury gave prosecutor James Allen what he needed to proceed. In total, the grand jury gave him seven indictments, six for those accused of "harboring negroes" and one for official negligence related to the "harboring negroes" charges. The six accused of harboring were Dr. Horace Cannon, James Siler, George K. Steele, William B. Morris, Washington Hadley and Albert Coffin. Cyrus Garrigus, a public official, was indicted for public negligence for his failure to collect the bonds required of the Parke County freemen as written in the 1831 law.

All six of the indicted individuals were men of influence and standing in the community. James Siler was a charter member of the Bloomfield Quaker Church, which was started in the home of his father, Adam Siler.⁵⁸ At the

⁵⁸ *History of Parke County, Indiana, 1880, 282.*

time of the indictments, April of 1847, James Siler was a wealthy farmer with considerable clout in the Quaker Church. The grand jury indicted him for harboring, or giving employment to "Bass, a negro," which was probably Henry or Zachariah Bass, both of whom were living next door to the Siler Farm. The Bass family had migrated to Parke County from North Carolina, where they had lived as freemen for generations.

George K. Steele may have been the richest man in the county at the time of the trials. The 1850 census noted that he had a farm worth more than \$10,000 dollars.⁵⁹ He is also listed in the county history as a business owner and banker as well as being active in politics.⁶⁰ In 1860 and 1868 he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention from Indiana.⁶¹ In 1874 his picture was on the title page of the Atlas Map of Parke County, indicating that he was a man of stature in the community.⁶² Steele was indicted for employing Rachel Laws, whom he likely employed

⁵⁹ United States Census for Parke, County Indiana, 1850.

⁶⁰ *History of Parke County Indiana, 1880*, 72.

⁶¹ PoliticalGraveyard.com/bio/steele.html, accessed on 22, June, 2009.

⁶² A. T. Andreas, *Atlas of Parke County Indiana*, Chicago, 1874. See figure 5.

as a domestic. Unfortunately nothing more can be gathered about Rachel Laws from the available record.

The historical record tells us that William Morris was a successful merchant and farmer. He was also a member of a very large Quaker family and his brother was a conductor on the Underground Railroad; indicting him certainly would send a message to the whole community. The grand jury indicted Morris for harboring a freeman by the name of Jordan. This was probably Jordan Woodard, who seems to have left Parke County soon after the indictments were issued. He would later play a significant role in an important event in Indiana history.

Albert Coffin was also from a significant Quaker family and a distant cousin to legendary abolitionist Levi Coffin. He arrived in the Quaker community with a brother and cousin, Vestal and Addison Coffin, in April of 1845.⁶³ The Quaker Church disowned Albert in December of that same year for marrying a non-Quaker, celebrating that marriage in an un-Quaker like manner and joining the Freemasons.⁶⁴ According to Addison Coffin, his brother Albert had been

⁶³ Abstracts of the Quaker Monthly Meeting Records, 238.

⁶⁴ Bloomfield Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1837-1847, December 10, 1845.

active in Underground Railroad activities in North Carolina and Whig politics in Indiana.⁶⁵ Coffin was accused of harboring a young freeman named Henderson Curry.

The grand jury indicted Dr. Cannon for giving work to "a negro man Ephraim," probably Ephraim Cook. Cannon hired Cook to work on his farm just outside Annapolis. Ephraim Cook was possibly one of the original slaves of the Cook family in North Carolina. According to the 1850 census he was living with Dinah Cook, possibly his mother, who was age seventy, and born in North Carolina. He was also living with his wife Maria and five children; all but the youngest two children were born in Alabama.⁶⁶

The file containing the indictment against Washington Hadley has disappeared from the public record. We know that it existed because there are references to the indictment in the records of the Parke County Clerk of Courts. Unfortunately, these records do not mention who Hadley was charged with harboring. In the existing records, Hadley and Cannon are usually listed under the

⁶⁵ Addison Coffin, *The life and Travels of Addison Coffin*, 108.

⁶⁶ United States Census for Parke County, Indiana, 1850, 332.

same indictment.⁶⁷ This may have been because Hadley played an equal part to Cannon in transporting the Alabama enslaved people to Indiana. This may also be the reason Hadley and Cannon are the only two indicted men whose trials went all the way to conviction.

The last person that the grand jury indicted in connection to the "harboring negroes" cases was Cyrus Garrigus for the crime of "Official Negligence" for not collecting the required bond of Ephraim, "a negro man."⁶⁸ Garrigus was a local merchant and official "Overseer of the Poor" for Parke County. According to the 1831 Law, it was his duty to collect 500 dollars from each freeman settling in the county as a guarantee of good behavior or to hire out the offending freeman until the bill was paid. Like most other people in his position in other counties in the state, Garrigus had not collected the required bond. The fact that many overseers of the poor did not collect the bond did not sit well with those who wanted to use the law to keep people of color out of the state.

⁶⁷ Record of the Circuit Court in Parke County, Volume 4, 272.

⁶⁸ Indictment of Cyrus Garrigus, case number 1697, filed April 24, 1847, Clerk's office, second floor, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

It seems that it was not the goal of prosecutor James Allen to punish Garrigus for inaction but rather to push him into action. In June of 1847 Cyrus Garrigus filed suits against Henry Bass and William Bass, two African Americans who were living in Reserve Township, for not paying their bond. This action seems to be what Allen and his supporters wanted, because in October of 1847, when Garrigus was to appear in court to face the charges of negligence, Allen announced that he had dropped the charges.⁶⁹ One can easily imagine a conversation where Allen told Garrigus that, if he proceeded with the collecting of the bonds of the freemen, Allen would drop the charges against him.

Henry Bass and William Bass appeared before Charles Martin, a Justice of the Peace, where the indictments were read to the men as presumably neither man was literate. Both pleaded not guilty and after a brief discussion with their lawyer, Thomas Nelson, Justice Martin dropped the chargers and allowed both men to go free.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Civil Order Book 4, August 1845-October 1849, page 291, Clerk's office, second floor, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

⁷⁰ Cyrus Garrigus vs William Bass, case number 1708 and Cyrus Garrigus vs Henry Bass, case number 1707, Clerk's office, second floor hallway, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana. See figure 16.

The reasoning behind the judge's ruling is not clear from the documents. It is probable that both men had not posted a bond, since no record of such bond could be found at the courthouse in Rockville. Perhaps Judge Martin's vision of the free people in Indiana was different than that of Allen and his supporters. If so, it is possible that this was due to the fact that Martin was from Ohio.⁷¹ One way or another, his ruling put an end to the indictments against the freemen of Parke County for not paying their bond.

The indictment of Garrigus for public negligence was clearly to put pressure on the freemen in the County by forcing them to pay their bonds. Intimidation seems to be the purpose for all the indictments-to punish those who helped the free people and to get at the free people themselves. A close study of the indictments reveals some interesting insights into the world of the prosecutor and his supporters.

Of the existing five indictment documents, three mention the freeman only by their first names.⁷² This can

⁷¹ United States Census for, District 85, Parke County, 1850, 334.

⁷² State of Indiana vs James Siler, case number 1692, and State of Indiana vs William B. Morris, case number 1691, and State of Indiana vs

be explained in one of two ways. First, the prosecuting attorney in his preparation of the documents and in the grand jury hearings never bothered to learn their last names. This seems unlikely, since the freemen were not in hiding and were living their lives in the open. It seems difficult to imagine a prosecutor, even one as young and inexperienced as Allen, would not bother to learn the names of the people so important to his case.

The other possibility is that the lack of last names is more reflective of Allen and his supporters' opinion of the place of the free blacks in America. In southern states it was the custom not to use the last names of blacks, especially slaves, in court or in census records. This was done to designate their status as somewhat less than fully human. This practice of using only first names of black individuals was not a common practice in Indiana at this time, as reflected in court records and the census.

Of the remaining two indictments, against Albert Coffin and George Steele, the last names of the freemen are listed. However, the script of the Coffin indictment is clearly not written in Allen's handwriting, and therefore

was probably written by someone else. (See figure 12) This could be because Allen was simply tired of writing so many indictments that day, or someone else wrote the document in support of Allen's actions. The important thing to note about this indictment is that it differs greatly from the other five indictments.

All of the other indictments began by stating that a grand jury had met and was charging someone with a crime, and then the crime was described. In the Coffin indictment, the document mentions the name of Henderson Curry (freeman) is mentioned five times before Albert Coffin's name is ever used. In fact, Coffin's name is used but once in the single page document whereas Curry's name is used eight times.⁷³ Clearly Curry is the person of interest in the case and not Coffin. It is not known why a nineteen-year old freeman was of such intense importance to the writer of this document.

⁷³ State of Indiana Vs Albert G. Coffin, case number 1687, Clerk's office, second floor hallway, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana. See figure 12.

The document indicting George K. Steele is also different from the others.⁷⁴ It begins in the same style and format as the others, but changes early in the text. The first quarter of the document is written in a heavy ink, until the part where the name of the accused is written. Then the style changes to that of the Coffin indictment and the writing is less heavy, as if the writer started with a new pen or wrote the document at two different times. The name of Rachel Laws is written four times in the document and George Steele only twice.

The most interesting difference, however, is the date that Rachel Laws went to work for George Steele. All the other indictments, except that of Horace Cannon, state that the freeman was employed "on the first day of January" 1847. The prosecutor probably chose this date because he did not know the actual date employment began. On the Steele indictment the date written is August first 1846. It is unknown why there is this difference in the indictment unless there is some significance to the date or

⁷⁴ State of Indiana vs George K. Steele, case number 1698, Clerk's office, second floor hallway, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

perhaps it was important to be specific in this case. All indications are that George Steele was a powerful man in the community and Prosecutor Allen may have felt it was important to be as correct as possible in the indictment.

The response of those accused in the indictments was swift and decisive. James Allen had made a mistake in indicting some of the most powerful men in the community, especially George Steele. Steele was clearly not a man to be trifled with; he brought three lawyers to his hearing who made an immediate motion to kill the indictment. Whatever they said must have convinced the judge, because "for arguments orally shown" the indictment was quickly quashed, and Steele was discharged from the court.⁷⁵

Immediately after the Steele hearing the prosecutor dropped the cases against William Morris and Albert Coffin.⁷⁶ Instead of requesting the indictment be quashed or the charges be dropped, the lawyers for James Siler pleaded "not guilty," thus bringing the case to trial. Perhaps because Siler was a leader in the Quaker community,

⁷⁵ Civil Order book four Parke, County Circuit Court, page 228, Clerk's office, second floor, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

he wanted to remove all doubt of his guilt. After his plea, the judge heard the arguments from both sides and promptly found the defendant not guilty.⁷⁷

With the acquittal of James Siler, James Allen was left with only two of the original seven cases-Horace Cannon and Washington Hadley. Unfortunately, the Hadley case file cannot be located; however, the Cannon file is full of significant information. This may be because, as Joseph Cannon suspected, his father was the main target of the prosecution.

According to the indictment against Cannon, he employed Ephraim Cook as of April of 1847, a date that makes little sense since the indictment is dated April 1847. As before, the date could be an arbitrary one selected by the prosecutor. Soon after the indictment was issued, James Allen ordered the sheriff, Gabriel Houghman, to arrest Cannon and issued a summons for him to gather witnesses for the trial scheduled for October.⁷⁸ It can be

⁷⁷ State of Indiana vs James Siler, Circuit Court Civil Order Book 4, August 1845-October 1849, page 376, Clerk's office, second floor, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

⁷⁸ State of Indiana vs Horace Cannon, Case Number 1686, Clerk's office, second floor hallway, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

assumed that the sheriff issued a similar warrant for Hadley, since both men were released on bail of twenty-five dollars on June fifth, 1847.

In the Cannon case, Allen submitted a witness list that included Isaac Cannon, Hiram Hunt, Mordecai Rayle, David Atchison, William Coffin and John G. Davis.⁷⁹ Of these witnesses, two immediately were particularly important. The first is Isaac Cannon, the oldest son of Horace Cannon, who was only fifteen at the time of the indictments. Isaac Cannon may have accompanied his father on his mission to rescue the Alabama slaves. Calling him as witness for the prosecution certainly would have been difficult for father and son to take. This may have been what Allen had in mind in calling the young Cannon as a witness.

The other name of interest is John G. Davis, who was the Parke County Clerk of Courts at the time of the trial. His name appears on all of the printed case documents as Clerk, but each document is signed by someone else instead of the Davis. Davis was a primary leader of the Democratic Party in Parke County and the region. He served as Parke

⁷⁹ Ibid.

County Clerk of Courts from 1833 to 1850, and he was a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1851 to 1855 and again from 1857 to 1861.⁸⁰ Davis is listed as a Anti-Lecompton Democrat, which means he opposed the proslavery constitution of Kansas drafted at Lecompton Kansas and supported Stephen Douglas for president in 1860. It is not known why John Davis would be a party to this case or even a witness for the prosecution, unless his Party was somehow interested in the result.

Dr. Cannon was slated to appear in court on the third Monday in October of 1847. Perhaps because the other cases had gone so badly for the prosecution, Allen decided to postpone his case against Hadley and Cannon. As a result the cases against Cannon and Hadley were continued to the April 1848 Term of the District Circuit Court.

The additional time may have given Cannon and Hadley a chance to think about the trials they faced and the events that brought them to this point. With the coming of the April 1848 term of the court, the accused changed their approach to the matter. In an act that seems to be a statement of civil disobedience, both men decided they

⁸⁰ Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, accessed at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>, accessed on 24, June 2009.

would no longer take part in their own trials. On the twenty-fourth day of April 1848, neither Hadley nor Cannon appeared in court to face the charges against them.⁸¹ The judge ordered the forfeiture of their bail money and the arrest of Hadley and Cannon.

Four days later on, April twenty-eighth, Cannon appeared in court. He was tried, at his own request, before a judge without a jury present. The judge found him guilty and fined him ten dollars and court costs of sixteen dollars.⁸² The total cost of his crime of "harboring negroes" including the forfeiture of his bail, was fifty-one dollars. Thomas Nelson, Cannon's attorney, spent another year appealing the fines without positive result. It is probable that Washington Hadley paid the same fine, but there is no record of his appeals.

The judgment against him was not the last Horace Cannon had to say about his crime. Stubbornly refusing to pay the fine against him, he forced the State of Indiana to take the payment from him in livestock, which would be

⁸¹ State of Indiana vs Washington Hadley, case number 1812 and State of Indiana vs Horace Cannon, Case number 1811, for forfeiture of bond.

⁸² Parke County Circuit Court Order Book 4, 355.

auctioned to pay the fine.⁸³ To Cannon this was a statement he was making about an unjust law; he would simply not make it easy for the State of Indiana to collect its fine.

There are two very different versions of the end of this portion of the story. In the Joseph Cannon account of the story, Horace Cannon and his wife, serene in the knowledge they were victims of an unjust law, peacefully watched the sheriff take the majority of their livestock to pay the fine.⁸⁴ The other edition of the tale has Cannon taunting the sheriff's deputies as they came and took a few of his horses away. He informed them that he had hired three more freemen and that there were more horses if they wanted to come back.⁸⁵ The difference between the two versions of the story is based on whether Cannon is a victim, as in his son's edition, or a defiant social activist in the finest Quaker tradition.

The completion of the Cannon trial and the payment of the fine against him brought a close to the struggle of the whites over the future of the freeman in Parke County. The forces in support of the blacks in the county could claim a

⁸³ Busbey, 57.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *Rockville Republican*, Wednesday October 17, 1917.

moral victory. The seven indictments had brought only two convictions and only two minor fines. The negative publicity generated over the whole affair certainly would have landed heavily on the anti-black element of the county.

However, the end of the trials did not mean the end of tribulations for the black population. Evidence tells us that the fight of the freemen to carve out a place in Parke County continued. In October of 1848, Richard Bass, eldest of the Bass brothers and a carpenter living outside Annapolis, was indicted for "suffering a horse to run on a public highway."⁸⁶ There were several other men indicted for this same horse race, but the rest of them were white. The names of the men included Richard Martin, William Stark, James Rock and Jacob Ephlande, who provided the other horse. Bass was not charged by the prosecutor with betting on the horse race but only of allowing his horse to be used. The men who actually bet on the race and probably arranged it were fined between one and three dollars. Richard Bass was fined and charged court costs totaling

⁸⁶ State of Indiana vs Richard Bass, case number 1863, Clerk's office, second floor hallway, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

seventeen dollars and thirty-seven cents.⁸⁷ Noted on the outside of Richard Bass's case file are two interesting notations. The first under the seventeen dollar figure is the note, "paid me by Bass (unreadable), 16, 1849." The second notation is below the first but was probably written prior to the notation above. It says, "I am to plead guilty for him." Both notations were probably written by Bass's lawyer, William Prichard. Richard Bass seems to have decided that contesting the charge and the unjust fine would be fruitless. He just paid the fine and went on with his life. This kind of harassment was probably typical in many communities in antebellum Indiana.

In the years that followed the trials, life for the freemen in Parke County and in Indiana became more difficult. In 1851, the State of Indiana passed a new constitution which forbade the settlement of freemen in the state and encouraged those already in residence to leave. In Parke County in particular that same year, two of their biggest supporters, Horace Cannon and James Siler, died. At the same time many other supportive members of the Quaker community left and moved west. This left the small

⁸⁷ Ibid.

black community more vulnerable to those who did not welcome them into the community.

All the time that the Bass family and the other freemen in Parke County were suffering hardships, they may have been hoping for a place where they could be treated fairly and not be dependent on outsiders for help. The answer to their hopes would not be long in coming as they migrated to a place they could call entirely their own.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PUBLIC HISTORY

Senator John C. Calhoun was working late one night when a ghost visited him. Despite the thin cloak that covered his face, Calhoun immediately recognized the specter as George Washington, dressed in his colonial uniform. Washington asked what the Senator from South Carolina was working on. Calhoun replied that he was working on plans to "dissolve the American Union."

Washington then called for the Senator to give him his right hand. Calhoun complied and the ghost of Washington took the Senator's right hand. Washington asked Calhoun if this was the hand he would use to sign the documents to dissolve the Union. Calhoun answered to the affirmative, that if certain things were to happen, he would help create and sign such a document. At that moment a black blotch appeared on the back of his hand. Calhoun withdrew his hand sharply asking what the spot on the back of his hand was. Washington replied that it was the same mark that Benedict Arnold carried in the next world, a sign given to the lowest of traitors.

Washington then laid a skeleton on the Senator's desk, and told him that they were the bones of Isaac Hayne, a South Carolinian hung by the British during the revolution. Hayne had been a patriot and had died for the Union that Calhoun was so willing to dissolve. If Calhoun was to act to destroy the Union, he would do it with the bones of a South Carolina patriot weighing on his mind. It was then that Calhoun woke from his dream; he had fallen asleep at his desk.

The next morning the Senator related his dream to Robert Toombs, a fellow congressman from the state of Georgia. Toombs noted that Calhoun seemed preoccupied with the back of his hand; as if something was there that the senator was continually trying to rub off. Toombs could not see anything there, but Calhoun insisted that he could still see the blotch on his hand.

Calhoun was so troubled by his dream that he spent the last few years of his life attempting to keep the Union together. His trademark speeches became more conciliatory and less confrontational. As a result, the United States

did not descend into Civil War in Calhoun's lifetime, but would stay together for another ten years.

This ghost story comes to us from "The Strange Dream of John C. Calhoun," found in *The Civil War in Song and Story*, edited by Frank Moore and published in 1889.¹ Many different publications reprinted the story until the present day.² Although the story is purely fiction, many who have reprinted the story treat it as gospel truth.

The story is clearly fiction, even if one believed in ghosts. In fact, the story does not hold even a sliver of historical truth. Calhoun's final speech before the Senate was all about secession, and Robert Toombs had barely risen to the level of congressman by the time of Calhoun's death. It is doubtful that the seasoned Calhoun would have taken the junior congressman from Georgia into his confidence.

¹ Frank Moore, Ed., *The Civil War in Song and Story* (New York: P.F. Collier, 1889)

² For different publications of this story see: Christopher K. Coleman, *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil War: Authentic Accounts of the Strange and Unexplained*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1999); and websites www.godtheoriginalintent.com and www.wesclark.com. The title of the story changes from one publication to another. These various titles include: "The Strange Dream of John C. Calhoun," "The Spotted Hand, An Anecdote of John C. Calhoun," and "The Black Spot."

So what was the purpose of the story? Besides entertainment, the story's purpose is to help put a spin on history that makes sense to the writer and the audience. When first published in 1889, the story implied that Calhoun's crime was promoting disunion, an act that George Washington would have condemned as treason. Robert Toombs was also guilty by association, since he was both Secretary of State for the Confederacy and a General in the Confederate army. The message in the story is clear; the individuals whom helped bring about secession had committed an act of unforgivable treason that was damnable in not only this life but the next.

The story does not mention John C. Calhoun's other crime that was seemingly unimportant to both the ghost of George Washington and the author of the tale. Nowhere was Calhoun's view of slavery mentioned, which he defended not as a necessary evil but as a positive good. Had slavery been the important point of the story, perhaps George Washington would be the best choice for the ghost since he was a slave owner himself.

Frank Moore's point was clear; the Civil War was a war for Union, not a war for the benefit of those who labored in bondage. Many still find a history they are comfortable with in this interpretation of the story. One modern website that contains the story states "that Calhoun changed his views on secession to Pro-Union almost overnight."³ Clearly Calhoun did not change his views, but it suits the purposes of the web-site sponsor to believe that he did.

Historian Bruce Levine calls this kind of phenomenon a "search for a useable past."⁴ Human beings will often interpret an event in a way that corresponds with a personal worldview of history. People tend not like history that makes them uncomfortable, unless it all works out in the end and the transgressors are all punished. The discomfort is even more challenging to overcome when we find that we have some connection to the transgression or

³ www.godtheoriginalintent.com/.../The%20Spotted%20Hand%20-%20An%20Anecdote%20of%20John%20C.%20Calhoun.pdf, page 1, accessed on 10 July 2009.

⁴ Bruce Levine, "In Search of a Useable Past" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History*, edited by James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 187.

there is no positive conclusion. As a result, we often chose to ignore the truth; despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Hard topics and uncomfortable history threaten our ordered sense of the past. According to historian Edward Linenthal, difficult subjects "'back talk' to our 'mythic claims' about ourselves."⁵

One may ask why finding a useable past is so critically important. It is vastly significant because history defines who we are. Our sense of the past identifies our place in the world. It tells others who we are and what can be expected of us. It is part of our internal psyche; it provides the underpinnings of our collective identity as well as a place to reside in ourselves. As a result, we as a people will gravitate to stories and myths that reaffirm our beliefs.

In the events surrounding the Indiana freemen and their white supporters, there are a number of historical interpretations, both direct and tangential, worthy of discussion. As we have seen, the actual events are more

⁵ Edward T. Linenthal, "Epilogue: Reflections" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History*, edited by James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 219.

complicated than those recorded in popular history. We must ask ourselves why the interpretation of the events was simplified and what was the "usable past" that Joseph Cannon and his contemporaries created. How might this story have different meanings for us today than it did for prior generations?

The most glaring element missing from the popular narratives of the event were the freemen themselves. The persons of color were never mentioned by name and were incorrectly referred to only as "slaves." Cannon's narrative, created an image of the free people as "a high type of American Negro," skilled but somehow helpless to survive without help.⁶ It also clearly implied a distasteful element of class superiority and racism. In this version of the story, as in others, the Quakers rescued the "slaves" from a plantation in Alabama, brought them to Parke County, gave them small farms to live on, and provided them an education.⁷ Horace Cannon was then prosecuted for his role in the affair.⁸

⁶ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, 54-55.

⁷ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, 50-62, and *The Rockville Republican*, February 3, 1909, reprinted in "Annapolis and its Wabash and Erie Canal

The historical record suggests a different narrative. The majority of the individuals mentioned in the indictments were not freed slaves but freemen, some free for generations. Furthermore, they were far from helpless. The free people used their own skills and the system of support provided by Quakers and others to get what they needed. They were not solely dependent on the kindness of Quakers for their existence, as portrayed in the narrative. John T. Campbell, a canal boat captain with connections to Annapolis, wrote a letter to the *Rockville Republican* dated February 3, 1909, mentioning that the "Bass brothers" were skilled carpenters.⁹ Why was it so important that the freed people were dependent on their supporters and not the self-sufficient individuals they obviously were? The answer lies in the search to create a "useable past" that fits

Connections," by Charles Davis in *The Hoosier Packet*, publication of the Indiana Canal Society, November 2003, 13.

⁸ It should be noted here that the majority of the written accounts of the event were written between 1909 and the present day. Most modern local historians use accounts written between 1909 and 1927 as primary sources for modern interpretations of the event.

⁹ *The Rockville Republican*, February 3, 1909, reprinted in "Annapolis and its Wabash and Erie Canal Connections," by Charles Davis in *The Hoosier Packet*, publication of the Indiana Canal Society, November 2003, 13.

into the ordered beliefs of the writer and his or her audience.

The image of the helpless slave or runaway is not unique to the interpretation of this event. The idea of the person of color's being rescued by caring white people is a prominent image even today at Underground Railroad sites, despite evidence to the contrary.¹⁰ Runaways could not always count on the kindness of caring white northerners and often had to depend solely on themselves. Historic site brochures and websites routinely use terms like "rescue," "haven" and "harboring," all of which imply a high degree of vulnerability of the freeman.

So why is a high level of vulnerability of the freeman so important to both the story of the Parke County blacks and some Underground Railroad sites? There are many possible explanations, but two of the strongest reasons may be racism and guilt.

¹⁰ Gara, *The Liberty Line*. Gara argues that the Underground Railroad has been over popularized as an all encompassing northern institution, when in fact many formerly enslaved people escaped without the aid of the Underground Railroad, or the kindness of white northerners.

Racism played an important role in the early interpretations of the Parke County events. It was in the best interest of the writers of the early narratives to present the freemen as vulnerable and in need of protection and support. This concept of the people of color being in need of white help to survive fits well into both Cannon's and his audience's white supremacist view of the freemen. In this interpretation, the freeman was like a child needing the support of a loving parent.

On the other hand, the skilled and independent freeman was contradictory to that world view and was therefore less acceptable to the writer's audience. The idea that blacks who migrated to the area were skilled individuals capable of competing for jobs and political power within the community was unacceptable in the minds of some. It simply contradicts the paternalistic view that many had about the black race. This view is not surprising, given the concept of human evolutionary development and the accompanying theories of racial superiority and inferiority that were part of the origin of man debates of the time. In the nineteenth century, many believed that certain races were

superior to others as part of the evolutionary process.¹¹ Sadly this belief continued among some well into the twentieth century.

The inclusion of black agency in the Parke County events creates another challenge because it downplays the role of the white heroes. In the case of the Joseph Cannon narrative, the important subject was his father, Horace Cannon, and therefore by association, himself. Cannon needed to create as much of a connection with his audience as he could. Portraying his father as a martyr of the underprivileged made Horace Cannon more appealing to his audience and his enemies that much more despicable. Joseph Cannon, always the Republican politician, could not resist the opportunity to make the Democrats look bad.

The African Americans in the Cannon narrative, as well as many other narratives since, are really just 'background people' to a wholly white event. Their lives are largely unimportant to the events, and they appear and disappear as needed, only to provide a prop for the white heroes. This

¹¹ John S. Haller, "The Species Problem: Nineteenth Century Concepts of Racial Inferiority in the Origins of Man Controversy," *American Anthropologist*, 72:6 (Dec., 1970), 1319-1320.

is a reflection of the world view of the majority of whites in the North at this time when the common narrative was written. The majority of whites did not cultivate a relationship with blacks unless they were needed to provide a service or their presence upset the northerner's perceived social balance, as in Parke County.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the difference between racism in the North and racism in the South at this time.¹² In the North, racism was a response to contact, in the South, it is always prevalent, perhaps because much of the economy depended on free labor of blacks and contact was more frequent. For northerners, African Americans were people who came from somewhere else and therefore were only perceived as a threat only when they competed for jobs and resources or moved next door. In the South, due to the

¹² For discussions and examples of how racism in the North and South differed see Juliet E. K. Walker, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise: Black Entrepreneurship in the United States before the Civil War," *The Business History Review*, 60:3, (Autumn, 1986) and Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1845*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 125-129 and Jay R. Mandle, *Not Slave, Not Free: The African American Economic Experience Since the Civil War*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992) and Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, (New York: The New Press, 1974), 58-60, and Leon F Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

institution of slavery, African Americans were a vital part of the economy in a subservient capacity from the beginning. Their place in the southern social strata was already established, and unquestioned, whereas in the North it had not been so defined. In the pre-Civil War southern economic structure, the African American had a role as a slave. This may explain why many southern whites had trouble relating to blacks as freemen.

In the North, no place for African Americans had been established, resulting in a relationship built almost entirely on racism, rumor, and fear of people perceived as different. This may explain the hostility towards people of color in communities where few African Americans lived. Some communities in Indiana that sent petitions to the state legislature calling for a ban on black migration had very few or no black residents.¹³ In addition, all of the Indiana counties reporting no black population in the 1850 census voted in favor the State of Indiana's ban on black migration.¹⁴ One might ask why the population of these

¹³ Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana in Indiana Before 1900*, 19-22, and University of Virginia United States Census Browser, 1850.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

counties voted against the rights of African Americans so strongly, when the migration did not affect them directly. One possible answer is that in Indiana the threat of black migration was worse than the actual arrival of African Americans. The cause of this fear can only be attributed to racism and ignorance.

In the case of the modern interpretations of the Underground Railroad, guilt and the fear of presenting real black history may be the most powerful reasons behind what is presented. Interpreting the Underground Railroad is one way to interpret "black history" without discussing the unpleasantness of race relations both past and present. In discussing the Underground Railroad at historic sites, African American subjects are present but are secondary to the white heroes. The Levi Coffin House in Fountain City Indiana is a good example. Rarely do we learn about the lives of the people who traveled on the Underground Railroad or what happened to them once they moved to their final destination.

It can be argued that part of the reason why the lives of runaway slaves who traveled on the Underground Railroad

are not discussed in greater detail is because of the lack of direct evidence. A secret network of safe houses and individuals who helped escaping runaways by its very nature would not keep records. However, in most interpretations of the Underground Railroad, there is no discussion of the lives or motivations behind the enslaved person's desire to be free. A historic site where the Underground Railroad is discussed would be the ideal forum for a conversation about slavery, black agency, and antebellum race relations in the North. Even the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, which is the best forum in the Nation for such a discussion, falls short. The Center emphasizes the persons of color as slaves, largely ignoring their role as architects of their own freedom.¹⁵

Another possible reason why interpreting the Underground Railroad at historic sites and communities has become so popular may be because it helps alleviate some degree of white guilt. A vulnerable slave coming to a place of refuge, run by caring white conductors, is very

¹⁵ Samuel W. Black, "The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center: Museum of Conscience," *Ohio Valley History*, 6:2 (summer, 2006), 27.

appealing. It allows, by association, the visitor to take part in a story where race relations are strong, possibly reflecting a myth they see in themselves. However, it also can reinforce a paternalistic view of race relations, both past and present.

It is important to note that African Americans played a major role in the operation of the Underground Railroad, yet they are rarely mentioned.¹⁶ The Railroad as interpreted at most historic sites is primarily a white institution; very few sites interpret the role of black-owned safe houses and conductors. This fact may be because the Underground Railroad has such an appeal to white audiences.

Modern historic site interpretations of the Underground Railroad offer historic sites and their visitors a portion of nineteenth-century American history related to African Americans that is pleasant. The Underground Railroad is one of the few events that whites can be proud of when it comes to race relations in the period before the Civil War. As a result, the Underground

¹⁶ Sayers, Daniel O. "The Underground Railroad Reconsidered." *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 28:3 (Sept., 2004), 435-436.

Railroad narrative has grown to mythical proportions in the nation's popular culture psyche.

The Underground Railroad legend is so powerful that it has defied historians' attempts to weaken its allure by correcting the historical record on the subject.¹⁷ Even professional historians writing for popular audiences tend to play upon the romance of the Underground Railroad, producing popular books and other works on the subject.¹⁸ These narratives continue to sell well despite, as one reviewer writes that the popular work "merely reinforces the myths and legends historians have tried so hard for several decades to debunk."¹⁹

¹⁷ Larry Gara's *Liberty Line*, published in 1961 remains the premier work on the subject, but other works include: Franklin, John Hope and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

¹⁸ Such works include, Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005) and Karolyn Smardz Frost, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), and Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

¹⁹ Roy E. Finkenbine, Untitled review of *Flight for Freedom: The Underground Railroad* by John Overlan and Ann Spurling, *The Journal of American History*, 83:3 (Dec., 1996), 1118.

The Underground Railroad has become so popular in the American historical landscape that some historic sites and even whole communities have used it to enhance their tourist appeal. Good examples include Galena, Illinois and Springboro, Ohio. Both communities with limited Underground Railroad histories have built considerable tourist industries based on or augmented by the Underground Railroad interpretive theme. A local historian in the city of Galena once commented that the tourist appeal of the Underground Railroad was so popular that people would soon be laying railroad track in their basements.

The appeal of the Underground Railroad story has created in many Americans what historian Alison Landsberg calls a "prosthetic memory."²⁰ Although the memory is often a false one, the nature of the Underground Railroad narrative sparks the imagination of the audience creating a feeling of excitement and adventure. Visitors can easily identify with white heroes and innocent runaway slaves in need of protection and help. It is "feel good" history,

²⁰ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2 and 20.

especially for white visitors. Instead of the history of discrimination and racism so prevalent in the nineteenth century, this narrative is welcoming and supportive.

A remarkable exception to this white-centered and pleasant interpretation of the Underground Railroad is the "Follow the North Star" program at Conner Prairie living history museum near Indianapolis, Indiana. This program submits the paying visitor to many of the horrors a fugitive slave might have encountered while traveling through Indiana to Canada. Visitors are threatened, humiliated, worked hard and even frightened while taking part in the program.

Conner Prairie's program has received both praise and condemnation by many. It has even been featured on a segment on *National Public Radio*. Some praise the program because it opens the lines of conversation on difficult subjects and leaves the visitor with a lasting impression. Critics complain that it does not paint a true picture of the experiences of runaway enslaved people and is too complex a subject to be reduced to a two or three-hour program. The majority of the criticism comes from African

Americans, who may see the event as a trivialization of the lives of runaway slaves.²¹

It is certainly true that the "Follow the North Star" program has had positive effects on some visitors, and it continues to be a program at Connor Prairie. However, one must ask if such dramatic role playing is actually more a form of entertainment than a tool of education. Should historians be concerned that the program is more popular with white visitors than black visitors? Or is a reflection of our society and the "unpleasantness" that both races feel with difficult subjects? It seems that, even at Connor Prairie, discussion on the Underground Railroad may continue to be one sided and monochromatic.

Part of understanding history for most Americans is seeing oneself in the past. We learn by being able to relate events or actions to our own understanding. We imagine ourselves in similar situations; we empathize with the characters of the past. In making this connection we

²¹ Carl Weinberg, "The Discomfort Zone: Reenacting Slavery at Connor Prairie," *OAH Magazine of History*, 23:2 (April, 2009), 4-6.

create understanding. Historian Freeman Tilden calls this method of learning the first principle of interpretation.²²

At the most fundamental level, part of the learning process in a museum or elsewhere is affirming self.²³ We each create within ourselves personal images of who we are and who we would like to be as individuals. It is part of our psyche and it is made up of past experiences, our likes and dislikes as well as what others think of us. We bring these elements of our individuality with us when we visit museums, and they help shape our understanding.²⁴

It is only human nature to think the best of ourselves. It is extremely difficult to make a connection with people from the past who seem so different from us, especially if their actions foreign, or are unpleasant. The unpleasantness increases when we are somehow related by blood to the person in the past. We cannot relate to slave hunters and even slave owners; we would rather see

²² Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, third edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 9-11.

²³ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning From Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (New York: Altamira Press, 2000), 21.

²⁴ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Whalesback Books, 1992), 25.

ourselves as Underground Railroad heroes.²⁵ Author Anais Nin said: "We see things not as they are but as we are."²⁶ In reality it is not as we are but more often how we would like to see ourselves.

The heart of this myth may not be racism, but rather guilt. Guilt makes us feel uncomfortable, especially when it is a problem we perceive we cannot correct. The Underground Railroad and its powerful myth allow white Americans to avoid the repulsiveness of American history and make it possible for us to be proud of our actions and the actions of our ancestors. To many communities and historic sites, adding the Underground Railroad to their historic interpretation allows the addition of black history to their interpretation without the need to discuss racism or injustice. It is also a way of introducing black history without adding African Americans. The freeman is

²⁵ The only acceptable way that some can imagine themselves as slave owners in the past is if the nature of slavery itself is changed into something pleasant; a benevolent institution where there was a kind and loving relationship between slave and master. This theme is popular in some antebellum southern house museums and among some southern heritage groups.

²⁶ Anais Nin as quoted by James W. Loewen in *Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, second edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 259.

in the interpretation but only as a prop to what is really a white man's story. Freeman remain nameless and faceless.

Although it is for different reasons, both the early twentieth century writers of the Parke County events and most of the modern interpreters of the Underground Railroad have eliminated the person of color from the narrative. In doing so, they are taking an active role in deciding what is important for the audience to know. This act of picking and choosing dramatically determines what is saved and remembered and what is lost. This act of selecting what is interpreted is reinforced by the fact that primary resources are limited; however, African Americans should still be made part of the interpretation, regardless of the limitations because the black experience is fundamental to American history.

Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot used the phrase "silencing the past," when referring to those who have the power to determine what is to be saved and what is not.²⁷ The removal of the African Americans from interpretations allows those creating the narrative to produce a product

²⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 15-24.

more palatable to themselves and their audiences. Removing the escaped enslaved person is therefore very attractive to those establishing an historic site or museum.

Historian James Oliver Horton argues that it "is the public historian's most difficult task" to bring about a national discussion on the history of slavery and race relations.²⁸ But employees of museums and historic sites must not be afraid to confront the issues of race, despite how uncomfortable the conversation. If America's racial attitudes are to change, the place where history meets the public is the proper forum.

Despite the universal call for a dialogue on race at historic sites and museums, there is no consensus on acceptable approaches. One of the most famous was the controversial reenactment of a slave auction at Colonial Williamsburg in 1994 when the African American Department of Colonial Williamsburg orchestrated a mock slave auction before an audience of visiting tourists.²⁹ The event

²⁸ James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, James Oliver Norton and Lois E. Horton, editors (New York: The New Press, 2006), 55.

²⁹ Horton, 50.

brought both praise and condemnation from visitors, historians, and minority activists. However the general response from historians was positive because they saw it as opening the door on an uncomfortable but necessary discussion on race history in America. Nevertheless, the staged event created uncomfortable feelings in the audience who witnessed the event, making it doubtful it will be restaged any time soon. At a time of shrinking budgets and governing boards who focus on revenue generation, the likelihood of uncomfortable history becoming a part of our interpretation programs is slight. Boards of trustees and museum directors look to create positive and "fun" experiences to attract visitors and are less likely to risk losing funding over controversial programming. One of the new catch phrases for this kind of thinking is called "edutainment," where education and entertainment meet.

In reviewing the Williamsburg slave auction as an educational event, one is obliged to ask whether or not it was done correctly. Certainly the event was painful to watch for the audience and even for some of the participants, but did it move forward the educational

mission of the organization? If the fact that the event will not be repeated is any kind of indicator, it could be said to be a failure as an educational tool, despite all the publicity it generated. Yet the conversation it has spurred in academic circles is clearly worthwhile.

If the program was a failure, it is important to ask why. Could the presentation be done differently? Was there a purpose and an end result desired before the program was planned? According to Christy Matthews director of the African American department, the goal of the event was to "teach the history of our mothers and grandmothers so that every one of you will never forget what happened to them."³⁰ [Emphasis added]

The word "you" is key to this phrase. One wonders if the results in the program would have been different if the word "you" was replaced by "us?" "You" denotes a dictation or order given to an audience; "us" implies a journey taken together. The words are small, but the difference is important. "We" implies a more holistic approach to

³⁰ Horton, 50. James Horton Quoting African American department director Christy Coleman Matthews from the Washington Post, October 11, 1994.

education, where educators and their audience are working together to create understanding. This was clearly not the case in the Williamsburg event. Many historians make the mistake of thinking that their knowledge should be accepted by the public without question. The fact is that the public does not need historians, but historians need the public. It has been proven time and time again that if the historian presents a message that the public does not accept, the public will just go elsewhere. History for history sake seems like a waste of time. History must serve a greater good.

There are two ways to approach history when trying to help an audience to understand it. One approach is to see "the past as a foreign country," where the people look like us but we cannot fully understand them because there will always be this unbridgeable gap between us.³¹ The second approach is best summed up by a quote from one of Shakespeare's plays; the "past is prologue."³² In this

³¹ "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there," is a quote from the opening line of *The Go-Between* by L.P. Hartley, published in 1953.

³² William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act II, Scene 1.

approach, history is the framework for all that is now. Our present is an inescapable product of our past.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches to history. If history is a foreign country, it may be impossible to feel a connection to it, and it may be difficult to learn history's lessons. However, the ability to distance ourselves from prior actions may allow us to rise above them. For example, if a person was descended from a family where alcoholism is a problem, the ability to believe that he or she is separate from that past and therefore not condemned to continue that legacy may offer hope. A person can say that "those actions of the past are not me and are foreign to my being, I do not own them."

If the past is seen as being prologue to the present, there are also some advantages and disadvantages. It may be an advantage to claim a legacy and feel a part of something greater than oneself. However this is a double-edged sword. Pride in one's ancestors is admirable, yet there are many whose entire self worth is tied up in who they are related to. In addition if the past and present

are invariably linked; then what hope is there in escaping an unpleasant past.

Public historians must think about these issues when developing an effective interpretation of the past to a public audience. Public historians should think about who their audience is and what they want their audience to know or feel when they leave. Knowing the audience includes a good understanding of why they are there and what brought them to the site in the first place. This allows the program designer to develop and tailor a plan for giving visitors the steps to arrive at the understanding desired.

The slave auction program at Colonial Williamsburg failed to reach its audience by not following these few fundamental rules of public history. Perhaps the task was too great and the subject too complex for the event to be a success, but one might ask how things could have been done differently. Stepping into the realm of "what if" let us look at how the program could have been run differently with hopefully a more positive result.

The first step may have been to approach the subject of slavery as if history were a foreign country. In many

ways this is a sound approach because it meets visitors where they already are. Slavery is such a distant concept to us living in America in the twenty-first century that the general public has trouble conceiving it. Even professional historians, who have studied it for years cannot fully grasp it. Therefore the visitor must be a witness to a slave auction event, not a participant in it.

The way to approach this problem is to separate the audience from the action, both physically and intellectually. Instead of allowing the visiting audience to be part of the auction crowd, they should be removed from it by some distance. Doing so will reduce the uncomfortableness associated with the event. Allow a docent, out of character, to explain to the audience what they are about to see and explain that what they will see will be uncomfortable. It also may be important to remind them that these people they are watching are playing a role much like an actor on television or on the stage.³³ To further this point, the managers of the program may have

³³ Staging the slave auction program this way may conflict with Colonial Williamsburg's traditional interpretive methods, however the subject and the audience calls for adapting the style of interpretation which Williamsburg will do on occasion.

one of the docents playing a slave address the crowd. This address should not be done as a slave but as a knowledgeable speaker getting the crowd ready for what it is about to see.

The next important element in staging this event is to ask what the program should provide for the visitor. Part of the problem with the Williamsburg event was that the purpose of the event-other than to bring forth the horrors of slavery to the interpretation of the living history museum-may not have been clear.³⁴ Let us therefore assume, for the sake of this discussion, that the program was an attempt to aid a truer sense of history to the site by adding slavery and its inherent ugliness to the interpretation.

Now that we have removed visitors from the role of participant and have placed them in the role of witness, it is now important to bring them back into the action in order to foster greater understanding. This could be done by giving them something within the event to relate to.

³⁴ Some might argue that this is an impossible task given the nature of Colonial Williamsburg the tourist attraction and how prevailing slavery was in the real history of Williamsburg.

One way to do this is to wisely select the players in the drama avoiding a stereotypical selection of players. A clichéd staging would include white sellers and buyers selling black slaves. Although this image is most certainly correct in most cases, it is not universally true. Having this form of traditional interpretation misses the opportunity to show a clearer picture of slavery. In addition this style of interpretation may foster animosity within the crowd of visitors as one ethnic group or another sees themselves reflected on stage.

What would be the result, for example, if some of the buyers of slaves were black and some of the slaves looked white? Would doing this be so contrary to our accepted notions of the past that it would render the portrayal to incredible to believe?

If part of the learning process requires the ability to see oneself reflected in the lives of someone else, however, then it may be the only way to portray the event. History may provide the answer to this dilemma. Reviewing newspapers for ads about runaway slaves from Williamsburg in the late eighteenth century, we see a number listed as

being nearly white. Some ads even mention that the runaway might be passing as white. Again, how different would the interpretation at Williamsburg be if some of those playing the role of slaves were white and some of the buyers black? How would this add to the understanding of the nature of slavery in the colony and throughout America?

One possible answer is that the diverse twenty-first century audience would be able to see itself reflected in the history of America and therefore be more likely to relate to the horrors and the economics of slavery. The "landscape" of the American audience is diverse, and therefore the slaves on the auction block should be. Hopefully this would remove the black and white, us and them, principle fostered by the more monochromatic approach to the interpretation. Visitors should be made aware that slavery and the resulting racism that it created is inseparable from American history. The visitor, especially the white visitor, is not responsible for its creation anymore than we are responsible for the actions of people who lived before we were born.

Although we did not create racism in America, we bear a responsibility for its continuation. Our task is to recognize this legacy with all its ramifications, move beyond it, and work for reconciliation. It is important for white America to understand that slavery was an institution that damaged all of us not just one segment of the population. The challenge is to do this without placing blame on one group of people or another. Teaching history is, at times, a subversive activity.

The interpretation of the Underground Railroad and the events that took place in Parke County should be approached in the same way. It is essential that the freemen and the fugitive slave be reintroduced in both narratives. The interpretation should not be white heroes and helpless persons of color, but strong individuals working together against a system that was both pervasive and unjust. This kind of interpretation gives "agency" to the historical players in the drama.

It is understandably difficult to make real what has been forgotten for so long, but the freemen must be returned to the narrative. It is also important to

understand the motivations of the characters involved, and the reality of the world they lived in. Doing so will help us better understand their world and perhaps our own.

One of the most common responses received from individuals when informed about the goals and content of this dissertation in Parke County, Indiana, was surprise that African Americans ever lived in the county. This is an indication of how much the image of the freeman has been removed from the public mind and much of the historical record. To change this perception, the story of the Parke County events must be retold, this time with inclusion. The agency of the small black community must be rediscovered and represented. The goal would be to make Parke County residents aware that the history of this black community is local history as important as the small, celebrated Quaker community.

A public historian's approach to facing the difficult and forgotten elements of our history is to begin with a thorough understanding of the audience and the goals of our project. In doing these simple things we can work to

recover much of what has been lost and to correct what has been often so wrong.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: AFTERMATH

Of the relatively small number of players in the events in Parke County, a surprising number of individuals would play a significant role in later American History. In the effort of putting together this work, and perhaps to make up for the oversights of the past, considerable research was done on the background of many of the principle players. The following is a brief history of some of them in order to offer the reader a better understanding of who they were and what happened to them.

Bass (Bassett) Family

James Siler was indicted for harboring a "negro by the name of Bass."¹ Although not named by the prosecution, it was probably either Henry or Zachariah Bass who was living in close proximity to Siler's large farm. History indicates that Henry and Zachariah were probably the

¹ Indictment of James Siler, Case number 1694, Second floor hallway, Clerk's Office, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

younger brothers of Richard Bass. The 1840 United States Census for North Carolina records Richard, Zachariah, Henry and John living close to Britton Bass, who may to have been their father.² The 1850 Census for Parke County records the same family group living in close proximity to each other. Britton Bass is listed as Britton Basseth (sp) (Bassett), a tailor, living with his wife Ester, a seamstress, and his son William.

The Bass family was part of a small community within the African American population in Parke County made up of families that had been free for generations. These included at least the Artis, Ellis, and Tyler families but probably several others. There may also have been connections to the Bass and Ellis families living in the Lost Creek Township in Vigo County, Indiana.³

These families seemed to have worked to establish themselves independently from their Quaker neighbors. In 1848 and again in 1858 the families entered long-term lease

² 1840 United States Census for Green County North Carolina.

³ 1850 and 1860 United States Census for Lost Creek Township, Vigo County, Indiana. Many of the same names listed in the 1850 and 1860 census for the Lost Creek Township appear years later in Howard County, Indiana.

agreements for land on which to build a church and school buildings, despite educational opportunities offered by the Quakers of Bloomfield.⁴ Richard Bass and his Brother Zachariah were later listed as Baptist ministers in Howard County.⁵

Sometime in the late 1850s a number of African American families living in Parke County migrated to Ervin Township in Howard County, Indiana. In Howard County they established a small community that became known as the Bassett-Ellis Settlement, named after two of the most prominent families living there. Families moving from the Parke County settlement to Howard County included the Bass, Artis, Ellis, Hall and Hartwood families. At its peak in the 1880s, the settlement boasted a population of over 1200 individuals.⁶ During a brief period in the 1880s the

⁴ Record of Deed between Lewis, Henrietta and Mathew Artis and Jesse Lane, Richard Bass and John Artis, Record of Deeds, Book Ten, page 540, Parke County Recorder's Office, first floor, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

⁵ Thornbrough, 158 and "When did the Bassett-Rush Fade Away," *The Indianapolis News*, August 11, 1953.

⁶ Dawne Slater-Putt, *The People of the Bassett-Ellis and Rush African American Settlements: Ervin and Clay Townships, Howard County, Indiana, 1840-1820*, unpublished manuscript, Kokomo-Howard County Public Library, Special Collections, Kokomo, Indiana, 2.

settlement was granted a post office by the Federal government and Henry Bassett was named post master.⁷

Sometime prior to the founding of the settlement, the Bass family adopted the name "Bassett," a name used by Britton in North Carolina. It is not clear why the name was changed. It is possible that the Bass and Bassett names were interchangeable by the family using one or the other as it suited them best. It is also possible that the Bass and Bassett families were at one time two separate families which decided to combine and make one family. At any rate, Bass became Bassett by 1860.

Richard Bassett, indicted in Parke County for "forcing a mare to run," became the leader of the Bassett-Ellis community as pastor of the Baptist Church in Ervin Township. In 1857 he helped found the Indiana Association of Negro Baptist Churches.⁸ The Association actively petitioned the state legislature on behalf of African American rights, and supported the African American effort

⁷ "Two Negro Settlements Once Were Busy Communities Here," *Kokomo (Indiana) Tribune*, August 13, 1953, 3.

⁸ Obituary of Richard Bassett, reprinted from Eastern Indiana Baptist Association in *Connections: The Hoosier Genealogist*, Indiana Historical Society, Spring/Summer 2009, 50.

in the Civil War.⁹ In 1892 he was elected to the Indiana House of Representatives from Howard County, only the third African American elected to such a high office.¹⁰ Unfortunately, illness prevented his serving effectively and he died in 1894.

The Bassett-Ellis community thrived until 1920, when most its younger members migrated to the cities of Kokomo or Logansport. The only thing remaining of the community is a small cemetery and possibly some houses.

Interestingly, one of the main roads west out of the city of Kokomo which runs towards the settlement was known as "Colored Town Road."¹¹

Jordan Woodward (Woodard)

Jordan Woodward was probably one of the Alabama slaves freed by the Woodard inheritance. If the Woodard family had indeed inherited slaves from a relative, it is conceivable that they would bear the last name Woodard.

⁹ Thronbrough, 203, 231.

¹⁰ "Bassetts Prominent in Ervin Township," *Kokomo Indiana Tribune*, Feb 23, 1986, 13.

¹¹ On modern maps the road is labeled 500 north.

The African American Woodards living in Parke County in 1850 all were born in Alabama.¹² The census list includes Mahala Woodard, black, age twenty, Ezekiel Woodard, mulatto, age four, and William Woodard, mulatto, age three. Jordan is not listed but it is possible that he is Mahala's brother.¹³ The family is listed as living close to a number of Quaker families, including the Coffins, Hadleys and Morrises.

The April of 1847 indictment of William Morris accuses him of giving harbor to Jordan, a negro man.¹⁴ The case was dropped and all record of "Jordan" disappeared from the Parke County court records; however a Jordan Woodward appears in 1850 living in Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana. He is listed as a laborer living with a group of other African American men and women in a boarding house in Center Township. He could not read or write, which may explain the change in the spelling of his name. Jordan

¹² 1850 United States Census for District 85, Parke County Indiana.

¹³ In 1850 there were 11,262 persons of color living in the state of Indiana. There are relatively few 'Jordans' listed in the census and of all the possible individuals Jordan Woodard (Woodward) of Indianapolis seems the best candidate.

¹⁴ State Vs. William Morris, case number 1691, Second floor hallway, Clerk's Office, Parke County Courthouse, Rockville, Indiana.

Woodard may have left Parke County after his benefactor was indicted because he may have found living in Parke County unpleasant, with few opportunities.

On April 24, 1854, Jordan Woodward was indicted by a grand jury in Marion County for the attempted murder of Lorenzo Dow Wilson. According to the indictment, Woodward did "unlawfully, feloniously, purposely and with premeditated malice make" an assault on Lorenzo Wilson with a "round club of the length of five feet, of the circumference of four inches".¹⁵ The official charge was "assault and battery with the intent to murder." According to the 1850 census, Lorenzo Dow Wilson owned a farm not too far from the boarding house where Jordan Woodward was living.

Woodward's lawyer was John L. Ketcham, a prominent Indianapolis attorney, politician, and defender of the rights of people of color. In 1853, Ketcham defended John Freeman, a former slave who had obtained his freedom in Georgia and had established himself as a successful small business owner in Indianapolis, against the charge of being

¹⁵ State vs. Woodward, Marion County Circuit Court, Indiana Supreme Court Records, file number 879, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis Indiana.

a runaway. A man named Pleasant Ellington claimed Freeman as his runaway slave and demanded he be returned to Missouri. The case gained statewide attention and caused considerable debate. Despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence, Freeman was held in jail without bond. Ketcham and his partners were able to locate Freeman's former owner in Georgia and bring him to Indianapolis for the trial. As a result, Freeman was released, but his life was ruined and his efforts to recoup his losses from Ellington proved fruitless.¹⁶

Ketcham's first move was to have Woodward's trial moved to a friendlier venue. Indianapolis in the late 1840s and early 1850s could be a hostile place for African Americans. In 1845 John Tucker, a prominent black citizen of Indianapolis, was murdered by a mob of white thugs, his only crime being that he was at the wrong place at the wrong time.¹⁷ After this incident many African Americans of the community carried weapons for personal protection. The Freeman case had divided the city even more; Ketcham may

¹⁶ Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 115-117.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

have feared his client would not get a fair trial in such a hostile environment.

Ketcham was successful in getting the venue of the case transferred to the Fifth Circuit Court of Danville in Hendricks County, just west of Marion County. The *Danville Advertiser* of September 30, 1854, reported the trial, stating that there was little of interest in the present Circuit Court session except a murder trial of a "colored" man, Jordan Woodward, and a case of incest. The case of incest was dropped due to lack of evidence, but in the trial of Woodward, he was found guilty of assault and battery but not attempted murder.¹⁸

The challenge facing Woodward and his attorney was an Indiana law passed in 1853 that prohibited a black man from testifying in any court case where a white man was a party.¹⁹ Ketcham was not allowed to call any black witnesses to testify on Woodward's behalf. As a result, Ketcham could not mount a defense and Jordan Woodward was found guilty. Ketcham quickly appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court.

¹⁸ *Danville Advertiser*, September 30, 1854.

¹⁹ Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1800*, 123.

In Woodward's appeal to the Indiana Supreme Court, Ketcham argued that the defendant should have been able to call witnesses in his defense, regardless of their color. Ketcham stated that in this case the other "party" to the trial was the State of Indiana and not a white person. The State, he argued, was a "lady of changeable complexion-graciously taking on the hue she finds in her adversary."²⁰ Therefore, if his client cannot call a black person as a witness, then neither could the State. Ketcham illustrated his point with a question. If a black man murdered a white person and there were only black witnesses to the crime, would the black man go free because no one could testify against him? At this point in the appeal, Ketchum tied up his argument with a statement which indicates where he thought the mindset of his audience might be. He wrote, "I do not, myself, like the smell of a Negro; but I think this would be yielding too much to prejudice."²¹

In the May term of 1855, the Indiana Supreme court ruled in favor of Woodward, stating that his witness,

²⁰ Appeal, Jordan Woodward vs The State of Indiana, case number 879, Records of the Indiana Supreme Court, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

²¹ Ibid.

Samuel Payne, a black shoemaker living in the same boarding house with Woodward, should have been allowed to testify. Payne had testified that he had witnessed Wilson attack Woodward with a deadly weapon and that Woodward was acting in self defense. The prosecuting attorney in the case had objected to the testimony on the grounds that Payne was a black man and the judge had tossed the testimony out of court.

In ruling in favor of Woodward, the Supreme Court greatly limited the interpretation of the 1853 law banning black testimony in court.²² Although the law was not officially repealed until after the Civil War, the judgment in the Woodward case was a landmark case in the struggle for the rights of freeman in Indiana before the Civil War.

Jordan Woodward spent the rest of his life in Chicago.

James Cameron Allen

In August of 1848 James Allen resigned his position as Indiana State Prosecutor for the Seventh Judicial District and moved to Palestine, Illinois. Wasting no time, Allen

²² Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, 124-125.

immediately jumped into Democratic politics and was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1850 and then the United States House of Representatives as part of the Thirty-Third Congress in 1853. In March of 1853 Allen was seemingly elected to a second term in congress, but an investigation of the election by the House determined he was not entitled to the seat.

The fight over Allen's congressional seat was bitter and patrician. In a speech to the house, Representative Jesse Norton, a Whig from Joliet, Illinois, argued that Allen did not deserve his seat because of a miscount in one precinct in his district. The initial count of votes put Allen the victor by one vote; however, two votes that should have been counted for his opponent were missed and one vote counted for Allen was not legitimate.²³ Therefore, James Allen had lost the election by two votes. The Democrats countered that the ballot box key was missing from the secure place where it was kept, giving someone ample time to alter the contents of the box. Further they

²³ Speech of Jesse O. Norton of Illinois on the Illinois contested election delivered in the House of Representatives, July 17, 1856. Printed at the Congressional Globe Office, 1856. In the collection of the Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.

argued that a Mr. James Cowden who voted for Allen's opponent was not a resident of the state and therefore his vote should not be counted. Norton denied both allegations, claiming that a missing key did not prove that anyone tampered with the votes inside.²⁴ A party-line vote removed Allen from his congressional seat, but he was reelected to fill the seat he was forced to vacate.²⁵ Between 1857 and 1859 he served as Clerk of the House of Representatives.

In 1860 Allen ran for the office of Governor for the State of Illinois in a very bitter race. The State was extremely divided over the issues of the expansion of slavery and the rights of free blacks. One issue of particular importance was the support of Article XIV of the State constitution of 1847 that limited the rights of blacks, including the right to immigrate into the State. Richard Yates, Allen's opponent, favored modifying these laws.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, entry for James Cameron Allen, accessed at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index+A000128>.

Republicans accused Allen of being in league with the "slaveocracy," constantly doing their bidding. In an article titled "Record of James Allen—Will He Lie?", Republicans asked why Allen voted against congressional investigations of Representative Preston Brooks for his attack on Charles Sumner and Philemon Herbert for his murder of a Washington D. C. waiter by the name of Charles Keating.²⁶ The campaign got so ugly that Allen bought out a Republican newspaper, *The Yellow Jacket*, that was published in his district because of the vicious attacks against him. He reopened the newspaper as a Democrat paper, the *Crawford County Bulletin*.²⁷

The same tide that swept Lincoln into the presidency in 1860 brought defeat to James Allen. The race was close; Allen had mustered 159,253 votes to Yates' 172,196 votes. Allen continued to work as a leader in Democratic politics and was again elected to the United States Congress in 1863.

²⁶ Political Broadside, "A Man is Known by the Company He Keeps," *Mount Carmel Resister*, 1860. Collection of the Lincoln Archives, LB-3027, Springfield Illinois.

²⁷ Scrapbook, *Crawford County Newspapers*, book 20, page 18, Genealogy Room, Robinson Public Library, Robinson, Illinois.

During the state-wide Democratic convention, where Allen was nominated to run for Congress, a resolution was passed calling on the President to stop the war on secession from becoming a war to free slaves. The platform also called for tougher enforcement of the State Constitution article banning the migration of blacks into the State.²⁸

In Congress, Allen was known as a "Copperhead," or Peace Democrat, a organization of Northern Democrats who fought Lincoln's management of the war effort. While in Congress Allen opposed the recruitment and paying of black troops for the Union Army. He also opposed giving black troops equal pay with white soldiers. In Springfield, Illinois, on June 17, 1863, Allen attended and spoke at a "Copperhead" convention that called for Lincoln to withdraw the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁹ He also voted against the

²⁸ John Moses, *Illinois Historical and Statistical: Comprising the Essential Facts of its Planting and Growth as a Province, County, Territory and State* (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1892); 662.

²⁹ George Washington Smith, *A History of Southern Illinois: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress, its People and its Principle Interests, Volume III* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), 1608.

Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution to end slavery.³⁰ Allen was not re-elected in 1864.

In 1870 Allen was appointed to a convention to form a new Illinois State constitution and was instrumental in the creation of the document. In 1873 he was elected to the Circuit Court and later the appellate court, holding a judgeship in both courts until 1879, when he retired. He continued in private practice as a lawyer until 1907 and died in 1912.

History may have caught up with James Allen in his later years, as he seems to have taken an active role in the creation of his legacy. In a history of Crawford and Clark Counties published in 1883 there is a considerable biographical sketch of Allen. Most of the many county histories published in the latter quarter of the 19th century were full of flattering biographical sketches written with heavy input from the subjects themselves. The purpose for these glowing and self promoting segments was to sell the county histories to individuals profiled within them. Allen's lengthy profile, no doubt written with his

³⁰ Isaac Newton Arnold, *The History of Abraham Lincoln and the Overthrow of Slavery* (Chicago: Clarke & Co., 1867), 586.

contribution and approval, states that while in congress "he possessed the confidence of President Lincoln, and voted for every appropriation of men and money which was asked by the administration to prosecute the war."³¹

Another history states that he was, "a confident and faithful supporter of Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War."³² In the eulogy at his funeral, Reverend A. G. Parker summed up Allen's life with these words. "He was a public officer without vices, a private citizen without wrong, a neighbor without reproach, a friend without treachery, a Christian without hypocrisy and a man without guilt. Courteous, honorable and just, he walked humbly before God."³³

³¹ William Henry Perrin, *History of Crawford and Clark County, Illinois* (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1883), page 56.

³² Undocumented local history reprinted in "Judge James C. Allen, Palestine, Helped Write the Constitution 100 Years Ago," *Robinson Daily News*, December 17, 1970. Allen file, Genealogy Room, Robinson Public Library, Robinson, Illinois.

³³ Funeral Address of elder J.C. Allen by Reverend A. G. Parker, Pastor, February 1, 1812. accession number, sc1142, Collection of the Lincoln Library, Springfield Illinois.

Ephraim Cook

Horace Cannon's children called him "Uncle Eph." Dr. Cannon hired him to work on his farm, located on the edge of Annapolis, on the road to Bloomfield. It was for this act that Dr. Cannon was indicted for harboring a "negro man Ephraim."³⁴

The 1850 census records that Ephraim Cook was born in North Carolina and his wife Maria was born in Alabama. He had five children, Narcissa, Rufus, Allen, Manuel, and Wright. Narcissa, Rufus and Allen all were born in North Carolina. Manuel and Wright were under the age of two and born in Indiana. Also living with the family was seventy year-old Dinah Cook, possibly Ephraim's Mother. She was also born in North Carolina.

Ephraim Cook was probably one of the slaves from the Alabama plantation. It is possible that Ephraim and Dinah were part of the original group of slaves that left North Carolina with the relative of Woodards and moved to Alabama. Thomas Woodard's first wife's maiden name was Cook, so it is possible that Ephraim and Dinah were slaves

³⁴ State of Indiana vs. Horace F. Cannon.

of that family. Estate records for members of the Cook family from Wayne County, North Carolina, indicate that there was a strong connection between the Woodards and the Cooks and that slaves were part of each legacy.³⁵

Ephraim Cook was described by Joseph Cannon as always being respectful and social with people.³⁶ To this description one can add strong and kind. Joe Cannon writes of an incident that describes these traits well. One day, Dr. Cannon allowed Ephraim and his son Joe to attend a visiting circus in Rockville, seven miles from the Cannon farm. After spending the afternoon at the fair, Cook carried the young Joe Cannon, age nine or ten, the long way back to the farm.

While at the fair, Joe Cannon describes another event that gives us a clue as to the personality and life of Ephraim Cook. Cannon describes how "Uncle Eph" encountered a baboon in a cage while at the circus.³⁷ After studying

³⁵ Wayne County North Carolina Will and Estate Records for John, Jones, and Jacob Cook, posted by Elton Cooke, at the USGenweb Archives. Accessed at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/wayne/wills/cooke02.txt> and <http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/wayne/wills/cooke03.txt> and <http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/wayne/wills/cooke04.txt>

³⁶ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

the animal for a time, Cook removed his hat and addressed the baboon with respect. He asked how the baboon was, asking again when he received no answer. Again he received no answer, and said to the animal, "That's right, you keep your mouth shut or they will have you out in the field hoeing corn like me." Joseph Cannon recalls that Ephraim's encounter with the baboon as the "chief event of the day," giving credit to the simian for keeping his mouth shut and being thought of as intelligent.

One may wonder what was going through the mind of Cook looking at another creature in bondage as he once was. One also may wonder if in the hostile environment that Ephraim Cook encountered in Indiana he may have been publically compared to such a beast. Perhaps this is why he showed the animal such respect in removing his hat and addressing the animal so kindly.

After the death of Dr. Cannon in 1851, Cook seems to have roamed the county looking for work. In the early 1850's he may have been befriended by the Bass (Bassett) family, as they are recorded paying taxes together in the

County Treasurer's office.³⁸ The 1870 census lists Cook as a day laborer living in Raccoon Township near the city of Catlin. Raccoon Township is located in the far southern portion of Parke County. He was living with Dinah and the family of his daughter, Narcissa Pope. He was also listed as a widower, and the rest of his family was not listed.³⁹ Raccoon Creek runs through Raccoon Township and feeds into the Wabash River. Raccoon creek contained a number of mills and at least one boat manufacturer. It is possible that Ephraim Cook worked in one of these businesses.

In 1880, Cook is listed as a laborer living and working in Rockville, the County Seat of Parke County. He lives alone in a boarding house owned by George Steward, a mixed race man who worked in the local brick factory.⁴⁰ He may have worked there also; however, *The Rockville Republican* for September 11, 1878 reports that the city of Rockville paid Ephraim Cook three dollars for work on city streets.

³⁸ 1850 Parke County Tax Record Book in the collection of the Parke County Library, Rockville, Indiana.

³⁹ 1870 United States Census for Raccoon Township, Parke County, Indiana, 153.

⁴⁰ United States Census for Rockville, Parke County, Indiana, 1880, 32.

The 1880 census is the last time Ephraim is listed in the census. The Rockville Tribune reported the death of Cook on June 9th 1881. The brief article read, "Ephraim Cook, the aged colored man died Monday and was buried on Tuesday."⁴¹ The record of his death recorded at the court house states that he was buried on Section O, East ½ of lot 46 and that he was born in Alabama, died of tuberculosis on June sixth, 1881, at age 65. The record is in error on two counts; he was born in North Carolina and was 71 years old.

The only member of Ephraim Cook's family who seems traceable is his son Allen. Allen was the youngest son of Ephraim, born while still a slave in Alabama. An Allen Cook is listed in the 1870 census as a "Buffalo" soldier of the Ninth United States Cavalry stationed at Fort Davis in Texas. According to his enlistment papers, Allen Cook joined the regiment September 3, 1867, in New Orleans. His unit was assigned to Greenville, Louisiana, to help during a cholera epidemic there. His occupation is listed as a cook.⁴²

⁴¹ Rockville Tribune, June 9, 1881, 1.

⁴² Enlistment record of Allen Cook, provided by historian Mary L. Williams, Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis Texas. Correspondence in the collection of the author.

It is conceivable that Allen Cook could have made his way from Parke County, to New Orleans. Montezuma, Indiana, located in Parke County was both a terminus for the Wabash and Erie Canal and a major port on the Wabash River, leading to the Ohio River. Business shipping goods out of Parke County was so good there were a number of flat board builders in the county. It is possible that Allen Cook hired on as a cook and laborer on one of these boats and ended up in New Orleans.

On January 28, 1867, Allen was transferred to company A of the Ninth Cavalry band. He was later given the rank of chief bugler earning \$23 dollars a month. He left the army in 1871. He may have married a woman by the name of Rosa and lived in San Antonio.

Benjamin Curry

The 1850 United States Census has Benjamin Curry living in Wayne County, Indiana, on the far side of the State from Parke County. The indictments of 1847 listed Curry as being harbored by Albert Coffin. If this is the same Henderson Curry mentioned in the Parke County indictments he would have been between fifteen and sixteen

years old at the time of the trials. Albert Coffin had many relatives living in Wayne County, including his famous cousin, Levi Coffin. It is possible that Coffin sent Curry to his Wayne County relatives when Parke County proved too hostile to the young man. It is also possible that Henderson Curry had relatives of his own in Wayne County. The 1850 census shows a Benjamin Curry living with his family in New Garden.⁴³

Minor African American children living with and working for white Quaker families was not uncommon. Many African American parents living in southern states sent their children north to free states in the company of Quakers in order to insure their freedom. If Benjamin Curry was Henderson's father, he may have had a very good reason for sending his son north with migrating Quakers.

Sometime in the late 1830s, the home of Benjamin Curry was raided by a group of white men claiming that Curry had defaulted on a loan to them. As a result they were seizing his property and his five slaves. His slaves were in fact his wife and children whom he had purchased and had not yet

⁴³ 1850 United States census for New Garden, Wayne County, Indiana, 276.

gotten permission from the authorities to emancipate. Curry was able to gain back his family with promises to pay their value to the white men. He instead sought legal help, and the men were arrested for making a fraudulent claim against Curry and his family. The men were found guilty and ordered to pay fines, serve a brief sentence, return all property to Curry and pay restitution. The case was appealed to the North Carolina Supreme Court which ruled that the fine and short jail time was punishment enough, and that restitution was not required.⁴⁴

After such a traumatic event, Benjamin Curry may have decided that North Carolina was not the place to keep his family. Since moving his entire family all at once was prohibitive because of costs, he may have chosen to send them north in the care of Quakers he could trust. Perhaps this is why a teenage Henderson Curry was living and working with Albert Coffin and his family in Parke County.

Henderson Curry spent the rest of his life in Wayne County as a farmer. His son Harry Curry went west,

⁴⁴ State of North Carolina vs Bennett, Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, Volume II, 83-84.

eventually living as a barber in Georgetown, Colorado.⁴⁵ As a black barber working in Georgetown it is possible that he was a part owner of the *Red, White and Blue* mine, headed by Jeremiah Lee, a prominent black barber. Many investors in the *Red White and Blue Mining Company* were African Americans.⁴⁶

Dr. Horace F. Cannon

According to the *Bloomington Women's Souvenir* Horace Cannon dreamed that one day his body would be found among rooting pigs. When human bones were discovered approximately a mile from where he was last seen trying to ford a river during a flood the previous year, they were found among rooting pigs.⁴⁷

On September seven 1851, Dr. Horace Cannon left his home in Annapolis on his rounds to visit the farms and homesteads in Liberty Township. His journey required him

⁴⁵ 1880 United States Census for Georgetown Colorado, 33.

⁴⁶ Liston E. Leyendecker, Christine A. Bradley and Duane A. Smith, *The Rise of the Silver Queen: Georgetown Colorado, 1859-1896* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 88.

⁴⁷ Kathryne E. Lamb, *Bloomington Woman's Souvenir*, 2.

to cross Sugar Creek which was swollen with late summer rains. He never made it. Hours later, his horse "old Guilford," returned home without his rider. When a few bones were discovered near a mill dam almost a year later, the small community gathered them up and buried them in the small Quaker cemetery in Bloomfield. As was the Quaker custom of the time, there is no headstone.

It had been a difficult few years for the Cannon Family. In April of 1849, soon after the Parke County trials were over, Isaac Cannon, who had been called to testify against his father in the trials, died of a brain fever. Sarah Hollingsworth, Horace's sister-in-law who was living with the family, died nine days later of Erysipelas. Dr. Cannon's death was a difficult event after so much tragedy within the family.

Dr. Cannon left a moderate estate with a good number of people owing him money for medical services rendered. His estate record also indicates he had just entered in partnership with young doctor by the name of Dare. He also owed money to many people including Zachariah, Richard,

William and John Bassett.⁴⁸ At the time of his death, Cannon had just completed building a new house and may have hired the Basset brothers, who were carpenters, to build it. This may explain the comment about hiring three more African Americans to the sheriff's deputy when they came to take his horses for sale to pay his fine for "harboring a Negro."

A few years after his death, the Cannon family moved with other Quakers to Illinois. Joseph Cannon became a lawyer and politician. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1873 and served for eight terms. He then moved to Danville, Illinois, where he failed to be elected in 1890. He was again elected to congress in 1893 and served until 1913, a total of nine more terms, for a total of seventeen terms in Congress. In the 58th Congress he was elected as Speaker of the House, serving four terms. While speaker, he tightly controlled the business of the house, earning the title of the most powerful man to ever hold the office. His political enemies called him the

⁴⁸Will and estate inventory for Horace Cannon, Complete Record book for the Court of Common Pleas, Parke County, Volume 3, October 1853-July 1854, 428-429.

"Tyrant from Illinois," his friends called him "Uncle Joe."⁴⁹

Horace F. Cannon: Part Two

In 1895 ten year old Horace F. Cannon was sent to reform school for stealing a pair of shoes. Fifty-five years later Cannon wrote a letter to the Department of Social Services for the State of Indiana ask if his records from the reform school might tell him how old he was and when he was born. At the time, he was living in Detroit and seeking to retire from the street department. Knowing his age would help him prove to his employer that he had reached the age of sixty-five. According to the state of Indiana, Horace F. Cannon was born in Wayne County, Indiana on February 9, 1885. His father's name was Richmond Cannon, born in North Carolina in approximately 1841.

The interesting thing about this Horace Cannon is that he was just one of several African American "Horace F. Cannons," including one female, in the State of Indiana whose families may have had a connection with Dr. Horace F.

⁴⁹ Blair Bolles, *Tyrant from Illinois: Uncle Joe Cannon's Experiment with Personal Power* (New York: W.W. Norton Inc., 1951).

Cannon of Parke County, Indiana.⁵⁰ The clues are few and tenuous at best, but it is possible that at least some of the African American Horace F. Cannons found in the historical record were given the name to honor the legacy of Dr. Cannon.

In the case of Horace Cannon of Detroit, Michigan, his father had the unique name of "Richmond." According to the historical record, Richmond was born in North Carolina about the same time Dr. Horace Cannon and his family moved from North Carolina to Indiana.⁵¹ The route of Dr. Cannon and his family from North Carolina took them through Richmond, Indiana where they visited some friends and family.

What if the Cannon family did not travel alone, but instead traveled with other families, including a family of former slaves? Just before the families moved north, one of their members gave birth to a son that they named Richmond in honor of the new place they would be moving to. In addition, one of the slave families, looking to make a

⁵⁰ Birth record of Horace Cannon, female, Howard County (Indiana) Index to Birth Records 1875-1920 inclusive, Volume 1, Letters A-K.

⁵¹ United States Census for Wayne County, Indiana, 1850.

new start, took the last name of a prominent member of their traveling party and possibly the last name of the man who helped in the birth of a son. That name, of course was, Cannon. When Richmond had a son, he named him Horace F. Cannon.

The African American Horace Cannon had a rather difficult life. After leaving reform school, he attempted to make a living as a cook, but was arrested in 1905 for burglarizing a saloon belonging to W.C. Curry. He reportedly stole a watch, a gun and sixty-five cents in cash.⁵² For this crime he was sent to the Indiana State Reformatory in Jeffersonville for one to four years. While in the prison Cannon suffered from repeated bouts of intestinal distress and was hospitalized three times.⁵³ After serving nearly eighteen months, Horace Cannon was paroled in June of 1906.

Soon after leaving prison, Cannon married Elizabeth Downs in Tippecanoe, Indiana and moved to Detroit, Michigan

⁵² Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, January 27, 1905. See Figure 19.

⁵³ Record of Horace Cannon, Indiana State Penitentiary Records, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, IN.

to make a new start.⁵⁴ The 1910 census lists Cannon and his wife living in a boarding house in Ward 3, within the city of Detroit.⁵⁵ His occupation is listed as "manufacturing Company." In 1910 there were a number of industries in the general area of Antoine Avenue where Cannon was living, and he was not too far from the Detroit River where a number of Great Lakes shipping companies had docks. Cannon's draft card for World War I lists his occupation as "patrolman" for the Detroit Police department, which seems strange given his criminal record. Horace Cannon does not appear in the 1920 census.

The 1930 Census records Cannon living as a single widower living in a boarding house run by Nannie Bailey. He is unemployed, but lists his occupation as the foreman of a street construction crew.⁵⁶ The 1930 Census is the last census available at the time of the writing of this work. Horace Cannon wrote his letter to the State of Indiana in

⁵⁴ Marriage Record of Horace F. Cannon and Elizabeth Downs, September 19, 1906, Index to Marriage Records for the Tippecanoe County Indiana, Volume 1, letters A-E. Clerk's Office, Tippecanoe County Courthouse, Lafayette, Indiana.

⁵⁵ United States Census for 1910, Ward 3, City of Detroit, 7-A.

⁵⁶ 1930 United State's Census for Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, 9b.

1950 asking for documentation of his age, probably because he was looking to retire at age 65. His letter states that his address in 1950 was 558 Alfred Avenue in Detroit. The address is currently located in the middle of a poorly maintained housing project. No further record of Horace F. Cannon could be located.

Washington Hadley

After the Parke County trials, Washington Hadley (See Figure 4) returned to his mercantile business and became active in Whig/Republican politics. In 1859 he was elected to the office of Parke County Treasurer for two terms as a Republican. He was then appointed to the office of Auditor. While the County Auditor, he helped oversee the construction of the Jackson Bridge, built on the site of Dr. Cannon's drowning.⁵⁷

In 1865 he migrated with other Parke County Quakers to Lawrence Kansas in order to go into the banking and mercantile business. He established the National Bank of Lawrence and became president of the Lawrence Water-Power

⁵⁷ See Figure 17.

Company. In addition, he served as Mayor of the city of Lawrence for two terms, 1869-1872, and helped establish the State University in Lawrence.⁵⁸

In 1889 Hadley moved to Los Angeles, California, where he became a principle in the Pickering Land and Water Company, which established the town of Whittier, California. He also helped form the National Bank of California and became President of the Bank, a position he held until 1908.⁵⁹ Washington Hadley died in 1911 at the age of ninety-four.

⁵⁸ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883)

⁵⁹ Robert J. Burdette, Ed. *American Biography and Genealogy: California Edition*, Volume I (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1914), 227-230.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1: Richard Bassett, (ca. 1875) was born in North Carolina and migrated with his family to Parke County in 1845 or 1846. Richard and his brothers, Zachariah, Henry, and William, worked as carpenters and farm laborers in or near Annapolis. In 1848 Richard was indicted for allowing his horse to be used in a horse race. As influential leader of the black settlement in Parke County, Richard led members of the community to a new settlement in Howard County, Indiana, sometime around 1860. Richard Bassett became a minister in the Baptist Church in Indiana and was elected to the Indiana House of Representatives in 1892. (Photo courtesy the Indiana State Library)



Figure 2: James Cameron Allen (ca. 1863) was the prosecutor for the State of Indiana in the Parke County trials in 1847. Afterwards he moved to Palestine, Illinois and became very active in Illinois politics. He eventually ran for governor in 1860, losing to Republican Richard Yates. He was elected to the United States Congress in 1863 and was a prominent leader of the "Copperhead" movement. (Photo courtesy the Library of Congress)



Dr. Horace Cannon.

Figure 3: Photograph of Dr. Horace Cannon taken from an issue of *Bloomington Woman's Souvenir*, 1908. Dr. Cannon is believed to have been the leader of the group of Quakers who aided the enslaved people out of Alabama and was later indicted for "harboring negroes." He died attempting to cross Sugar Creek while making his medical rounds in 1851. (Photo courtesy of the Parke County Public Library, Rockville, Indiana)

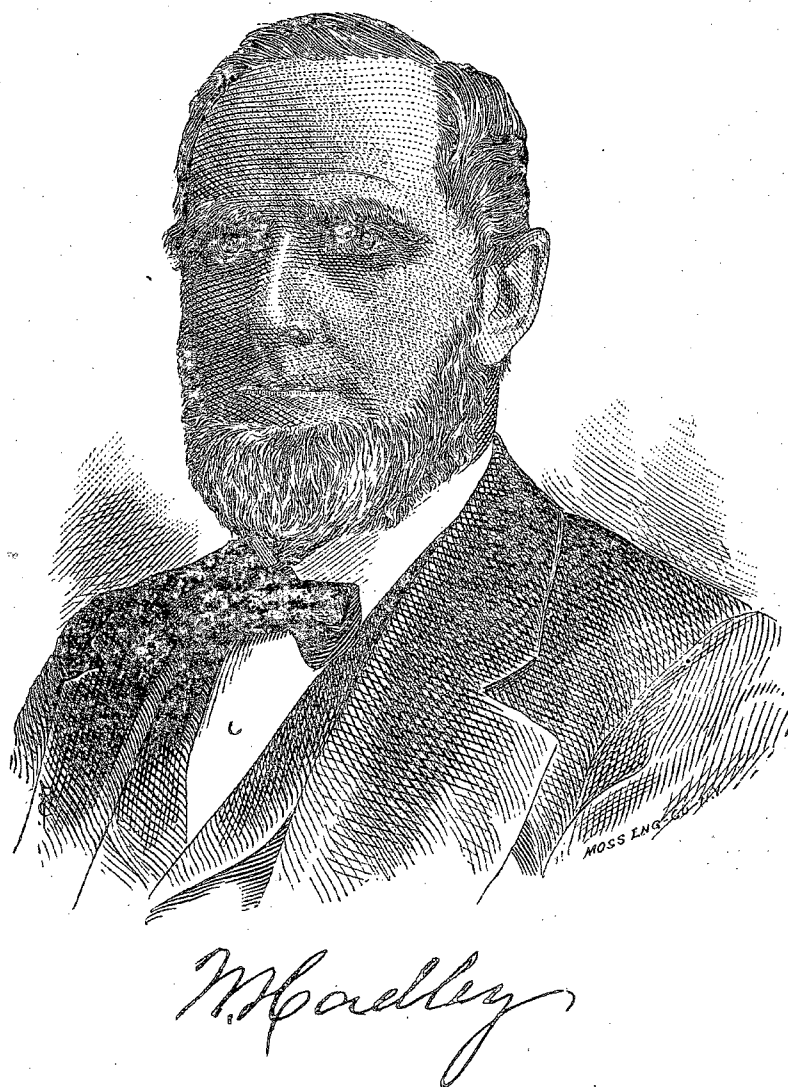


Figure 4: Washington Hadley was a young merchant working in Annapolis when he and Dr. Horace Cannon were tried for "harboring negroes." Hadley went on to successful careers in politics, retail and banking. After leaving Parke County, he lived for a time in Kansas and later California, where he helped found the city of Whittier. (Photo taken from the *History of the State of Kansas* by William G. Cutter, 1883, courtesy of Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Historic Site, Olathe, Kansas.)



Figure 5: George K. Steele was indicted by the Parke County grand jury for employing Rachel Laws. At the time of the indictments, 1847, he was one of the richest men in the county. He was a strong supporter of the Whig and Republican parties serving as a delegate to the Republican National Convention from Indiana in 1860. (Photograph from the title page of the 1874 Atlas Map of Parke County. Courtesy of James D. VanDerMark and Carole Gardner)

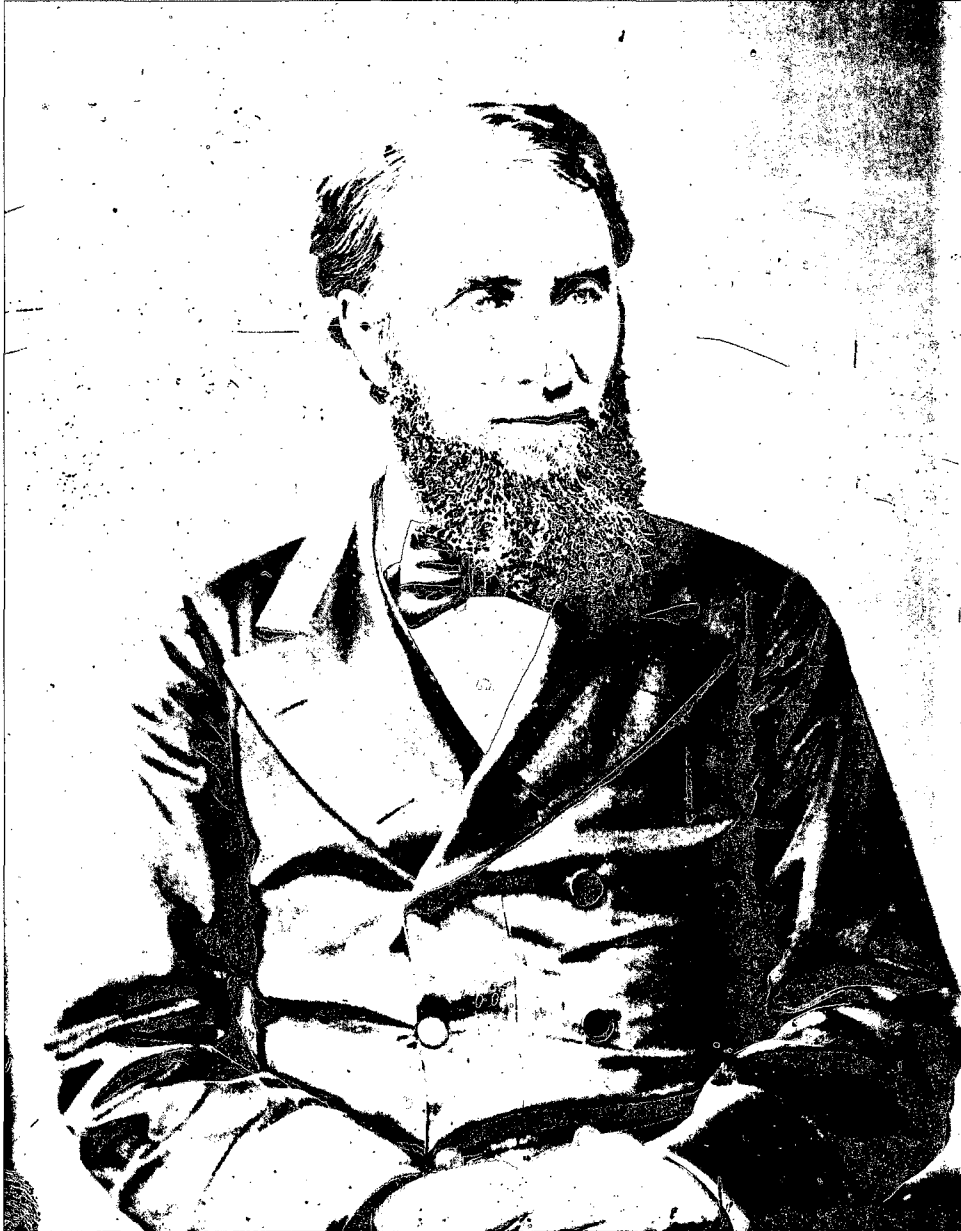


Figure 6: Joseph Gurney Cannon (ca. 1880) was the third son of Dr. Horace Cannon. It was his account of his father's ordeal and trial for helping the Parke County African Americans that became the basis of many later accounts of the story. After his father's death, Joseph and his family moved to Illinois where he became active in Republican politics. He was eventually elected to the United States House of Representatives and became Speaker of the House from 1903 to 1911. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

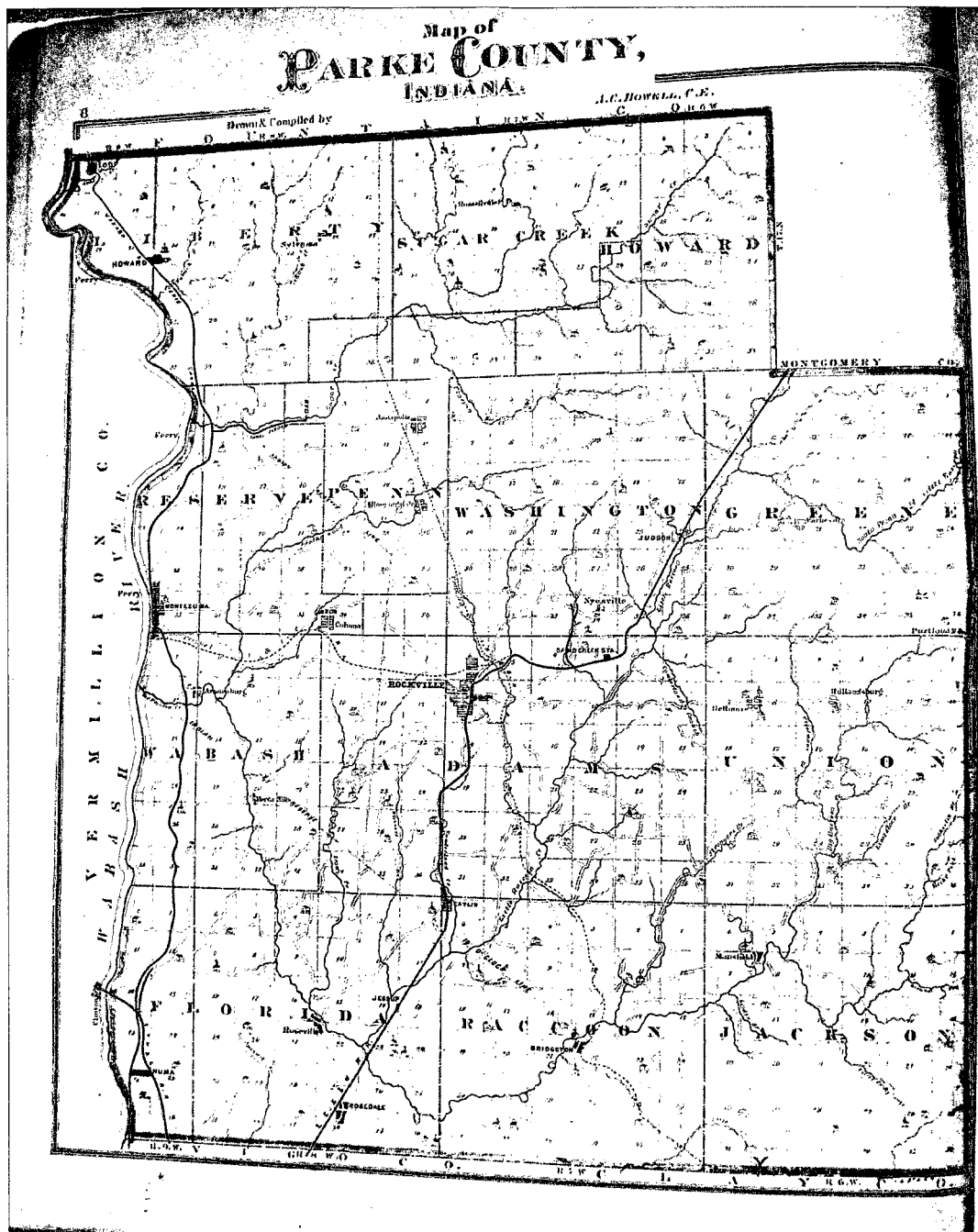


Figure 7: Map of Parke County showing townships, Bloomingdale (Bloomfield) and Annapolis are located in Penn Township in the middle of the map. The map is taken from the 1874 Atlas Map of Parke County. (Map courtesy of James D. VanDerMark and Carole Gardner)

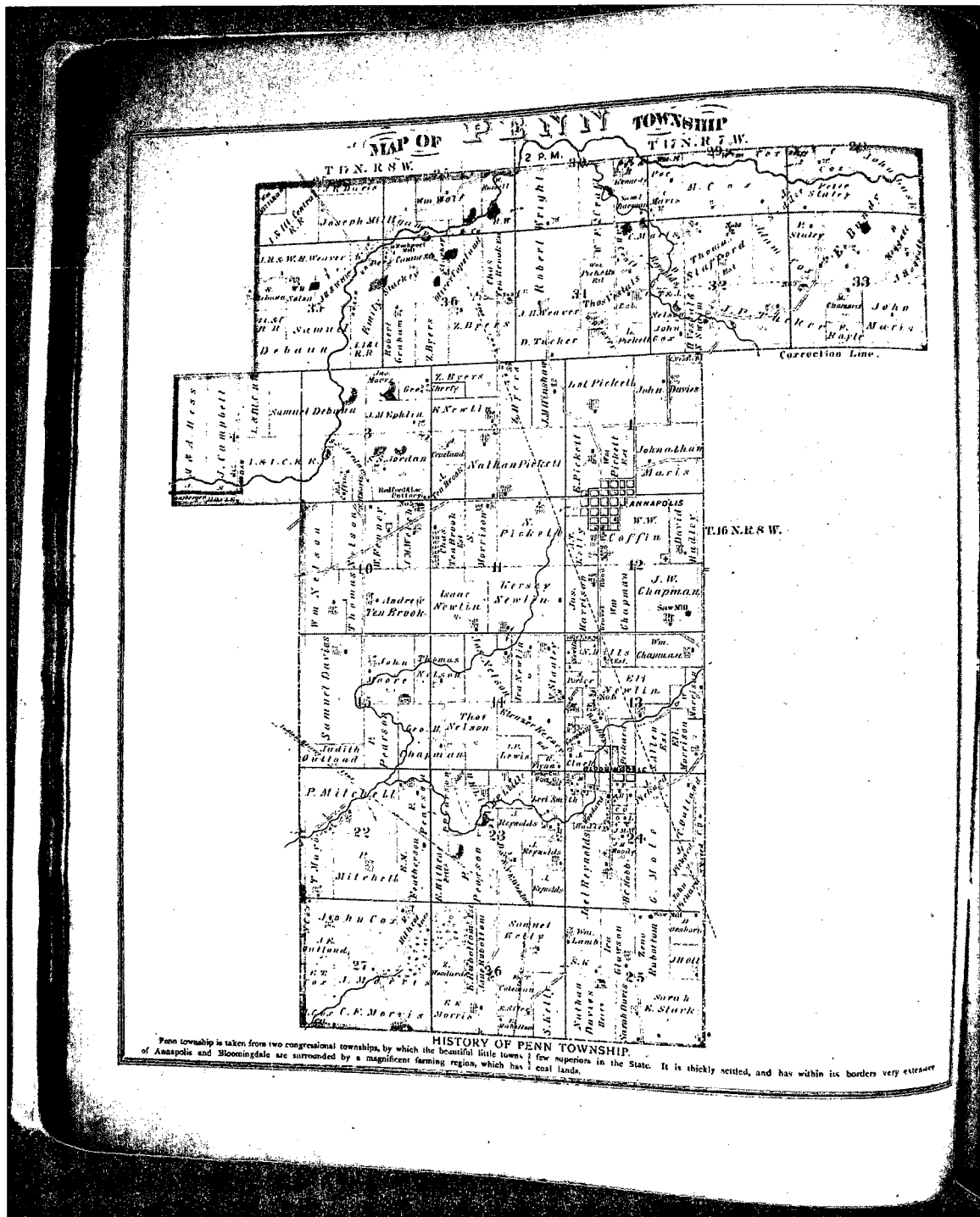


Figure 8: Atlas map of Penn Township, Parke County, Indiana, in 1874 showing the location of Bloomingdale and Annapolis. (Map courtesy of James D. VanDerMark and Carole Gardner)

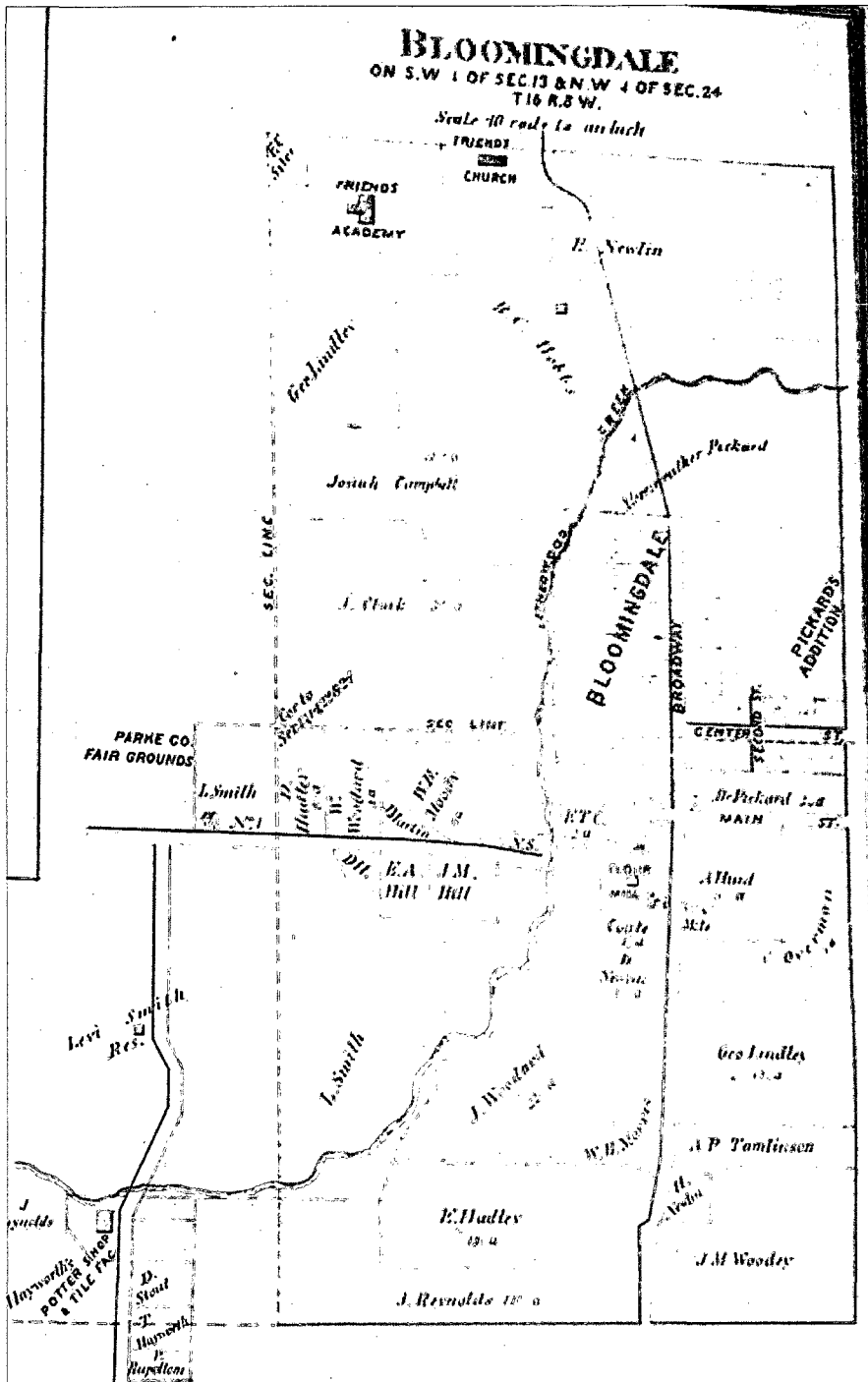


Figure 10: Bloomingdale (Bloomfield) 1874. The road at the top of the page leads to Annapolis. (Map courtesy of James D. VanDerMark and Carole Gardner)

State of Indiana, Parke Circuit Court
 Parke County } the April Term 1847
 The Grand Jurors empanelled
 charged and sworn to inquire for the State
 of Indiana in and for the body of the County
 of Parke upon their oath present that Horace
 Cannon late of the County of Parke on the fifteenth
 day of April in the year of Our Lord eight hundred
 and forty seven at the County aforesaid
 did then and there unlawfully and knowingly
 engage hire and harbor ^{the said} Man Ephraim
 (whose true name is to the Jurors aforesaid unknown)
 the said Ephraim negro man Ephraim
 then lately having come into the State of
 Indiana on the first day of March in the year aforesaid
 and the said negro man Ephraim not then
 and then ~~having~~ ^{having} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~County~~ ^{County} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~Parke~~ ^{Parke} ~~nor~~ ^{nor} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~other~~ ^{other} ~~County~~ ^{County} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~State~~ ^{State}
 and then ~~having~~ ^{having} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~County~~ ^{County} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~Parke~~ ^{Parke} ~~nor~~ ^{nor} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~other~~ ^{other} ~~County~~ ^{County} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~State~~ ^{State}
 with good and sufficient Security conditioned that said he said Ephraim
 negro man as aforesaid should not at any
 time be come a County charge to the said County
 of Parke nor to any other County in said State
 the said negro man Ephraim having not
 then and there nor at any other time previous
 thereto been hired out by the same Overseers
 of the poor of any Township in said State
 to the said Horace Cannon: and that
 the said Horace Cannon, then and there
 knowing that the said negro man Ephraim
 had in the year last aforesaid come into the
 said State of Indiana, and had ^{not had given in his bond of bond} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~County~~ ^{County} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~State~~ ^{State}
 with good and sufficient Security conditioned
 that he the said Ephraim should not
 thereafter be come a County charge to the said
 County of Parke nor to any other County in said
 State, did on the day and year first aforesaid
 and from that time until the finding of this indictment by

by the Jurors aforesaid at the County aforesaid
 unlawfully, ~~have~~ engage hire and harbor
 the said negro man Ephraim contrary to
 the form of the Statute in such case made and
 provide or against the peace and dignity of
 the State of Indiana,
 Alfen Gros ally.

1686
 State of Indiana
 Horace Cannon
 Harboring Negro
 Bail \$25
 A True Bill
 James M. Fisher
 Foreman
 Filed April 24, 1847
 J. G. Davis clk
 J. G. Davis Depy
 J. G. Davis
 Isaac Cannon
 Horace Cannon
 Mordica Parke
 Charles P. Robinson
 Amos Coffin
 John G. Davis

Figure 11: Indictment of Dr. Horace Cannon for harboring "negro man Ephraim" (Ephraim Cook), dated April 1847. Note that bail was set at Twenty-five dollars and the witness list included Isaac Coffin, Horace's son, and John G. Davis, clerk of the county court and head of the Democratic Party in Parke, County. (Scanned from the original located in the Clerk's Office, Parke County Courthouse, by the author, layout by John George).

State of Indiana } Sec
 Parke County } 3 Parke Circuit Court
 April Term 1847.

The Grand Jurors Empannelled, Charged and sworn to Enquire for the State of Indiana, and for the body of the County of Parke upon their oath presents: That Henderson Curry, a Negro heretofore to wit: on the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty seven was brought into this State; and that the said Henderson Curry, a Negro as aforesaid, has ever since the day and year aforesaid, continued to reside in the County of Parke aforesaid: And that the said Henderson Curry, so brought into this State as aforesaid, has heretofore wholly failed to have bond with approved security given on his behalf conditioned, that he the said Henderson Curry should not at any time become a security charge to the County of Parke, nor to any other County in this State; as also for his good behavior:— And that the said Henderson Curry was not at any time been hired out by the Overseers on the poor of any Township of this State:— And that Albert G. Coffin late of the County of Parke aforesaid (well knowing that the said Henderson Curry had not, nor given on his behalf, bond with good security conditioned as aforesaid; and that said Henderson Curry had not at any time been hired out by the Overseers of the poor of any Township of this State) did on the tenth day of April in the year eighteen hundred and forty seven unlawfully and knowingly engage and harbor the said Henderson Curry, Negro as aforesaid, contrary to the form of the Statute in such case made and provided, and

Figure 12: Indictment of Albert Coffin for harboring Henderson Curry, April 1847. Coffin's indictment is written by someone other than the person who wrote the other indictments. It is possible that it was written by John Davis, Clerk of the Parke County Court and witness against Horace Cannon. (Scanned from original in the office of the Parke County Clerk of Courts)

State of Indiana, Parke County, ss:

THE STATE OF INDIANA, TO THE SHERIFF OF SAID COUNTY—GREETING:

We command you to take *Horace Cannon*

if *he* may be found in your bailiwick, and *him* safely keep, so that you may have *his* body before our Judges, in our Circuit Court, at the Court House, in *Rockville*, on the *third* Monday in *October* next, then and there in our Circuit Court to answer unto *the State of Indiana on an Indictment for Harboring a Negro*

And have then there this writ.

WITNESS, JOHN G. DAVIS, Clerk of said Court, at *Rockville*, the *fourth* day of *May* in the year of Lord eighteen hundred and forty-*seven*

J. M. Morris
for *John G. Davis* Clerk.

Figure 13: Arrest Warrant for Dr. Horace Cannon issued on May 4, 1847. (Scanned from original in the office of the Parke County Clerk of Courts)

Parke County April Term 1847

Bailiff to grand Jury	500
Wm Gilkison 5 days	
riding Bailiff to grand Jury	
Josh L Boyer 5 days	625-
Jogel Hendrix do	625-
Philip Day do do	625-
³¹ Bailiff to Grand - the Court	
W. Allen - 8 days	800
To 1 day writing	125-
Alex - Quitt 6 -	600
To 2 days writing -	250

G. Humphreys Off

Figure 14: Statement of Bailiff's account for the Park County circuit court grand jury expenses for the April Term in 1847. This list shows the names of some of the jurors involved in the indictments of those who employed freemen in violation of the 1831 Indiana Black Law. (Scanned from original in the office of the Parke County Clerk of Courts)

State of Indiana } Parke Circuit Court
 Parke County } } October Term 1848

The Grand Jurors empanelled charged and sworn to enquire for the State of Indiana and in and for the body of Parke upon their oath present that Richard Bass late of the County and State aforesaid on the first day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty eight at the County of Parke and State aforesaid did then and there knowingly and unlawfully suffer and permit his horse ~~to be run~~ ^{to be run} in what is commonly called a horse race ^{in and along a public highway} which said horse race was then and there run by and between the said horse of the said Richard Bass and the horse of one Lawrence Gallagan on and along a certain public highway ^{aforesaid} then and there situated contrary to the Statute in such case made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana

S. Maxwell
 Pros Atty Geo. Turner

Figure 15: Indictment of Richard Bass(ett) for allowing his horse to be used in a horse race for which he was fined over seventeen dollars. Richard Bassett led a group of African Americans from Parke County to Howard County, Indiana, where the founded the Bassett-Ellis settlement. (Scanned from original in the office of the Parke County Clerk of Courts)

1107

State of Indiana & Del.

Cyrus Garrigus & Carroll Whitson overseers of poor
vs

Henry Bass a negro

Be it remembered that on the 14th day of June 1847, Cyrus Garrigus & Carroll Whitson overseers of the poor of Reserve township Parke County filed with me a complaint that a certain negro person by the name of Henry Bass has lately (viz since the first day of Sept 1831) taken up residence in said township, and that the said negro has not complied with the law of this state relating to all black and mulatt. persons, in force since September 1831 requiring them to give bond and security for their good behavior, &c

Whereupon a summons was issued directed to the proper constable commanding him to summon the said Henry Bass to appear before me on Monday the 21st day of June 1847 to show cause if any he can why he should not comply with the law as aforesaid

June 21 summons returned duly served on defendant by reading

And was on the same day the parties appeared (the defendant & bonds not guilty) and go into trial Thomas W Nelson Council for defendant and after the proofs and allegations on both sides being heard it is considered by the court that the complaint is not sustained and that the defendant be discharged

Charles Martin J.P. (seal)

Justice Fee 50 cts Constables Fee 50
this transcript 25
melaye 50
\$ 1,31

Figure 16: Indictment of Henry Bass(ett) for not paying his bond as required by the Indiana Black Law of 1831, June 1847. (Scanned from original in the office of the Parke County Clerk of Courts)



Figure 17: Jackson covered bridge, Parke County, Indiana. This bridge was built near the ford where Dr. Horace Cannon drowned in 1851. Note that the county Treasurer at the time was Washington Hadley, who was indicted with Dr. Cannon in the Parke County trials. (Photo by the author, 2008)

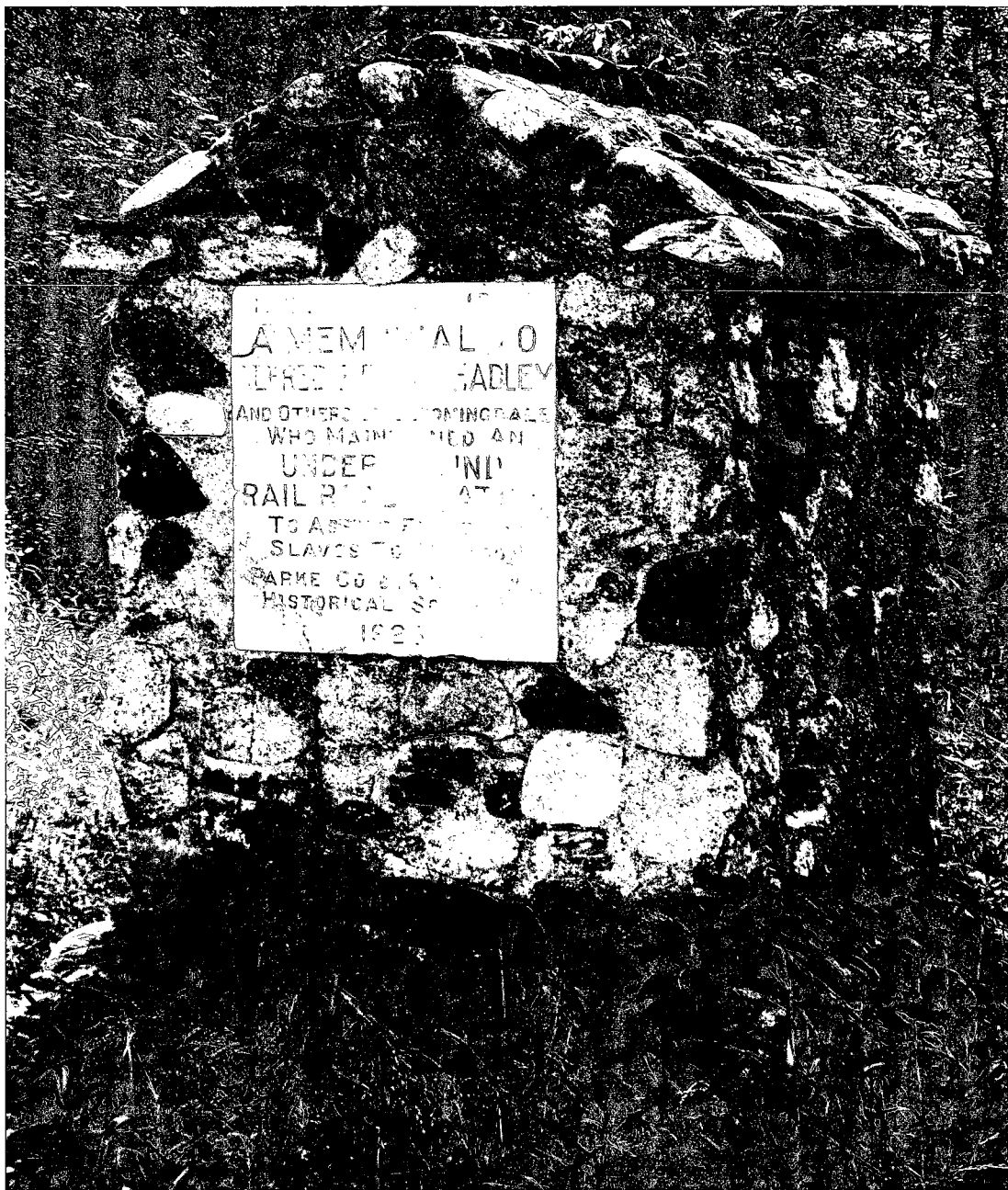


Figure 18: Underground Railroad monument located off Highway 41 near Bloomingdale, (Bloomfield) Indiana. The monument reads in part: "1850-1863 A Memorial to Alfred and Rhoda Hadley and others of Bloomingdale who Maintained a Underground Railroad Station to Assist Fugitive Slaves to Freedom. Parke Co & Penn Twp Historical Societys (sp) 1926." (Photo by the author, 2008)

THE FORT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE, FRIDAY MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1905.

NEGRO CONFESSES TO BURGLARY

ADMITS HE PLANNED FOR OTHER
OPERATIONS.

Secured Watch, Revolver and Cash
From Saloon—Mrs. Louisa Wes-
sel Arrested on Serious Charge—
News of the Police.

Detective Charles Rulo made a clever catch yesterday when he placed Horace Cannon, a twenty-year-old negro youth, behind the bars and secured from him a confession that it was he who burglarized the saloon of W. C. Curry, at 131 1/2 Lafayette street, about a week ago. The articles stolen included a gold watch, a revolver and 65 cents in cash, and the officer secured the watch and revolver before he made the arrest. Later Cannon paid over the money taken. The prisoner, after stealing the articles, had turned them over to friends to keep for him.

In addition to making a confession that he pulled off the Curry robbery, Cannon said he had planned several other jobs. Among them was the proposed robbery of the barn of Mr. Charles Bash, on West Wayne street. There are dwelling rooms in the barn and Cannon expected to make a good haul from Mr. Bash's tenants and from articles in the barn.

Figure 19: A newspaper article written about the arrest and confession of Horace F. Cannon for robbing a saloon belonging to W. C. Curry in Fort Wayne, Indiana, January 1905. Horace Cannon was one of several African American "Horace Cannons" born in Indiana whose family may have had some connection to Dr. Horace F. Cannon of Parke County. The Horace Cannon mentioned in the above article later move to the city of Detroit and worked as a supervisor in the city's Street Department. (The Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette)