Northward bound: Slave refugees and the pursuit of freedom in the Northern US and Canada, 1775-1861

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Chapter Two
Freedom Seekers, the Underground Railroad, and Escape to the Northern US and Canada

> I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a free State… It was a moment of the highest excitement… In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery.
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> - Frederick Douglass[127]

In the decades after the first emancipation, thousands of enslaved African Americans in the US South escaped to the northern states and Canada. Although most made the journey on foot, others traveled by stagecoach or train, steamboat, and coastal maritime routes. Freedom seekers employed various strategies to reach their respective destinations. Self-emancipated men and women regularly sought to pass as legally free blacks. Steven Hahn argues that free African American communities in the North were the "most important and reliable allies the slaves had[.]"[128] Passing for free people of color, they hoped to evade enslavers, slave catchers, and local, state, and federal authorities. Others utilized the natural environment, including woods, fields, rivers, dens, and caves, to escape from southern slavery. Finally, other slave refugees were aided by the series of loosely organized, overlapping escape networks. Black freedom networks spanned the entire North and were managed by free and self-emancipated African Americans, Quakers, and white abolitionists. Some took advantage of these networks to reach northern towns and cities, while others escaped via New England, the Niagara borderland, and Detroit River borderland.

This chapter examines how freedom seekers escaped to the northern US and Canada. Which routes proved most popular among self-emancipated refugees? How

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[127] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 107-108, accessed May 1, 2018. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html.

[128] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 57. In another book, Hahn likens northern black communities with 'maroon' communities elsewhere in the Americas and even refers to them as 'enclaves.' Although Hahn presents an interesting conceptualization, the comparison between northern black communities and maroons is not quite accurate. Rather than forming completely separate settlements, African Americans across the North typically strove for integration and equality within the broader society. See Hahn, *Political Worlds*, 31-32.

did slave refugees reach the northern states and Canada? What modes of transportation (if any) did they use? And how did they avoid recapture? It will demonstrate that various factors shaped the journeys of self-emancipators to the North and Canada. First, geography was an important determinant; in short, enslaved African Americans typically fled to the closest 'free' state. Thus, self-emancipators in Maryland and Virginia mostly escaped across the Mason-Dixon line to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. From there, they typically traveled to New England or British North America. Meanwhile, enslaved people in Kentucky and Missouri typically escaped via Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Many refugees subsequently made their way to the Lake Erie border zone, Canada, or Wisconsin in an attempt to build distance from the South. Others took refuge in towns, cities, and independent farming settlements in the Ohio River and Mississippi River borderlands.

Furthermore, this chapter examines the nature and contributions of interracial freedom networks in aiding slave refugees to the North and Canada. In what ways did the UGRR assist freedom seekers? As mentioned earlier, UGRR histories since the mid-twentieth century have emphasized the agency of enslaved people and the contributions of free African Americans. This dissertation continues recent trends by depicting the UGRR as an interracial movement. Free black communities across the northern US sheltered refugees from the South, while African Americans were among the most instrumental UGRR activists. Black activists managed vigilance committees and other self-defense organizations across the northern states to protect freedom seekers. Furthermore, this study compares and contrasts the nature of the UGRR across the northern US. It examines the differences between freedom networks in the Mid-Atlantic region and New England, which were more organized, with those in the former Northwest Territory, which were comparatively less sophisticated (although they exhibited some degree of management and organization).

Lastly, this chapter explores the nature of escape to the North and Canada. While most studies depict self-emancipation as a predominantly solitary act, this study emphasizes the importance of family ties and kinship networks to slave refugee escapes. As revealed in abolitionist records, enslaved families devised various strategies to escape from the South. Some fled together in smaller groups, while most staggered their journeys in patterns that resemble chain migration. Freedom-seeking families (particularly those with young children) generally found escape more challenging than those who escaped alone or in small groups. Yet they still found ways of traveling covertly and reaching the 'free' states and British North America. Indeed, some self-emancipated men and women returned to the South to liberate enslaved loved ones. Far from insignificant, kinship ties thus remained important to self-emancipated people after their escapes.

Self-Emancipation and Freedom in the Mason-Dixon Borderland

Caroline Hammond recalled her escape from the South as part of the Federal Writers' Project in 1938. Born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in 1844 to a free black man and an enslaved woman, Hammond was "owned by Thomas Davidson, a slave owner and farmer of Anne Arundel." About twenty-five enslaved African Americans worked on Davidson's farm during her childhood, including her mother. The Davidsons "were considered people of high social standing in Annapolis and the people in the county." Hammond claimed that Davidson was "good to his slaves, treating them with every consideration that he could, with the exception of freeing them[.]" His wife, however, was "hard on all the slaves"; she was the daughter of a family "known all over Maryland for their brutality with their slaves." Following Thomas' death, his wife assumed "full control of the farm and the slaves." Hammond's father attempted to purchase her and her mother's freedom but their enslaver declined the offer. He hatched a scheme to liberate his wife and daughter. "By bribing the sheriff of Anne Arundel County," Hammond noted, "father was given a passage to Baltimore for mother and me. On arriving in Baltimore, mother, father, and I went to a white family on Ross Street – now Druid Hill Ave., where we were sheltered by two occupants, who were ardent supporters of the Underground Railroad." Hammond's enslaver posted rewards of fifty dollars each for the mother and child. In the meantime, plans were made to transport Hammond and her parents from the state. She claimed:

> A Mr. Coleman[.] whose brother-in-law lived in Pennsylvania, used a large covered wagon to transport merchandise from Baltimore to different villages along the turnpike to Hanover, Pa., where he lived. Mother and father and I were concealed in a large wagon drawn by six horses. On our way to Pennsylvania, we never alighted on the ground in any community or close to any settlement, fearful of being apprehended by people who were always looking for rewards. After arriving at Hanover, Pennsylvania, it was easy for us to get transportation farther north. They made their way to Scranton, Pennsylvania, in which place they both secured positions in the same family.[129]

Caroline Hammond's escape to Pennsylvania reveals a great deal about freedom seekers and escape in the Mason-Dixon borderland. First, it highlights the

[129] Interview with Caroline Hammond (A Fugitive). *FWP: Slave Narrative Project, vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks-Williams.*1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material, 19-21, accessed Sep. 1, 2019. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn080/.

role played by UGRR activists across the region, north and south of the line. Second, it emphasizes the importance of family to self-emancipation. And third, it demonstrates the significance of escaping from the Upper South to the 'free' states. While many self-emancipators remained in towns and cities throughout Maryland and Virginia, others understood the value of crossing into Pennsylvania. The state had gradually abolished the institution of slavery over previous decades and was home to anti-slavery sympathizers and friends. In some respects, however, Hammond's testimony is not typical of self-emancipation in the Mason-Dixon borderland. Most freedom seekers did not come into contact with UGRR activists during their escapes to Pennsylvania. Moreover, absent from her interview are some of the most important actors in the antebellum freedom movement: African Americans. Rather than seeking assistance from northern (or southern) whites, most self-emancipators typically sought refuge in free black communities throughout the borderland. In doing so, they hoped to blend in with the larger population and pass for free blacks. The next section will highlight the various ways by which slave refugees escaped to the North via the Mason-Dixon borderland.

For freedom seekers from Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and other states along the eastern seaboard, Pennsylvania was the natural destination. With its geographical proximity and growing free black populations, it made sense that self-emancipators would increasingly set their trajectories toward the Keystone State. As Max Grivno writes, Pennsylvania became "a haven for runaway slaves" over the antebellum period. Following the state's 1780 abolition statute, the Mason-Dixon line was irreversibly transformed into a prominent free-soil border between Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. While it did not formally share a border with Pennsylvania, northern Virginia's geographical proximity realistically made it part of the Mason-Dixon borderland. In practice, the law's initial results were quite ambiguous. First, black enslavement lingered in Pennsylvania well into the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the free African American populations of Delaware and Maryland rose swiftly in the early republic. By 1850, approximately half of Maryland's black residents were legally free. In Delaware, roughly ninety percent of African Americans were legally free people of color. In this regard, the Mason-Dixon borderland was a soft border between slavery and freedom.[130]

As Richard S. Newman writes, Pennsylvania emerged as "one of the first battlegrounds" over the 'free soil' principle, "the belief among enslaved people and their allies that certain geographies and territorial domains abetted black freedom

[130] Max Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 45; "SLAVERY in PENNSYLVANIA," *Slavenorth.com*, accessed Mar. 8, 2019. http://slavenorth.com/pennsylvania.htm; Maryland and Delaware statistics from Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1-2.

claims."[131] Beginning in the late eighteenth century, enslaved people from the Upper South and beyond sought to claim their liberty by escaping across the Mason-Dixon line. In other instances, Pennsylvania free blacks and white abolitionists launched legal cases to liberate those who were brought to the state voluntarily by their respective enslavers. In 1814, an attempt was made to free an enslaved woman from Maryland named Charity Castle, who had been taken to Philadelphia by her enslaver. Pennsylvania law permitted enslavers to bring enslaved people to the state for a maximum period of six months (these so-called 'sojourner laws' will be discussed further in Chapter Four). On the eve of their return to Maryland, Charity broke her leg and was declared unfit to travel. Local blacks and abolitionists petitioned the state courts for Charity's liberty because her enslavers had exceeded the six-month limit. Although the outcome is unknown, the episode illustrates how Pennsylvania increasingly became a "crossroads of freedom for generations of enslaved people and kidnapped free blacks in the United States."[132]

Across the Chesapeake and Tidewater Virginia, slave refugees employed a range of strategies and routes to reach Pennsylvania. Rather than heading straight for the Mason-Dixon line, self-emancipators often first sought refuge with free African Americans in the Upper South. Baltimore and Washington, DC, for instance, boasted sizable black communities. African Americans in both cities were, by and large, legally free. In 1830, Baltimore's black population stood at almost 19,000, roughly three-quarters of whom were legally free. As a result, enslavers, slave catchers, and other local authorities found it difficult to locate illegally self-emancipated people among the larger black population. While many permanent freedom seekers remained in these cities, others sought to use them as a springboard to neighboring Pennsylvania. Both cities had relatively extensive transportation networks with other northern cities. Stagecoaches, trains, and steamboats regularly traveled north from Washington and Baltimore. Furthermore, these cities offered a range of temporary employment opportunities, which would provide freedom seekers with the chance to earn money before escaping to the North. In the case of Baltimore, T. Stephen Whitman writes that the city's free black population and socio-economic opportunities "allowed many runaways simply to melt into anonymity, living with other blacks, huckstering, pursuing a trade, or working as day laborers." The city's

[131] Richard S. Newman, "'Lucky to be born in Pennsylvania': Free Soil, Fugitive Slaves, and the Making of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Borderland," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011), 414. The concept of free soil landscapes and geographies has been theorized by 71ouisvil scholars of slavery and freedom in the Atlantic world. For key readings, see Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, "Free Soil: The Generation and Circulation of an Atlantic Legal Principle," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011), 331-339; and Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (2012), 40-66.

[132] Newman, "'Lucky to be born in Pennsylvania,' 413-414.

docks and shipyards offered freedom seekers opportunities to obtain short-term work.[133]

Escaped slave notices illustrate Baltimore's reputation as a magnet for freedom seekers (particularly from neighboring counties). In 1811, the *National Intelligencer* printed an advertisement for "a Negro Man named DICK," who escaped from James Walker of St. Clement's Bay. Walker described him as "a very artful fellow" who would likely change his attire. Walker claimed, "I expect he will provide a pass and endeavor to get to Baltimore, as he ran away some years ago and shipped from that port to the West Indies; he has a son and other relations and friends in that city."[134] Other notices reveal that freedom seekers often sought refuge with legally free family members in the city. In 1839, the Baltimore *Sun* printed an advertisement for a self-emancipator named Wat Hanson, whose enslaver claimed that he had "a free uncle living in Howard street, south of Pratt, by the name of Patrick Hambleton. I am induced to believe that he is secreted in the city by some of his free black acquaintances until a favorable opportunity offers him to make his escape." Similarly, in 1843, Joshua M. Bosley of Baltimore County placed a notice for a sixteen-year-old named Bill Middleton, who "has a sister or two living in Frederick street, and it is likely he will be lurking about them."[135]

Some notices reveal that family units sought refuge among Baltimore's free black communities. In 1842, R. Welsh, who lived four-and-a-half miles from the city, reported the escape of ten freedom seekers. Among the group were a man named Resin, his wife Evelina, and her nine-year-old son Daniel. The group also included Flavella, her husband John Smith, two teenagers, and four children. Given its geographical proximity, it is likely that the group absconded to the city. Other enslavers hypothesized that enslaved families fled to Baltimore in stages. H. W. Waters of Catonsville, Baltimore County reported that a "dark mulatto" named Tom Tucker escaped from his service. Waters wrote, "It is probable that he will lurk about the neighborhood, or else in town, as he has left a wife and children living with me."[136]

Like Baltimore, Washington, DC was the first stop for many freedom seekers heading to the northern states and Canada. By 1840, approximately 8,500

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[133] Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 110; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 58, 66-83; Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 33; Andrew K. Diemer, *The Politics of Black Citizenship: Free African Americans in the Mid-Atlantic Borderland, 1817-1863* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 55; T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 72.

[134] "50 DOLLARS REWARD," *National Intelligencer*, Aug. 11, 1811.

[135] "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Oct. 23, 1839; "TEN DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun*, Sep. 1, 1843.

[136] "200 DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun*, Sep. 14, 1842; "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun*, Nov. 8, 1842.

blacks lived and worked in the nation's capital. Enslavers feared that freedom seekers would use Washington as a springboard to the North. In 1818, John A. Sommers of Fall's Church in Fairfax County, Virginia, reported the escape of Henry Tuxe, whom he feared "may be endeavoring to get to some of the Northern states." Similarly, in May 1850, Charles H. Johnson of Calvert County, Maryland reported the escape of Hanson Hawkins, who supposedly fled to Washington because he had "a free wife in the City… [and] it is possible he is lurking there until he can try to make his escape to a free State."[137]

Moreover, the nation's capital was home to an interracial UGRR network. Key figures included Charles T. Torrey, a white abolitionist from Massachusetts, and Thomas Smallwood, a formerly enslaved man from Prince George's County, Maryland. The escape of Anna Maria Weems illustrates the remarkable efforts of African Americans and white abolitionists in the city. Born enslaved in Montgomery County, Maryland, the fifteen-year-old Weems escaped to Washington in 1855 after the sale of her enslaved brothers. She stayed with Quaker Jacob Bigelow while the freedom network formulated a plan to transport her to the North. Once ready, Weems disguised herself in male attire and traveled to Philadelphia by carriage, and onward to New York City and Canada.[138] Freedom seekers were often housed in churches or stayed with UGRR activists in Washington. Enslavers, slave catchers, and city authorities regularly patrolled the city in search of freedom seekers. In 1858, the *Democratic Watchman* reported that a male freedom seeker "was discovered in the attic of a Methodist church, [in] Washington, D.C… He had lived there four or five months, unsuspected, had used up the communion wine, and picked up his food by nightly sorties into the neighboring pantries."[139]

Self-emancipated women also sought refuge in Washington before escaping to the North. Born in Maryland, Jane Clark resolved to escape from bondage after enduring decades of floggings and abuse. With help from loved ones and white

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[137] Josephine F. Pacheco, *The Pearl: A Failed Slave Escape on the Potomac* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 22; "100 DOLLARS REWARD," *Daily National Intelligencer*, Dec. 21, 1818; "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun*, May 25, 1850.

[138] The Weems family and Anna Maria's escape from slavery have been covered in various books and articles. See Stanley Harrold, "Freeing the Weems Family: A New Look at the Underground Railroad," *Civil War History* 42, no. 4 (1996), 289-306; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 536; Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 167-170; Prince, *A Shadow on the Household*; Jenny Masur, *Heroes of the Underground Railroad Around Washington, D.C.* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019), Ch. 3. For more on the UGRR in Washington, D.C. See Stanley Harrold, "On the Borders of Slavery and Race: Charles T. Torrey and the Underground Railroad," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 2 (2000), 273-292; Harrold, *Subversives*. For abolitionism in the US South, see Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1995) remains the key text. For more on Thomas Smallwood, see Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood, (Colored Man:) Giving an Account of His Birth – The Period he was Held in Slavery – His Release – And Removal to Canada, etc. Together with an Account of the Underground Railroad. Written by Himself.* (Toronto: James Stephens, 1851), accessed Jul. 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smallwood/smallwood.html.

[139] "A runaway slave was discovered…," *Democratic Watchman* (Bellefonte, PA), Aug. 5, 1858.

abolitionists, Clark fled to a cabin in Maryland where she hid for almost one year. She subsequently traveled with counterfeit passes to Washington, where she remained for two years. In 1859, Clark secured passage out of the city; traveling by train to Baltimore and New York City. She traveled onward to Auburn in New York, where she worked as a domestic.[140] The threat of recapture in Baltimore and Washington motivated many freedom seekers to journey onward to the North and Canada. Christopher Nichols recalled seeing "guards at every corner of the street" in Washington. Indeed, the nation's capital lay at the heart of the interregional slave trade, as well as the illegal kidnapping trade (see Chapter Four). One of the most infamous kidnapping cases in Washington involved Solomon Northup, a free black man who traveled from his home in New York to the capital city for work. Northup was drugged and sold to slave traders, who subsequently sent him to New Orleans where he was enslaved for twelve years.[141]

Furthermore, Washington and Baltimore's UGRR networks were constantly under threat from the local authorities. Unless they fled to the North quickly, there was a chance that the versatile escape networks could be dismantled by local authorities. The arrest of UGRR activists highlights the fragility of interracial networks in Washington and Baltimore. In 1839, free black activist Leonard Grimes was arrested and served a two-year prison sentence. Four years later, free black activist John Bush was arrested at his home in Washington following a botched rescue operation. The following year, Charles Torrey was arrested in Baltimore for his role in aiding freedom seekers. From his prison cell, he wrote, "I have freed about 400 who, otherwise, would have lived, and, most of them died, in slavery." He received a six-year prison sentence but died from tuberculosis less than two years later.[142] In this regard, time was of the essence for freedom seekers that escaped with assistance from UGRR networks in Baltimore and Washington.

With this in mind, freedom seekers had to determine the safest, quickest means by which they would reach the North. The traditional image of slave flight involves freedom seekers traveling on foot under the cover of night. However, most

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[140] Jane Clark's narrative was only unearthed recently by the Cayuga Museum and Case Research Lab in Auburn. See Robin Bernstein, "Jane Clark: A Newly Available Slave Narrative," *Common-place.org* 18, no. 1 (2018). Accessed Mar. 27, 2019. http://common-place.org/book/vol-18-no-1-bernstein/.

[141] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 71; Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853* (Auburn: Derry and Miller, 1853), 41, accessed Jul. 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html.

[142] Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *The Underground Railroad: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Operations* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 235; "Attempt to Decoy away Slaves," *Liberator*, Dec. 15, 1843; "LIBERTY MEETING," *Daily Morning Post* (Pittsburgh, PA), Sep. 17, 1844; "Letter from Charles T. Torrey to Milton M. Fisher, 16 November 1844," *Masshist.org*, accessed Sep. 9, 2019. https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=3237&pid=3; "Rec. Chas. Torrey," *Sun*, reprinted in *Star* (Gettysburg, PA), May 8, 1846; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 184.

recognized that this type of could be quite perilous, especially if confronted by local whites. Consequently, many self-emancipators sought quick passage aboard stagecoaches, trains, steamboats, and ships. As mentioned earlier, Baltimore and Washington shared a host of transportation links with northern cities like Philadelphia, New York City, Boston, and other northern cities. Whereas traveling on foot could take days to reach the Pennsylvania border, traveling by train or boat could reduce the journey to a few hours. African American dockworkers, steamboat workers, and sailors in Washington and Baltimore concealed slave refugees aboard seafaring vessels to northern port cities. Martha S. Jones notes that about seven percent of black male heads of households "were said to be seamen."[143] At the same time, traveling by stagecoach, rail, steamboats or ship also posed various risks. Ship captains and train conductors were liable to check black passengers for tickets and free papers. Henry Banks, who escaped from Stafford County, Virginia, recalled being questioned by a ship captain in Washington. After Banks failed to present any papers, the captain brought him to a police constable, who subsequently placed him in jail. After he was returned to Virginia, Banks managed to escape again and successfully reached Upper Canada.[144]

Frederick Douglass availed of the region's shared transportation networks to escape from slavery. Born in Talbot County, Maryland, Douglass originally planned to escape to the North in 1835. He devised plans to escape with other self-emancipators in the region. They considered the numerous physical and logistical challenges before escaping. In particular, Douglass recalled that they "knew nothing of Canada" and that their "knowledge of the north [sic] did not extend farther than New York[.]" Nevertheless, Douglass and the others resolved to head north in search of "doubtful liberty." However, the group were discovered and Douglass was placed in a local jail.[145] Three years later, Douglass fled alone to Baltimore and secured passage by train to Havre de Grace, where he crossed the Susquehanna River and traveled onward to Pennsylvania. Douglass noted that the railway between Baltimore and Philadelphia was "under regulations so stringent, that even free colored travelers were almost excluded."[146] While male freedom seekers generally found it easier to conceal themselves aboard trains and ships, some female freedom seekers in the

[143] Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 22. For more on black sailors in the antebellum US, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, "'To Feel like a Man': Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (1990), 1173-1199; and W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[144] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 75-76.
[145] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 83-92.
[146] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom. Part I – Life as a Slave. Part II – Life as a Freeman* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 326, accessed May 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html. For more on Frederick Douglass, see David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

region also availed of rail and maritime networks. In 1841, James Desvarreux of Baltimore placed an advertisement for nineteen-year-old Cecelia King. He speculated, "She is supposed to have gone on to Philadelphia by the steamboat on the same evening – she being known by the hands and servants on board, and no doubt was enticed away or received assistance from them."[147]

Southern lawmakers attempted to stem the tide of slave refugees heading to the North aboard trains, boats, and ships. In 1837, Virginia's General Assembly passed a law that required enslaved people to possess written permission from their enslavers to travel aboard stagecoaches, trains, boats, and ships. One year later, Maryland's state legislature enacted "An Act to Prevent the Transportation of People of Colour Upon Railroads or Steamboats," which aimed to restrict the ability of free and enslaved African Americans to travel aboard trains, boats, and seafaring vessels. North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana approved similar measures to restrict black travel aboard trains, stagecoaches, boats, and seafaring vessels. City councils and southern authorities also passed measures designed to prevent African Americans from boarding steamboats, trains, ships, and steamboats. Local patrols and authorities also monitored docks, harbors, and riverboats and seafaring vessels to stop freedom seekers from escaping to the North and Canada.[148]

The most audacious maritime escape took place in 1848 when seventy-seven freedom seekers attempted to flee from Washington, DC to New Jersey aboard *The Pearl*. The group sought to sail down the Chesapeake Bay, around Maryland's Eastern Shore, and land on the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay. Among the passengers were siblings, couples, and other family units. However, the captain was forced to land near Point Lookout, Maryland due to stormy weather. The passengers were subsequently arrested and charged by Washington authorities who learned of their escape. Most of the freedom seekers were subsequently sold to New Orleans. Responses to the incident varied between regions. The *Washington Union* praised the local authorities, while northern anti-slavery newspapers lamented the recapture of the freedom seekers.[149]

Elsewhere, freedom seekers fled to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York via other routes. Self-emancipators in western Maryland and northern Virginia often headed straight for the Pennsylvania border rather than escaping towards urban

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[147] "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 25, 1841.
[148] Jenny Bourne Wahl, *The Bondsman's Burden: An Economic Analysis of the Common Law of Southern Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 95; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 290.
[149] "THE RUNAWAY SLAVES," *Washington Union*, reprinted in *Port Tobacco and Charles Town Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 1848; Tricia M. Wagner, *It Happened on the Underground Railroad: Remarkable Events that Shaped History*, 2nd ed. (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2015), 59-62; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 401-403. For key readings on *The Pearl* incident, see Pacheco, *The Pearl*; Mary Kay Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad* (New York: William Morrow, 2007).

centers. Hagerstown, Frederick, and other towns and locales close to Pennsylvania. Indeed, the former was less than ten miles from the Mason-Dixon line. Located within touching distance, it made practical sense for freedom seekers to head directly north rather than flee towards Washington or Baltimore. Newspaper notices highlight that countless slave refugees made the short journey from western Maryland across the Mason-Dixon line. In 1857, the *Hagerstown Chronicle* reported on "a regular stampede [that] took place among the negroes in this neighborhood." The group was "pursued… and arres[t]ed at Chambersburg, Pa.," just over twenty miles from Hagerstown.[150]

Freedom seekers on Maryland's Eastern Shore were more inclined to escape up the peninsula to Wilmington, Delaware before crossing into Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In January 1847, Isaac Mason escaped with two others to Wilmington on foot, "it being about thirty-five miles away." About eight miles from the city, they were informed that "there was a gang of body-snatchers waiting by the bridge to mob every colored person that came that way." Eventually, they "passed by Wilmington unmolested by any one [sic], and, as near as I can judge, it was three o'clock that morning when the dividing line that runs between the States of Delaware and Pennsylvania were crossed. No words can depict the joy and gratitude that filled the bosom of one who had… stepped from bondage into liberty, from darkness into light." The climate and time of year had a direct impact on the routes available to freedom seekers in the region. During the summer months, for instance, freedom seekers could escape via maritime routes along the Delaware River. As Erica Armstrong Dunbar writes, the river often froze over during the winter months, "eliminating the sea as an escape route."[151]

Harriet Tubman is the most famous freedom seeker that escaped via this route. Born in Dorchester County, Tubman resolved to escape from the South following the death of her enslaver. On September 17, 1849, Tubman and two brothers absconded without informing anyone of their plan. Not long after their escape, her brothers had second thoughts and decided to abandon the plan. Tubman also gave up the plan but remained committed to escaping from bondage. A couple of weeks later, Tubman fled north alone. After some time, she finally reached Philadelphia, where she stayed with friends in the city. Tubman subsequently traveled to the Niagara borderland, where she crossed into Canada. Over the following decade,

[150] "RUNAWAY NEGROES," *Hagerstown Chronicle*, reprinted in *Agitator* (Wellsboro, PA), Jun. 4, 1857.
[151] Isaac Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason As a Slave* (Worcester, MA: [Publisher unknown], 1893), 36-52, accessed Sep. 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/mason/mason.html; Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* (New York: 37INK, 2017).

she became a prominent UGRR activist in St. Catharines, Upper Canada, and returned to Maryland to rescue enslaved family members on several occasions.[152]

While overland escape avoided the perils of traveling by stagecoach, rail, and maritime routes, it posed other challenges and obstacles. Most notably, they had to decide which way to go, which time of day or year to travel, where to find food, water, and shelter, where to sleep, and who (if anyone) to ask for assistance. While the natural wilderness enabled freedom seekers to avoid being seen by local whites, its various risks, particularly during cold winters and hot summers, proved serious obstacles. In the winter, freezing temperatures, ice, and snow created various problems for freedom seekers. "The small rivers and creeks across the North were also impassable," writes Dunbar, "often sending brave and desperate fugitives to premature, icy deaths. Roads, impassable from heavy snow and frozen mud, disabled even the strongest and most agile fugitives, trapping men and women on the run." More worryingly, refugees from slavery had to contend with the threats of starvation, dehydration, and physical illness, such as hypothermia.[153]

Many freedom seekers recalled the logistical difficulties and natural challenges that they faced during their escapes. James W.C. Pennington, a self-emancipator from Maryland, wrote in his autobiography, "I have no knowledge of distance or direction. I know that Pennsylvania is a free state, but I know not where its soil begins, or where that of Maryland ends? Indeed, at this time there was no safety in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or New York, for a fugitive, except in lurking-places, or under the care of judicious friends, who could be entrusted not only with liberty, but also with life itself." Fortunately, Pennington stumbled across some "judicious friends," a Quaker couple in Adams County, Pennsylvania, that offered him food, water, and shelter. But most were not so fortunate. They had to rely on their wits and intelligence to make their way through forests, fields, fauna, rivers, and other features of the natural wilderness.[154]

In recent years, scholars have theorized how African American refugees from the South negotiated the unfamiliar terrain. Rebecca Ginsburg argues that freedom seekers crafted an alternative "black landscape" through which they saw their surrounding environments differently from southern and northern whites. In her

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[152] Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: One World Books, 2003), 75-88. In the early 2000s, several excellent biographies were published on Harriet Tubman. See Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004); Jean M. Humez, *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Stories* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

[153] Dunbar, *Never Caught*, 101.

[154] James W.C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: or, Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington, Pastor of a Presbyterian Church, New York, Formerly a Slave in the State of Maryland, United States* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1849), 13, accessed Jun. 9, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/penning49/penning49.html. For more on the life of James W.C. Pennington, see Christopher L. Webber, *American to the Backbone: The Life of James W.C. Pennington, the Fugitive Slave Who Became One of the First Black Abolitionists* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011).

own words, the black landscape was "a system of paths, places, and rhythms that a community of enslaved people created as an alternative, often as a refuge, to the landscape systems of planters and other whites. It was a largely secret and disguised world, as compared to the planter landscape of display and vistas." Understandably, the black landscape varied between farms and plantations, towns and cities, and broader regions. By developing an independent vision of the natural world, enslaved people and freedom seekers crafted ways to outsmart their enslavers, survive beyond their homesteads, and successfully reach the North and Canada.[155]

Narratives and testimonies reveal how freedom seekers took advantage of the natural environment to evade enslavers and slave catchers. James Adams claimed that he "lay concealed in the woods for four days" during his escape. Although most freedom seekers had never ventured above the Mason-Dixon line, their experiences in Maryland, Virginia, and elsewhere taught them how to navigate the Pennsylvania landscape. Sam Davis, a freedom seeker from Virginia, recalled almost being recaptured in Orangetown, Pennsylvania by two white men. He claimed, "I got into a piece of woods – thence into a wheat field, where I lay all day; from 9 A. M. until dark. I could not sleep for fear. At night I travelled [sic] on, walking until day, when I came to a colored man's house among mountains. He gave me a good breakfast, for which I thank[ed] him, and then directed me on the route. I succeeded, after a while, in finding the underground railroad.[156] Davis understood exactly how to outwit his potential captors and remain hidden in the natural environment. While the natural world was disorienting for many, other slave refugees coped by transplanting their previous knowledge and experience to these new landscapes. As Ginsburg notes, it was "an expression of geographical intelligence."[157]

Rivers proved another natural hazard for freedom seekers. Charles Peyton Lucas and two others ran to the Potomac River, where they "tied their provisions into bundles" on their backs and "waded and swam" their way to the other side. The group encountered various challenges during their journey. Lucas recalled, "We travelled [sic] by night and concealed ourselves in the bushes by day, for ten days and nights, suffering greatly from hunger and from rain, without shelter. One day in September, we sat on a mountain, exposed to a hot broiling sun, and without food or drink. We could hear people at their work about us, but we did not dare ask for aid. For three days, we had neither food nor drink, excepting green corn. We sucked the juice for drink, and the corn itself was our only food." The group's journey was long, arduous, and filled with potential hazards. The freedom seekers drank "muddy water" multiple times and at one point "were run very severely by dogs and men, but we got away

[155] Rebecca Ginsburg, "Escaping through a Black Landscape," in Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (eds.), *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 54.
[156] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 116.
[157] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 19; Ginsburg, "Escaping through a Black Landscape," 56.

from them." Fortunately, they came across a sympathetic white resident, who provided them with directions to the Mason-Dixon line. Eventually, Lucas reached western New York, where he remained for a short time before he was advised to cross the border into Canada.[158]

Southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania (namely Adams, Delaware, Chester, Lancaster, York, and Franklin counties) received thousands of freedom seekers, mostly from Maryland and Virginia. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Upper South enslavers placed advertisements for self-emancipated men, women, and children in Pennsylvania newspapers. In 1803, William Tyler of Frederick County, Virginia, placed an advertisement in the *Carlisle Weekly Herald* for Toby, "who sometimes called himself TOBIAS BELT[.]" Tyler claimed, "I followed said fellow to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and was informed he took the York road… it is highly probable he has a forged pass or certificate of his freedom, and may change his name."[159] Southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania, notes David G. Smith, were "part of the great colonial era migration path, with settlers disembarking in Philadelphia and then heading to south central [sic] Pennsylvania before turning south to the back country of Virginia, Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Georgia." More importantly, both regions were home to sizable free African American populations. Smith writes that "the most important aid to runaways came from free blacks in south-central Pennsylvania." Following the state's gradual abolition law, the legally free African American population rose precipitously in the Mason-Dixon borderland. By 1840, almost 700 free people of color were officially recorded in Adams County. Around the same time, approximately 600 African Americans lived in Franklin County.[160]

Towns and villages across the region received countless freedom seekers from the Upper South. Gettysburg, York, Chambersburg, Shippensburg, Mercersburg, Harrisburg, Carlisle, Columbia, and Lancaster became home to small yet rapidly growing free black communities – comprised of free-born, freed, and illegally self-emancipated refugees. In each locale, African American activists formed the backbone of the region's UGRR network. The escape 'routes' which ran through southern and south-central Pennsylvania are too numerous to list. Countless freedom seekers fled through Chambersburg, Gettysburg, and Hanover to nearby York, Carlisle, Mechanicsburg, Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Reading. Smaller villages and rural locales formed an integral part of black freedom networks, while a smaller number stuck completely to the natural environment to avoid being seen. Yet the routes taken by freedom seekers were subject to change during their escapes. "Many times," argues Smith, "the natural routes through the physical landscape were also

[158] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 107-109.
[159] "Sixty Dollars Reward," *Carlisle Weekly Herald* (Carlisle, PA), Jan. 5, 1803.
[160] Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom*, 13 (quote), 17, 27 (second quote)

modified by information the fugitive might have received. Fugitives might take a more difficult route if it was faster, if they were less likely to be seen, or if they knew a friendly house along the way."[161]

Newspapers highlighted the presence of slave refugees in southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. In 1813, the *Carlisle Weekly Herald* printed an advertisement for Billy Jackson, a "man servant" who was "of that kind of mulatto resembling the Indians[.]" Smith noted that Jackson "cuts hair remarkably well, being a good barber[.]" Women were also among the freedom seekers that fled to Pennsylvania. In 1804, Charles Worland of Hagerstown reported the escape of a forty-year-old woman named Suke, who "was lately seen in the town of Shippensburgh [sic], and it is very probable that she may be hired, in or near said town." Meanwhile, the Gettysburg *Adams Sentinel* published an advertisement for Rachel, a forty-year-old freedom seeker from Frederick County, Maryland, who fled with her ten-year-old daughter. It claimed that she had "gone to Pennsylvania, as she has been taught to believe that she is entitled to her freedom in that state."[162] Other freedom seekers escaped in pairs or as part of small groups. In 1828, the *Adams Sentinel* printed an advertisement for Jim Hall who "went away with three other Negroes[.]" Patterns of group escape continued throughout the antebellum era. A Maryland newspaper reported in August 1850 that a "party of five runaway slaves were brought in the cars yesterday morning from York, Pa. It appears that eleven slaves owned by different parties in Maryland recently absconded, and succeeded in making their way over into Pennsylvania[.]" The self-emancipators were captured aboard a train in Shrewsbury.[163]

Regional newspapers also described the escape strategies of freedom seekers in the borderland. In 1832, Garland Davis of Charles Town, Virginia, placed a notice in the Gettysburg *Star* for a man named Isaac, whom he alleged had "obtained a free pass from a fellow by the name of John Beeson, & is in Pennsylvania from every information I can get[.]"[164] Other notices detailed the presence of black freedom

[161] Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom*, 30-31.
[162] "50 Dollars Reward," *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, Oct. 15, 1813; "TEN DOLLARS REWARD," *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, Oct. 26, Nov. 2, 9, 30, Dec. 7, 21, 28 1803, Jan. 4, 11, 1804; "Fifty Dollars Reward," *Adams Sentinel*, May 12, 19, 1813.
[163] "$100 Reward," *Adams Sentinel* (Gettysburg, PA), Nov. 26, 1828; "ANOTHER ARREST OF FUGITIVE SLAVES," *Port Tobacco and Charles Town Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1850.
[164] "$100 REWARD," *Star* (Gettysburg, PA), Feb. 28, 1832.

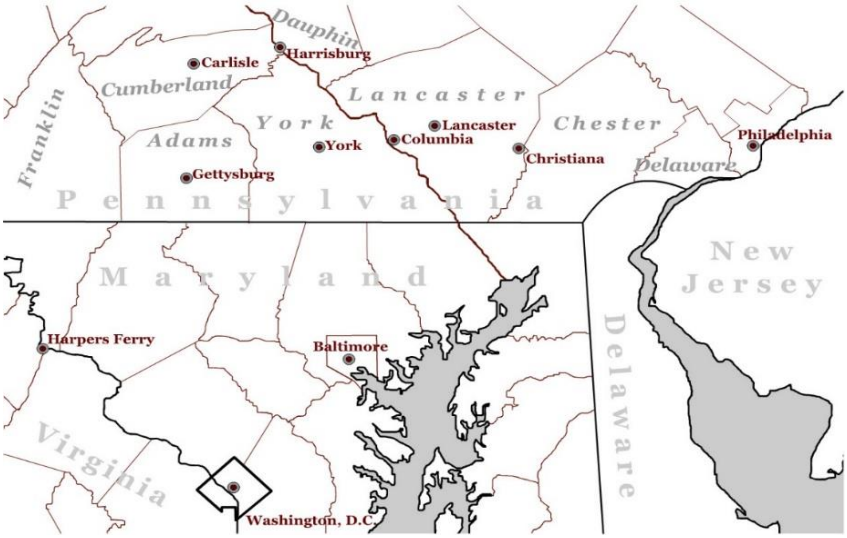

Figure 5: Underground Railroad Locations in the Mason-Dixon Borderland

Source: "The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania and Maryland," House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, accessed Oct. 3, 2020. http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/23240.

networks in southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. In 1844, the Baltimore *Sun* claimed that Joshua Ogle, a self-emancipator from Anne Arundel County, was potentially "making his way to York, Pa., where other parties were to meet him… He has no doubt changed his name, but may be easily detected, if closely questioned, as he is by no means smart." Ten years later, the Gettysburg *Star* reported that a couple of slave catchers traveled to Pennsylvania in pursuit of three freedom seekers. "The chase continued as far as Harrisburg," noted the paper, "where the pursuing party had the pleasure of learning that their prey had taken the "underground railroad" about one-half hour before and were beyond their reach!"[165]

Quakers also assisted slave refugees in southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. Elijah Pennypacker of Phoenixville, Chester County regularly aided freedom seekers to the North and Canada. From his home, he directed slave refugees onward to Philadelphia, Norristown, and other nearby towns. In November 1855, Philadelphia abolitionist William Still asked Pennypacker to "forward the two boys of whom you make mention, and I will see that they are duly and safely sent on to

[165] "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," *Sun*, Aug. 3, 1844; "It is some time since…," (Gettysburg, PA) *Star*, Jun. 16, 1854.

Can[ada]… I can plan them under the charge of Somebody who would look after them[.]"[166] Similarly, the Lewis family in York provided food, water, shelter, and transportation to slave refugees. In her unpublished memoir, Graceanna Lewis wrote, "There was never a time when our home was not a shelter for the escaping slave – a place in which he would be protected and sent forward to freedom either to some place in the north [sic] or Canada under the protection of the British Government."[167]

Newspaper articles also made direct references to Quaker assistance in the Mason-Dixon borderland. Enslavers Samuel Simpson and George Turner of Loudoun County, Virginia placed an advertisement for Len and George, "[b]oth of dark complexion, and brothers," who were no doubt aiming for Pennsylvania, or Ohio, where they are supposed to have friends." Additionally, the notice stated that Len "has been in the habit of hiring himself and trading with the Quakers[.]" Free blacks and Quakers formed the cornerstone of the interracial UGRR across the region. Quaker meetinghouses and black churches were erected within miles of each other and became important symbols of "a visible, interconnected, and widespread support network for African Americans."[168]

Narratives and testimonies also discussed the role played by Quaker activists in the borderland. Samuel Ringgold Ward recalled that his parents aimed for Cumberland County, New Jersey, "where they had learned slavery did not exist [and] Quakers lived in numbers, who would afford the escaped any and every protection consistent with their peculiar tenets – and where a number of blacks lived, who in cases of emergency could and would make common cause with and for each other." During their escape, the Wards encountered several free African American communities at Springtown, Bridgetown and elsewhere, before eventually making their way to Greenwich. Ward noted, "there were no slaveholders in that part of the State, and when slave-catchers came prowling about the Quakers threw all manner of peaceful obstacles in their way, while the Negroes made it a little too hot for their comfort."[169]

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[166] "Land of Liberty," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jul. 13, 1886; William Still to E.F. Pennypacker, Nov. 24, 1855. Elijah Pennypacker Correspondence. Elijah Pennypacker MSS, SC 097. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, PA, accessed Jun. 16, 2020. http://triptych.swarthmore.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/HC_QuakSlav/id/4105/rec/23.

[167] Graceanna Lewis Underground Railroad Memoir. Lewis-Fussell Family Papers, SFHL-RG5-087. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, PA, accessed Jun. 16, 2020. http://triptych.swarthmore.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/InHOR/id/13628/rec/39; Snodgrass, *The Underground Railroad*, 323-324; Christopher Densmore, "Aim for a Free State and Settle among Quakers: African-Americans and Quaker Parallel Communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey," in Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plans (eds.), *Quakers & Abolition* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 121, 124-125.

[168] "$100 Reward," *Genius of Liberty*, Sep. 24, 1822.

[169] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (London: John Snow, 35, Paternoster Row), 22-23, accessed May 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/wards/ward.html.

Others documented the assistance which they received from Quakers and white activists in the borderland. Born in Maryland, James Watkins managed to permanently escape from his enslaver in 1844. During his escape, Watkins was pursued by slave catchers and their dogs. He recalled, "I was concealed in the side of a mountain, when I heard the voice of blood-hounds on my track along with the noise of a number of negro-hunters." After another close shave with two men and a woman, he continued onward until he reached Pennsylvania. At Loganville, he received "a most hearty meal" from a gentleman in the town. The following day, Watkins journeyed onward to York where he was taken in and fed by a possible UGRR activist. Not long after, a local black man instructed him to cross the Susquehanna River and take shelter in Columbia, Lancaster County, where he stayed with a Quaker. Watkins subsequently fled to Philadelphia before traveling to New York City and Connecticut.[170]

After crossing the Mason-Dixon line, freedom seekers in south-central and southeastern Pennsylvania had several options. They could remain in the region, taking refuge in free black communities in the border zone. Some likely sought to stay close to enslaved family members in neighboring Maryland and Virginia. Yet this left self-emancipators at greater risk of recapture by enslavers and bounty hunters. As a result, many resolved to build distance from the Upper South. Geography and topography shaped the routes taken by freedom seekers. Most notably, the Appalachian Mountains funneled self-emancipators toward eastern and northeastern Pennsylvania. While some escaped into the mountains, most sought to avoid the challenging terrain. Slave refugees fled to virtually every locale with free black and white anti-slavery populations. Some traveled along the Susquehanna River on foot, by horseback, or by boat.[171]

Meanwhile, countless freedom seekers sought refuge in Philadelphia. W.E.B. Du Bois described the City of Brotherly Love as "the natural gateway between the North and South, and for a long time there passed through it a stream of free Negroes and fugitive slaves towards the North, and of recaptured Negroes and kidnapped colored persons towards the South."[172] By 1830, roughly 14,600 African Americans officially resided in the city. Furthermore, the city boasted one of the most active abolitionist communities in the country. By the late 1820s, a strong, interracial UGRR network thrived in Philadelphia and its surrounding regions. It is easy to see why Philadelphia appealed to many freedom seekers, although it is impossible to

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[170] James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a "Chattel" in Maryland, U.S.; Containing an Account of His Escape from Slavery, Together with an Appeal on Behalf of Three Millions of such "Pieces of Property," Still Held Under the Standard of the Eagle* (Bolton, UK: Kenyon and Abbat, 1852), 20,25, accessed May 27, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/watkin52/watkin52.html.
[171] Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom*, 30.
[172] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899. Reprint, New York: Cosimo, 2010), 25.

understand how many passed through the city. One study estimates that 9,000 freedom seekers escaped to Philadelphia over the antebellum period.[173]

Newspaper notices highlight the city's role as a beacon of liberty for slave refugees. In 1826, the *Genius of Liberty* reported the escape of a thirty-two-year-old named Daniel, who absconded from his enslaver in Fauquier County. His enslaver claimed that he "probably obtained spurious papers, and will attempt to pass himself as a free man. He has a brother, by the name of Dennis, in Philadelphia." In other instances, enslavers alleged that freedom seekers received assistance from free African Americans and white abolitionists. Abraham R. Duffin reported the escape of "a colored boy, named MARK COLE, about 16 years of age," who was "persuaded off by a white boy who came to my residence as an orphan stranger[.]" Duffin claimed that the pair were "probably making their way to Pennsylvania, as they were seen in company on the Philadelphia road."[174]

Autobiographies and testimonies also illustrate Philadelphia's status as a beacon of liberty. C. H. Hall, a self-emancipator from Maryland, claimed, "I walked the streets [of Baltimore] every day, and read my own advertisement – "$100 in the States." Sunday night I was in Columbia, Penn., where I fell in with a friend, and remained there a week, and then came to Philadelphia." He subsequently traveled onward to Upper Canada. Meanwhile, William Cornish of Maryland's Eastern Shore escaped to Wilmington, Delaware, and "took the cars… for Philadelphia. Eleven days from the time I started, I was in Canada." Some escapes to the city were truly extraordinary in terms of planning and execution. Most notably, Henry 'Box' Brown shipped himself from Richmond to Philadelphia in a box. Brown was transported through Richmond and Washington, until he reached Philadelphia in March 1849. Upon arrival in the city, he recalled, "My heart then leaped for joy."[175]

Freedom seekers from the Mid- and Lower South also sought refuge across the Mason-Dixon line, especially in port cities like Philadelphia. In 1852, David Holmes of Mecklenburg County, Virginia ran away upon learning that his enslaver planned to sell him. When asked why he escaped northward, he claimed, "I wanted

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[173] Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 110; Margaret H. Bacon, *But One Race: The Life of Robert Purvis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 17; Statistics taken from Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 71-72, 137-139, 213; Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 16-18; Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 147; Switala, *Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania*, 141; Nilgun Anadolu Okur, "Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, 1830-1860," *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 5 (1995), 537.

[174] "100 Dolls. Reward," *Genius of Liberty*, Jun. 27, 1826; "SIX CENTS REWARD," *Sun*, Aug. 28, 1839;

[175] Blassingame (ed.), *Slave Testimony*, 416-418, 423-426; Henry 'Box' Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself* (Manchester: Lee & Glynn, 1851), 40-60, accessed Apr. 8, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownbox/brownbox.html.

to go towards Canada, I didn't know much about the way, but I went by the North Star." Holmes added that he had heard about Canada's reputation "from an old man, a slave, who had gone off a good many times; but he never had the luck to get right away." The journey proved perilous for Holmes, who had to contend with patrols, dogs, and a lack of knowledge about how to reach the North. With little food and water, Holmes also risked hunger, thirst, and sickness. Eventually, he met with an African American man who agreed to ferry him across the Potomac River. After crossing into Pennsylvania, Holmes came across UGRR activists who "called themselves abolitionists." They placed him in a wagon and transported him further north for several days. Holmes later met up with a free African American man "who told us we had best soon clear out; ever so many runaways had been taken from there of late, and sent back." Holmes eventually arrived in Buffalo, where he crossed into Canada via steamboat.[176]

Philadelphia's status as a beacon of liberty was well-known among enslaved communities in the Mid- and Lower South. James Williams was forcibly removed to Alabama via the interregional slave trade. Upon learning that he was to receive 250 lashes, Williams resolved to escape to the North. His journey took him through Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. Upon reaching Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he met some free African Americans, one of whom "took me in a wagon, and carried me some distance on my way to Harrisburg, where he said I should meet with friends. He told me [Williams] that I had better go directly to Philadelphia, as there would be less danger of my being discovered and retaken there than in the country, and there were a great many persons there who would exert themselves to secure me from the slaveholders." Williams traveled to the city, where he was "visited by a large number of the Abolitionists, and friends of the colored people[.]"[177]

Given the distance, freedom seekers from the Mid- and Lower South often escaped via seafaring vessels on the Atlantic coast. Norfolk, Wilmington, and Savannah became important gateways to Philadelphia and other northern ports. Smaller port towns along the Eastern Seaboard also attracted freedom seekers that sought to escape aboard seafaring vessels. Across the South, writes David S. Celeski, black watermen were "the most critical link in this oceangoing route to freedom[.]" They secreted freedom seekers on board their ships and ensured their safe passage to northern cities. In a small number of cases, white sailors and ship captains also aided freedom seekers aboard ships. Yet slave refugees had to be careful when sneaking aboard coastal ships. "Inspectors," writes Cecelski, "searched many seagoing vessels

[176] Blassingame (ed.), *Slave Testimony*, 295-302.
[177] James Williams, *Narrative of James Williams, an American Slave, Who Was for Several Years a Driver on a Cotton Plantation in Alabama* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838), 98-99 (quotes), accessed Jun. 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/williams/williams.html.

and, at points, regularly fumigated ships to drive hidden runaways up onto the deck. The chance of betrayal or discovery always existed, and an extraordinarily high proportion of fugitives never reached a wharf."[178]

Maritime escapes were also highlighted in newspaper advertisements and reports. In 1829, Charles R. Yancey of Chapel Hill, North Carolina placed a notice for Samuel, a self-emancipated freedom seeker. "I am apprehensive," he wrote, "that he is endeavoring to get to Philadelphia or New York. Captains of vessels will do well to recollect the severity of the law upon this subject." Other self-emancipators detailed their escapes aboard seafaring vessels in their memoirs. In 1849, Thomas H. Jones struck a deal with a ship captain in Wilmington, North Carolina to provide his wife and children with safe passage to New York City. He had learned that his family was about to be sold. Jones later escaped via the coastal maritime routes to New York City, where he reunited with his family. He recalled, "It was a moment of joy too deep and holy for and holy for any attempt to paint it." In response to the threat of slave catchers, Jones was compelled to escape to St. John in New Brunswick, Canada. He wrote, "I have found a home of refuge, full of true, warm, generous Christians, whose hearts, abounding with the love of God, are full of sympathy for the slave[.]"[179] While some ship captains and boatmen were motivated by humanitarian beliefs, others held "mercenary motives," writes Fergus Bordewich. Akin to smugglers, sailors and captains conspired with enslaved people to secretly transport freedom seekers in return for profit. Coastal vessels became "piece[s] of free territory that suddenly came within the physical reach of restive slaves."[180]

While freedom-seeking men possessed more opportunities to sneak aboard steamboats and ships, some female refugees also managed to secure passage to the North. Harriet Jacobs' escape was one of the most daring and widely publicized examples. Born in Edenton, North Carolina, Jacobs suffered years of physical and sexual abuse from her enslaver, Dr. James Norcom, which resulted in the birth of a child. In 1835, Jacobs escaped and hid in her grandmother's attic for the next seven years. Finally, an opportunity emerged; smuggling herself aboard a ship, Jacobs made her way to Philadelphia and later traveled by train to New York City.[181] Likewise, William and Ellen Craft, a married couple from Macon, Georgia, also escaped via the coastal maritime routes to Philadelphia. Ellen, a lighter-skinned woman, disguised herself as a male enslaver and pretended that William was her servant. The couple

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[178] Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 123 (first quote), 125 (second quote).
[179] "30 DOLLARS REWARD," *Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser*, Jan. 9, 1829; Thomas H. Jones, *The Experience of Thomas H. Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years. Written by a Friend, As Related To Him By Brother Jones* (Boston: Bazin & Chandler, 1862), 36, 46-47, accessed May 18, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jones/jones.html; Ripley et. al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 133-134.
[180] Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan*, 272-274.
[181] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* (Boston: Published for the Author, 1861), accessed Feb. 8, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html.

traveled to Savannah, Georgia via train (approximately 200 miles), from whence they took a steamboat to Charleston, South Carolina, and another to Philadelphia.[182]

New York City was another primary destination for slave refugees in the Mid-Atlantic region. With its numerous land and maritime connections, freedom seekers could reach the city on foot, by horse and carriage, by train, by boat, or other means of transportation. New York mostly welcomed self-emancipators from the Upper South. Over the antebellum era, thousands of freedom-seeking men, women, and children either sought permanent refuge in the city or journeyed onward to more secure regions. In response to cruel treatment from his enslaver, Leonard Black fled from Maryland across the Mason-Dixon line in 1837. He traveled through Pennsylvania and New Jersey, enduring physical hardships and the threat of recapture along the way. Eventually, he made it to New York City, where he managed to secure passage aboard a ship to Boston. [183]

Compared to southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania, fewer freedom seekers escaped to Bedford, Somerset, Fayette, Washington, and Greene Counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Charles Garlick, a self-emancipator Shinnston, West Virginia made his way northward through the region in 1843. He recalled, "The underground railroad was brought into use wherever practicable, there being occasional stations where I was assisted to elude my pursuers and sent ahead when safety was assured." Garlick journeyed through Uniontown and Greenburg, where he remained a few days before traveling onward to Pittsburgh by horseback. He journeyed onward to New Castle and subsequently Trumbull County, Ohio. Garlick soon heard that "some southerners, presumably in search of runaway slaves, were in the vicinity," and continued onward through northeast Ohio. He eventually resettled in Upper Canada.[184]

In 1820, the *Genius of Liberty* published a notice James Tate, whose enslaver believed that "he has shaped his course towards the western parts of Pennsylvania, where he will endeavour [sic] to pass for a free man." A young but rapidly growing city, Pittsburgh was an appealing destination for freedom seekers. By 1850, almost 2,000 African Americans lived and worked in the city. William J. Switala writes that Pittsburgh "was a natural junction for fugitives trying to escape bondage, as it was

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[182] William and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860), accessed Feb. 8, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/craft/craft.html.

[183] Leonard Black, *The Life and Sufferings of Leonard Black, a Fugitive from Slavery. Written by Himself* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), accessed May 20, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/black/black.html.

[184] Charles A. Garlick, *Life, Including His Escape and Struggle for Liberty of Charles A. Garlick, Born a Slave in Old Virginia, Who Secured His Freedom by Running Away from His Master's Farm in 1843* (Jefferson, OH: J.A. Howells and Co., 1902), 5-13, accessed Apr. 20, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/garlick/garlick.html.

located at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers; was on several rail lines; and had numerous roads leading in and out."[185]

Letters from white abolitionists and their descendants offer glimpses into western Pennsylvania's UGRR networks. In December 1895, John Rouse wrote to Wilbur H. Siebert, "I lived close to the Mason-Dixon line in Bedford County, Pa., on a farm called the Bear Tract Station. The fugitives would come there from Cumberland, Md." In one instance, he recalled the arrival of a freedom seeker named Jacob Dicken "who belonged to a man named Willeby, who had sold Dicken, and had the money for him." Rouse and his associates forged freedom papers for Dicken and later "took him up on the mountain, and put him on the right road." Over the antebellum period, Rouse aided other slave refugees from Maryland and Virginia. Meanwhile, Joseph S. White of New Castle wrote, "I would say that every county of western Pennsylvania had its branch railroad, or rather branches, for mostly there were several routes." On one occasion, White claimed that ten freedom seekers from Virginia "came by way of Uniontown, Fayette County… to Pittsburgh, then by Butler County, to New Castle[.]"[186]

Geographic factors explain why freedom seekers were less inclined to take this route. Southwestern Pennsylvania's mountainous terrain proved challenging to navigate. Furthermore, most African American communities were located in southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, some self-emancipators made their way north via western Pennsylvania. In 1850, the *Huntingdon Journal* reported that ten freedom seekers from Virginia "lost their way on the ridge of the Alleghenies, eight miles east of [Bedford, Pennsylvania]. They were discovered last Monday and attacked by Pennsylvania men; one of them was mortally wounded, and another dangerously so." Additionally, as Matthew Pinsker writes, "there were fewer free black residents, fewer white abolitionists, and fewer organized vigilance committees," and that enslaved African Americans in the Appalachian Upper South "were less likely to be urban or literate, and thus less likely to run away."[187] In 1850, the Philadelphia *Press* reported that ten self-emancipators "ran away from the vicinity of Pruntytown, [present-day West Virginia], last week… the negroes were overtaken in Fayette [C]ounty, Pa., where a desperate fight took place, and the owners and other

[185] "$30 Reward," *Genius of Liberty*, Oct. 10, 1820; Richard J. M. Blackett, "Freedom, or the Martyr's Grave": Black Pittsburgh's Aid to the Fugitive Slave," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 61, no. 2 (1978), 117-118; Switala, *Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania*, 81.
[186] John W. Rouse letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, Dec. 23, 1895. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX63 F03 042. OHC, accessed May 2, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/21624/rec/152; Joseph S. White letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, January 1897. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX64 F05 018. OHC, accessed May 2, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/20363/rec/50.
[187] "Slaves Recaptured," *Huntingdon Journal*, Oct. 15, 1850; Matthew Pinsker, "Vigilance in Pennsylvania: Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861," Report Presented at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Annual Conference on Black History, Harrisburg, 2000, 85.

pursuing were beaten back."[188] Freedom seekers that escaped via western Pennsylvania often continued onward to the former Northwest Territory. In 1807, the *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* printed an advertisement for a self-emancipator named Gilbert from Ann Arundel County, Maryland. His enslaver claimed, "it is supposed is making his way to the Ohio, in order to go down the river, as he has a wife belonging to Mr. William Johnson, who is now moved out to Kentucky with his family to settle in that country."[189] While most freedom seekers escaped with minimal or no external assistance, many were aided by UGRR activists and vigilance committees.

Vigilance Committees and the UGRR in Philadelphia, New York City, and Beyond

By the 1830s, African Americans and white abolitionists had established more sophisticated UGRR networks and societies in the Mason-Dixon borderland. This was perhaps best symbolized by the formation of vigilance committees which, in the words of Jesse Olsavsky, were clandestine organizations that "illegally aided hundreds of fugitive slaves in their exodus from slavery." Vigilance committees in Philadelphia, New York City, and elsewhere recorded the names, physical details, and biographical information of hundreds of freedom seekers they aided to the North and Canada. Indeed, without these secretive organizations, it is likely that countless self-emancipated refugees, and particularly freedom-seeking families, would likely never have escaped from the South.[190]

Philadelphia was home to one of the strongest UGRR communities in the country. The Vigilant Association of Philadelphia formed the backbone of the city's network. Founded in August 1837, it played a vital role in helping free African Americans and self-emancipated refugees. Beverly C. Tomek writes that the organization "offered fugitives boarding, clothing, medical attention, legal counsel, and guidance farther north… Most of these fugitives were from Virginia and Maryland, and most went to Canada via New York."[191] Robert Purvis, the President of the Vigilant Association, was an instrumental figure in the society's early years. A

[188] "FIGHT WITH RUNAWAY NEGROES," *Press* (Philadelphia, PA), Nov. 10, 1858. For more on the UGRR in Western Pennsylvania, see W. Thomas Mainwaring, *Abandoned Tracks: The Underground Railroad in Washington County, Pennsylvania* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018).
[189] "One Hundred Dollars Reward," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, May 19, 1807.
[190] Jesse Olsavsky, "Runaway Slaves, Vigilance Committees, and the Pedagogy of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1863," in Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias van Rossum (eds.), *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism, 1600-1850* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 216.
[191] Beverly C. Tomek, "Vigilance Committees," *PhiladelphiaEncyclopedia.org*, accessed Mar. 12, 2019. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/vigilance-committees//.

secret room in the basement of his Philadelphia home was used to hide freedom seekers. Other members included James McCrummell, James Needham, and Jacob C. White. African American and white women abolitionists also played a vital role in the city's UGRR operations. In July 1838, activists established the Female Vigilant Association, which managed fundraising activities and organized anti-slavery fairs. Yet women were also instrumental in aiding freedom seekers directly. Purvis wrote to Wilbur H. Siebert in 1895, "A great number (of helpers were) here – the most efficient persons were women agents who brought the slaves. One was a black woman, the other a mulatto. Boats plying between the South and Philadelphia brought in (runaways)… Of the hundreds of slaves who passed throught [sic] the hands of the Vigilance Committee we never lost a one."[192]

Vigilant Committee records illustrate the importance of the organization to the city's UGRR network. Between May 1839 and March 1840, the Vigilance Committee documented sixty-two cases involving freedom seekers, most of whom escaped from Maryland and Virginia. Most entries included only brief facts, including the number of self-emancipators, place of origin, and destination. Specific details, such as names and physical descriptions, were generally omitted. While most entries were for individual newcomers or small groups of two or three, some detailed the arrival of freedom-seeking family units. The entry for November 5, 1839 reads, "Eight persons from [Virginia], a very interesting Family, sent to Canada accompanied by the agent." The Vigilant Association experienced significant strain and hostility from locals. In 1842, a white mob attacked Purvis' home, leading him to relocate from the city. "With Purvis gone," writes Beverly Tomek, "the committee essentially ceased to function."[193] Despite this, the UGRR remained an active movement in Philadelphia. On September 26, 1842, abolitionist Joshua Coffin wrote, "There are now 31 persons here, men, women, and children, who are on their way to Canada & will start tomorrow morning."[194]

During the 1850s, Philadelphia's Vigilance Committee was revived by free black abolitionist William Still. Born in New Jersey, Still dedicated his life to aiding

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[192] Tomek, "Vigilance Committees"; "Robert Purvis (1810-1898), *BlackPast.org*, Accessed Mar. 13, 2019. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/purvis-robert-1810-1898/; Robert Purvis to Wilbur H. Siebert, Dec. 23, 1895. WHSC, MSS116AV BOX65 F01 033. OHC, accessed Sep. 1, 2018. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/24819/rec/9. For more on the life and work of Robert Purvis, see Bacon, *But One Race*. For an excellent assessment of women's activism within northern vigilance committees, see Jesse Olsavsky, "Women, vigilance committees, and the rise of militant abolitionism, 1835-1859," *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 2 (2018), 357-382.

[193] Minutes of the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia, Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia Records (Collection 1121). Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA. For more on the Philadelphia Vigilant Committee, see Joseph A. Boromé, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1968), 320-351.

[194] Coffin, Joshua, and Maria West Chapman. "Letter from Joshua Coffin, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania], to Maria West Chapman, 1842 Sept[ember] 26." Correspondence. Sep. 26, 1842. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun. 3, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2z111138j.

freedom seekers to the North and Canada. He recorded the names, profiles, and motivations of hundreds of slave refugees, as well as the routes they took. Most arrived at his Philadelphia office on foot from the Upper South. Yet others arrived by stagecoach, train, or boat. In 1854, Solomon Brow and William B. White escaped to Philadelphia aboard the steamboat *City of Richmond*, which regularly traveled between northern and southern port cities. Likewise, Clarissa Davis from Portsmouth, Virginia managed to sneak aboard a ship at night while dressed in male attire. Commenting on the arrival of six freedom seekers from Baltimore, Still described the city as "one of the most difficult places in the South for even free colored people to get away from, much more for slaves. The rule forbade any colored person leaving there by rail road [sic] or steamboat."[195]

Still's records illustrate the complex relationship between kinship ties and self-emancipation. In many instances, mothers fled to the city with their children. On July 20, 1853, Still recorded the arrival of Charlotte Harris from Wilmington, Delaware, who "brought with her a son… nine years of age and a younger one… 10 [months] old." By contrast, Still only recorded a handful of self-emancipated fathers arriving with their children or two-parent family units in his records. On March 31, 1853, he recorded the arrival of James Gibbs and his two sons from Greensburg, Maryland. One year later, Stephen Amos and his wife Harriet (alias Henry Johnson and Mary Jane Johnson) fled from Baltimore to Philadelphia with their four children.[196] Still's records also demonstrate that freedom seekers were often forced to escape without enslaved parents, spouses, and children. On October 25, 1853, Still noted that Nelson Harris, who escaped from Richmond, "left a wife; Rosanna; a son John Henry & a daughter Evelina. Nelson was induced to fly for his liberty through the fear of being sold[.]" Likewise, William Davis of Portsmouth, Virginia, was forced to leave behind "a wife, Catherine, a daughter Louisa… and a Son [William]" when his enslaver "threatened to sell him[.]"[197]

In short, Philadelphia's African American and white abolitionist community offered slave refugees protection from re-enslavement. However, the city's proximity to the Mason-Dixon line meant that self-emancipators were not completely secure. Enslavers and kidnappers regularly searched for freedom seekers in Philadelphia (for more on reception and kidnapping, see Chapter Four). Reports of kidnappings in the city, or from nearby towns and settlements, convinced many freedom seekers that they needed to move farther north. In March 1844, the *Philadelphia Times* reported

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[195] Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 61-62; Feb. 13, 1854, Apr. 23, 1854, and May 22, 1854 in William Still, Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1852-1857. PAS Paper Series V – Miscellaneous, Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Section 5. PAS Paper Series 5.48. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA.; Still, *The Underground Rail Road*, 136. The group of six is also mentioned in Apr. 19, 1853 in Still, Journal C.

[196] Still, Journal C, Mar. 31, 1863, Jul. 20, 1853, May 12, 1854.

[197] Still, Journal C, Oct. 25, 1853, Dec. 15, 1854.

on the kidnapping of a "stout athletic colored man, known as "Big Ben," who has resided for the past, ten or twelve years near Forresstville, Bucks County, Pa., was taken by several persons on Friday last, as a runaway slave from one on them a planter in Virginia, from whom it seems he had escaped some twelve years earlier." Ninety miles north of Philadelphia, New York City was a popular destination for slave refugees. In 1810, more than 7,000 free African Americans lived and worked in the city, a number which grew steadily over the antebellum era. Philadelphia abolitionists regularly forwarded freedom seekers to New York City.[198]

After leaving Philadelphia, many freedom seekers journeyed to New York City. Aside from its significant black population, the city also offered an abundance of socio-economic opportunities. Furthermore, New York's UGRR network became increasingly active and organized. In 1835, free African American activist David Ruggles founded the New York City Committee of Vigilance. He wrote in the *Liberator*, "We must no longer depend on the interposition of the Manumission or Anti-Slavery Societies, in the hope of peaceable and just protection… We must look to our own safety[.]" Ruggles and the New York Vigilance Committee (NYVC) sheltered freedom seekers and protected free blacks from kidnapping. While the NYVC was an officially biracial organization, Eric Foner writes that "most of those who attended its meetings and took part in its activities were black New Yorkers."[199]

Two years after its formation, the *New York Evangelist* reported on its annual meeting at the AME Episcopal Zion Church. Attendee William Johnston declared, "There are multitudes of fugitive slaves who take refuge here," and asserted that the organization aimed "to throw a shield of protection around the fireside of the free colored man, and to aid the poor fugitive slave in escaping to a land of freedom[.]" Yet the NYVC soon experienced financial difficulties, which were compounded by schisms among its leadership. Ruggles' openly confrontational style had always proven too radical for some members of New York's black leadership. The NYVC was eventually disbanded in 1846 and absorbed into the New York State Vigilance Committee.[200]

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[198] "FRACAS – RUNAWAY SLAVE RECAPTURED," *Philadelphia Times*, reprinted in *Daily Morning Post*, Mar. 30, 1844; Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 56, 74.

[199] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 210; "KIDNAPPING IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK," *Liberator*, Aug. 6, 1836; Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 88; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 177-179; Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 65. For more on David Ruggles and the New York Vigilance Committee, see Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 63-90; Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan*, 171-176, 185-186; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 245-251.

[200] "NEW YORK VIGILANCE COMMITTEE," *New York Evangelist*, May 20, 1837; Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, Ch. 3. Other meetings of the New York Vigilance Committee are detailed in New York Committee of Vigilance. The first annual report of the New York Committee of Vigilance for the year 1837; together with important facts relative to their proceedings. New York, 1837. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 2 Apr. 2019.

As was the case in Philadelphia, New York City's UGRR network was revitalized in the 1850s. According to Foner, the city "consolidated its position as a crucial hub in a complex set of networks that stretched along the metropolitan corridor of the East Coast[.]" Black and white abolitionists in New York City set about revitalizing the city's freedom network. White abolitionist attorney and editor Sydney Howard Gay became an instrumental figure. Self-emancipators regularly sought assistance from his office. Alongside other well-known activists, including free black activist Louis Napoleon, Gay assisted slave refugees from New York City to more secure regions, namely Upstate New York, New England, and even Canada. Between 1855 and 1856, Gay recorded the arrival of 214 freedom seekers at his New York City office. 137 were men, 44 were women, and 29 were children (four were not specified). Roughly 160 came from Maryland and Virginia, while only 10 were from Washington and 19 from North Carolina.[201]

Gay's journal offers excellent insight into the profiles of freedom seekers in the city, the nature of self-emancipation, and the various escape networks and routes to freedom. As Foner notes, popular understandings of self-emancipation typically involve "lone fugitives." However, Gay's records reveal that countless groups passed through New York City. On May 15, 1856, Bill Henry Mason and William Chambers, both from Georgetown Roads, Maryland, escaped to Philadelphia with three other unnamed freedom seekers. The men "Walked to Mt. Pleasant, [and] took [the] cars, were questioned but not stopped. Went to Wilmington, [and] thence to [Philadelphia]." Still forwarded the trio to New York City. On October 3, 1855, he recorded the arrival of Sam Turner and Wesley Jones from Chestertown, Maryland "with seven others, among whom two were women[.]" The group "made their way by night to Wilmington, Del[aware] where they found friends," before being forwarded to New York.[202]

Freedom-seeking couples, including spouses, appear regularly among Gay's entries. On December 5, 1855, Jacob and Cornelia Hall arrived at his office. Gay wrote, "Jacob had been promised his freedom at 21 by his mistress, but she dying before that time, he was taken by [Col. William] Hutchins [and] held as a slave. Cornelia was about to be sold but not liking her proposed new master, determined to

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[201] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 150; Don Papson and Tom Calarco, *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City: Sydney Howard Gay, Louis Napoleon, and the Record of Fugitives*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2015), 13-31, 81, 89-117. For an excellent assessment of Louis Napoleon's activism in New York City, see Sarah Levine-Gronningsater, "Delivering Freedom: Gradual Emancipation, Black Legal Culture, and the Origins of Sectional Crisis in New York, 1759-1870," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014), Ch. 6.

[202] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 205; Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [13]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed May 10, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8911; "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [14]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8860.

cleave to her husband." One night, Jacob stole one of Hutchins' horses and "drove about 15 or 18 miles to New Market, then turned [the] horses loose, to find their way back if they could." From there, the couple traveled onward to Little York, Pennsylvania, where they met a white man who "took them to [the] colored church, [and] there they fell among friends." During this time, Jacob "drove a horse on [the] Canal from Millersburg to Wrightsville," while Cornelia stayed at Millersburg.[203]

Nuclear family units (i.e. two parents and children) appear less frequently in Gay's journals. Perhaps this speaks to the structure of enslaved families in the Upper South. On April 7, 1856, Otho Taylor, his wife, and their two children arrived at Gay's New York City office in search of assistance. The family lived across two farmsteads near Clear Spring, Maryland, "seven miles from [the Pennsylvania] Line" when they decided to escape from their enslaver. "There were eight together in the company," wrote Gay, "who filled two carriages. When near Chambersburg, one of [the] carriages broke down. Otho put his wife [and] one child on [the] horse, and his brother took [the] others." Fortunately, they managed to repair the carriage and continued onward to New York City, from whence they traveled to Canada.[204]

Meanwhile, single-parent units, typically mothers and children, were more common. On March 27, 1856, Gay recorded the arrival of Isaiah Robinson and a group of freedom seekers, most of whom came from Norfolk, Virginia. Gay wrote, "He with seven others, five of whom were from Norfolk, his sister [and] three children being four, were taken on board a [schooner] to Wilmington, [Delaware]." Robinson's sister, Rebecca Jones, was among the group; she escaped with her three children. According to Gay, "two of her brothers, [and] a sister were sold, [and] she had reason to suppose that she [and] her children would follow." Similarly, Caroline Taylor and her two daughters escaped with the group. The entry states, "Her husband is a free man, now at sea, in the US Steamer Saranac… Many of her master's relatives having died last year of yellow fever, he determined to sell his slaves, which Caroline determined that, so far as the other children were concerned, he should not."[205]

Rather than escape together, freedom-seeking families often fled from the South in stages. Husbands, wives, and other relatives often staggered their escapes, with the plan of reuniting at a later time. On November 17, 1855, Catherine Pitts

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[203] Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [27]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8873.

[204] Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [4]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8902.

[205] Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [43]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8889; "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [2]," *Columbia University Libraries Online* Exhibitions, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8900.

arrived with "an infant in arms." Originally from Maryland, Pitts managed to escape with help from her husband, whom Gay noted "took them in a wagon to Baltimore Hundred [Del.], thence she walked some distance, [and] finally got to [Philadelphia] by steam boat." Gay arranged for Pitts to be sent onward to Syracuse and noted that she expected her husband and brother "to follow her with a child she left behind." Other entries also referred to self-emancipators who sought to reunite with family members elsewhere. The previously mentioned Samuel Hill who escaped to Gay's office reportedly had "a brother at St. Catherine's [sic] Canada, who ran away a year ago, [and] whom he wishes to join." Likewise, Laura Lewis, who escaped from her enslaver in Baltimore, informed Gay that she planned to meet four others in St. Catharines.[206]

Some freedom seekers signaled their intention to rescue family members. On April 11, 1856, Charles Carter of Richmond, Virginia made his way to New York City. Gay recorded that he "has a wife at Alexandria [and] four children…whom he was allowed to go [and] see occasionally." Carter decided to escape after learning that his enslaver, "thinking that this very habit of going to Alexandria might lead [Charles] to acquire a taste for travelling [sic], had determined to sell him[.]" Carter fled to Washington where he stayed hidden for the winter, before making his way to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and later New York City, from whence he was sent to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Gay noted that Carter "is determined to get his wife [and] children somehow." Similarly, on September 1, 1856, Gay documented the arrival of Benjamin Wilson, alias Samuel Thornton. Wilson "left a wife [and] two children from whom he thinks of returning." Otho Taylor returned to the South "to bring away his parents [and] brother [and] sister, but did not succeed. They had been promised their freedom [and] preferred to remain till [the] time was up."[207]

Although many self-emancipators remained in New York, others journeyed onward to New England. New Haven, Providence, Newport, Worcester, New Bedford, and Boston received countless slave refugees. In 1850, about 2,000 African Americans officially resided in Boston. Meanwhile, in 1853, roughly 1,600 people of

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[206] Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [19]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8865; "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [9]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8855; "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [7]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8905.

[207] Gay, Sydney Howard, 1814-1888, "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [6]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8904; "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [7]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/record_fugitives/book2/page7; "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [33]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jun. 16, 2020, https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8931.

color resided in New Bedford. Newspapers in New England regularly documented the arrival of freedom seekers from the South. In December 1855, the *Huntingdon Journal* reported sixteen freedom seekers arrived in New Bedford.[208]

The Boston Vigilance Committee (BVC) was arguably the most influential of these organizations in New England. It received freedom seekers in the Bay City and forwarded some to the Canadian Maritimes, Lower Canada, and Upper Canada.[209] In 1854, Francis Jackson wrote Theodore Parker that he found a list with "the names of 230 fugitive slaves which have been assisted by the [Boston] vigilance committee" over the previous four years. Meanwhile, vigilance committees were also formed in other towns and villages in Massachusetts, such as Millbury and Harwich. In 1851, William Henry Fish of Milford wrote to Samuel J. May that the local vigilance committee was active in the region.[210]

Other freedom seekers headed from New York City towards central and Upstate New York. UGRR networks between the regions ensured the safe transportation of slave refugees. In Pleasantville, Westchester County, two Quakers (James and Joseph Pierce) received many freedom seekers. One abolitionist recalled that "Brother Joseph's house… [is] one known to fugitives, and many within a year have been refreshed with bread & cheese… & sometimes assisted in the darkness of the night with a conveyance to another friend who in turn shall aid him[.]"[211] Albany,

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[208] Kathryn Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 56; "Fugitive Slaves," *Huntingdon Journal*, Dec. 5, 1855.

[209] "Fugitive Slaves aided by the Vigilance Committee since the Passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill, 1850," Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society Records, 1850-1858. New York Historical Society. Digital version accessed Sep. 1, 2019. http://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A142855#page/1/mode/2up. For the BVC's membership list, see Austin Bearse, *Reminiscences of Fugitive-Slave Law Days in Boston* (Boston, MA: Warren Richardson, 1880), 3-6, accessed May 20, 2020. http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=mayantislavery&cc=mayantislavery&idno=12851220&q1=underground+railroad&view=image&seq=1&size=100. Bearse details interracial abolitionist and UGRR activism in Boston. In particular, he notes the escape of slave refugees to Boston (and his role in assisting them) via coastal maritime routes (see pp. 8-12).

[210] Jackson, Francis, and Theodore Parker. "Letter from Francis Jackson to Theodore Parker, 1854 June 11." Correspondence. Jun. 11, 1854. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun. 2, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2z111b07d. For the Millbury and Harwich vigilance committee membership lists, see Parker, Theodore, and Millbury (Mass.) Citizens. "Letter from Citizens of Millbury [Mass.] to Theodore Parker, July 1/18[54]." Correspondence. Jul. 1, 1854. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun. 3, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:6w925c20t; Parker, Theodore, and Harwich (Mass.) Citizens. "Letter from Citizens of Harwich [Mass.] to Theodore Parker, Aug. 17, 1854." Correspondence. Aug. 17, 1854. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun. 3, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:6w925c23n; Fish, William H. (William Henry), and Jr. Samuel May. "Letter from William Henry Fish, Milford, [Massachusetts], to Samuel May, [18]51 July 7." Correspondence. Jul. 7, 1851. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun. 3, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2z110n72d.

[211] Snodgrass, *Underground Railroad*, 415; Pierce, A. *Letter from A. Pierce to Thomas Howland, April 10, 1838. Howland Family Papers (MS 923). Special Collections and University Archives, University of*

Utica, Troy, Syracuse, Auburn, Buffalo, and Rochester also had sizable black and white abolitionist communities. In 1850, more than 1,000 African Americans were recorded in Albany and 549 resided in Rochester. 150 black residents were also documented in surrounding Monroe County. Frederick Douglass, Samuel J. May, and Jermain Wesley Loguen were among the leading figures in Upstate New York's UGRR.[212] Newspaper accounts detail the escape of freedom seekers to the region. In 1850, the Mississippi *Organizer* reported that sixteen refugees passed through Utica aboard "a boat for Canada… They were well armed, and determined to fight to the last minute." Ten years later, the *Keowee Courier* reported on the escape of John Niles from South Carolina to Rochester. After a brief stay, he crossed into Canada to reunite with his parents.[213]

Vigilance committees operated in towns and cities across Upstate New York. The Albany Vigilance Committee (AVC) was integral to assisting freedom seekers. Abolitionist and Baptist minister Abel Brown claimed that the organization "often found themselves in personal contest with slaveholders and their abettors[.]" The AVC's first annual report claimed that "no less than 350 fugitives had been aided to a place of safety by the Committee, at an expense of more than one thousand dollars." In 1844, members of the committee were instrumental in assisting William Johnson, a self-emancipator from Missouri, and his family to Canada. The *Fremont Journal* later reported that "287 fugitive slaves passed through the city of Albany, *en route* to Canada" between September 1855 and July 1856.[214]

Like other vigilance committees, the AVC was an interracial organization. Stephen Myers, a formerly enslaved black activist, even served as the AVC's president at one stage. In 1858, he wrote in a letter, "Durring [sic] the last 18 months we hav [sic] had more fugitives than we hav [sic] had in former times[.]" Three years

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Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Amherst, MA, accessed Jun. 5, 2020. https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums923-b01-f19-i002. For more on the UGRR in central and Upstate New York (as well as New Jersey), see William J. Switala, *Underground Railroad in New Jersey and New York* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006).

[212] Switala, *Underground Railroad in New Jersey and New York*, 89-90; Dann J. Broyld, "'Over the Way': On the Border of Canada before the Civil War," in Paul Lovejoy and Vanessa S. Oliveira (eds.), *Slavery, Memory, Citizenship*, 110. For population statistics for central and western New York, see Switala, *Underground Railroad in New Jersey and New York*, 110, 128. For more on the transnational black freedom network in the Niagara River borderland, with particular emphasis on black communities in Rochester and St. Catharines, see Dann J. Broyld, "The "Dark Sheep" of the Atlantic World: Following the Transnational Trail of Blacks to Canada," in Benjamin Talton and Quincy T. Mills (eds.), *Black Subjects in Africa and Its Diasporas: Race and Gender in Research and Writing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 95-108.

[213] "FUGITIVE SLAVES," *Organizer* (Oxford, MS), Nov. 9, 1850; "THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD," *Keowee Courier* (Pickens Court House, SC), Jan. 21, 1860.

[214] C.S. Brown, *Memoir of Rev. Abel Brown, By His Companion, C.S. Brown* (Worcester, MA: Published by the Author, 1849), 128 (first quote), 150 (second quote); "FATE OF A RETAKEN FUGITIVE SLAVE," *Voice of Freedom* (Montpellier, VT), Mar. 14, 1844; "The underground railroad…" *Fremont Journal* (Fremont, OH), Nov. 7, 1856; Ripley et. al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 407-410.

later, Myers wrote in the *Pine and Palm* that freedom seekers "are sent to me by the Underground Railroad… and in many cases they come poorly clad[.]" Slave refugees arrived at his Albany office "every few days" and were typically forwarded to Canada. Myers claimed to have directed 654 refugees (men, women, and children) to Canada over the previous eight years.[215] Vigilance committees and anti-slavery societies elsewhere in western and Upstate New York aided freedom seekers to Canada. In Syracuse, the Fugitive Aid Society was founded in 1857 to provide food, shelter, and transportation to black refugees.[216]

Freedom seekers often settled in towns and cities across Upstate New York. Yet some believed that only Canada guaranteed true freedom and security. Canadian-bound refugees typically crossed into British North America via Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, or the Niagara River. Anti-slavery societies documented cases of freedom seekers escaping to Canada via the Niagara borderland. In its third annual report, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) noted that a freedom-seeking family from Georgia had recently secured passage aboard the steamboat *Henry Clay* in Buffalo. It claimed that the "powerful current of the Niagara swept the boat rapidly into deep water, beyond the reach of tyranny… the man with his wife and children, were all safe on British soil, protected by British laws!!"[217]

Women's organizations also played an important role in aiding freedom seekers *en route* to Canada. Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society (RLASS) kept various letters that detailed the arrival and departure of numerous self-emancipated refugees. Frederick Douglass wrote several letters to white abolitionist Maria G. Porter of Rochester over the 1850s. One dated February 22 (year unknown) stated, "I have a poor fugitive at my office on his way to Canada – without money. I have assisted him as well as I can but am compelled to call upon you for two dollars." In another letter, dated March 27 (year unknown), Douglass requested one dollar "to pay for the board of a fugitive[.]"[218]

Abolitionists in the Niagara borderland maintained lines of communication with activists elsewhere. Moses Anderson, a black activist in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, wrote to Porter in 1853, "we hear almost weekly of some one escaping

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[215] Stephen Myers, "ABOUT THE U.G.R.R.," *Pine and Palm* (Boston, MA), Jun. 29, 1861.

[216] Milton C. Sernett, *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002); "AFRICAN AID SOCIETY," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, reprinted in *Liberator*, May 1, 1857. Members of the FAS included Samuel J. May and Jermain W. Loguen.

[217] American Anti-Slavery Society. *Third Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society; with the Speeches Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting, held in the City of New York, on the 10th May, 1836, and the Minutes of the Meetings of the Society for Business* (New York, NY: William S. Dorr, 1836), 19-20, accessed May 28, 2020. http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=mayantislavery&cc=mayantislavery&idno=02817310&q1=Canada&view=image&seq=1&size=100.

[218] Frederick Douglass to Maria G. Porter, Feb. 22, [year unknown]; Mar. 27 [year unknown]. Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society Records. Box 1. WLC, UM. Ann Arbor, Michigan.

from the jaws of slavery to the land of freedom though they are watched by the pro Slavery party and their accomplices[.]" Three-and-a-half years later, black abolitionist William J. Watkins wrote, "from Dec. 15th [1856] to Aug. 9th [1857], I passed 59 fugitives to Canada, as follows. [Six] to Toronto, and 53 to Suspension Bridge, St. Catharines, Hamilton, &c."[219] One letter noted the work of freedom seekers, such as Harriet Tubman. In November 1856, William E. Abbot, who served as treasurer of the FAS in Syracuse, directly referenced Tubman's activism in another letter:

> The woman who accompanies the party on their way to Freedom is well known to us for her untiring devotion to the cause of the enslaved. She is herself an escaped bondwoman and this second company she has brought forth out of the land of servitude at great risk to herself. It has been our custom to forward all directly on to the [Niagara Falls Suspension] Bridge. But now our funds fail us & are obliged to send them forward to different half way houses that are on their route.[220]

Activists also liberated enslaved people that were brought by their enslavers to the border zone. In 1846, Cecelia Jane Reynolds, an enslaved girl from Louisville, Kentucky, was taken by her enslavers to the Cataract House at Niagara Falls. Upon discovering this, black waiters at the hotel made arrangements for Reynolds to sail across the river on a rowboat. While her enslavers were away, she secreted herself across the Niagara River. After reaching Canada, she traveled to St. Catharines and later settled in Toronto.[221] Other reports illustrate the efforts of UGRR activists to assist enslaved people brought to the Falls. The *Detroit Free Press* noted that "an attempt was made by colored persons residing at Niagara Falls, to kidnap some colored servants of Southerners, visiting at the Falls, and they so far succeeded as to get them away from their masters and conceal them." Meanwhile, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* reported that an enslaved woman at the hotel "stated that she was wretched beyond description of the cruel treatment of her master and mistress. She wished them to convey her to *the Canada side*, where she would be protected by *British laws*."[222]

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[219] Moses Anderson ALS to Maria G. Porter, December 12, 1853; William J. Watkins to Mrs. Armstrong, Aug. 1857. Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society Records. Box 1. WLC, UM. Ann Arbor, Michigan; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 460.
[220] W. E. Abbott to Maria G. Porter, Nov. 29, 1856. Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society Records. Box 1. WLC, UM. Ann Arbor, Michigan. Abbott letter also quoted in Sernett, *North Star Country*, 190.
[221] For more on the escape and life of Cecelia Jane Reynolds, see Smardz Frost, *Steal Away Home*, esp. Ch. 2.
[222] "AFFRAY AT THE FALLS," *Detroit Free Press*, Jul. 14, 1847; "Riot at Niagara – Colony of Coloured People at Queen's Bush, Canada," *NASS*, Jul. 29, 1847.

Steamboats in the transnational border zone provided safe passage for other freedom seekers. Jacob D. Green, a freedom seeker from Kentucky, fled to Lewiston where he "was placed on board a steamboat called Chief Justice Robinson… Three hours after starting, I was in Toronto… where I lived for three years and sang my, song of deliverance." Others employed more drastic methods. In 1853, Ben Hockley, a freedom seeker from Tennessee, fled to Lewiston, New York, where he "lashed himself to a gate, and launched forth upon the Niagara River, in hopes that he should make his way to the Canada shore." He was spotted by passengers aboard the *Chief Justice John Robinson* to Canada.[223] The *Toronto Leader* published a much more extravagant account of the case. It claimed that Hockley first sought passage aboard a ship from Oswego, New York, but accidentally stowed aboard a ship heading to Youngstown, Ohio. He quickly fled to the Niagara borderland, where he floated on the lake aboard a gate. This particular account is unverified, however.[224] The next section will focus on slave refugee migration and UGRR networks in the former Northwest Territory.

Across these Bloody Rivers: Freedom Seekers and UGRR Networks in the Ohio River and Mississippi River Borderlands

Born in Madison County, Kentucky, Lewis Garrard Clarke experienced the horrors of slavery first hand. As a child, he was routinely beaten and whipped by his enslaver. Moreover, his mother and siblings were sold to the Lower South. Upon learning that his enslaver planned to sell him, Clarke decided to escape to the North. He fled to Lexington and took shelter with his brother Cyrus. Escape posed innumerable challenges ("both of us were very ignorant of the roads," he recalled), but his desire to run away could not be quelled. "Monday morning, bright and early," Clarke wrote, "I set my face in good earnest toward the Ohio River, determined to see and tread the north bank of it, or die in the attempt. I said to myself, one of two things, FREEDOM or DEATH." Clark later resettled in Upper Canada.[225]

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[223] Jacob D. Green, *Narrative of the Life of J. D. Green, a Runaway Slave, from Kentucky, Containing an Account of His Three Escapes, in 1839, 1846, and 1848* (Huddersfield: Henry Fielding, 1864), 73; DARING ATTEMPT AND SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE OF A SLAVE – ANOTHER BOLD STROKE FOR FREEDOM," *NASS*, Aug. 20, 1853.

[224] "REMARKABLE ESCAPE OF A NEGRO SLAVE TO CANADA," *Toronto Leader*, reprinted in *Kalida Venture* (Kalida, OH), Aug. 19, 1853.

[225] Lewis G. Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke, During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1845), 34, accessed Feb. 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/clarke/clarke.html. Clarke's narrative is also briefly touched upon in Hahn, *Political Worlds*, 1-2.

Stacey Robertson writes that the former Northwest Territory "served as a route toward free Canada for thousands of fugitive slaves." Like the Mason-Dixon line, the Ohio and Mississippi River borderlands symbolized the geographical border between slavery and freedom. Henry Bibb recalled "standing on the Ohio River bluff, looking over on a free State, and as far north as my eyes could see. I have eagerly gazed upon the blue sky of the free North, which at times constrained me to cry out from the depths of my soul, Oh! Canada, sweet land of rest – Oh! When shall I get there?"[226] Enslaved people in western Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri employed similar strategies to their counterparts in the Chesapeake and Tidewater. Most notably, freedom seekers typically fled to African American communities and settlements, where they sought to pass as free people of color. UGRR activists also assisted self-emancipators during their escapes but, compared to the Mid-Atlantic and New England, escape networks were less organized in the 'Old Northwest.'[227]

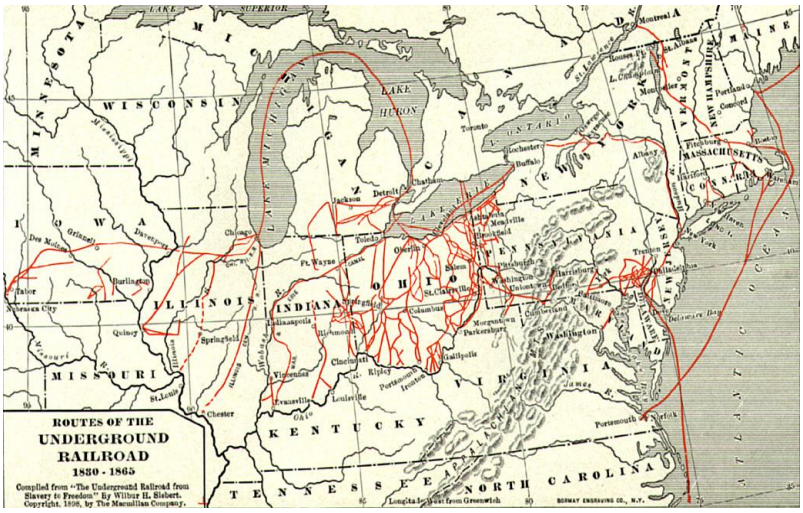

Figure 6: Map of UGRR Routes in the Old Northwest

Source: *Wikimedia Commons,* accessed Jan. 30, 2020. https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Undergroundrailroadsmall2.jpg. Originally from Siebert, *The Underground Railroad*.

[226] Stacey Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 164; Bibb, *Narrative*, 29.
[227] For more on slave refugees and black freedom networks in the Ohio River borderland, see Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom*; Harrold, *Border War*; Darrel E. Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and Its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2006); Matthew Salafia, "Searching for Slavery: Fugitive Slaves in the Ohio River Valley Borderland," *Ohio Valley History* 8, no. 4 (2008), 38-63; Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland*.

Most freedom seekers in the former Northwest Territory escaped from Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. Slavery in Kentucky and Missouri was not dissimilar from its counterparts in Virginia or Maryland. Enslavers in both states typically held no more than a handful of enslaved people who labored predominantly on rural labor camps. Tobacco, hemp, corn, and other grains were grown on farms in each state. Tobacco cultivation in Kentucky, notes Nikki Taylor, was second only to Virginia. In Kentucky, enslaved African Americans were concentrated in the Bluegrass region in the state's central and northern counties. Henderson, Union, Meade, and Jefferson Counties possessed significant enslaved populations. Moreover, Louisville and Lexington, the two largest urban centers, also boasted large enslaved populations. In Missouri, enslaved African Americans mostly resided in the region known as 'Little Dixie,' a series of counties in the upper half of the state along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. St. Louis, the largest city in the region, also boasted a large enslaved population.[228]

Kentucky and Missouri were not widely settled by white Euro-Americans until the early nineteenth century. In 1790, Kentucky's white population stood at just over 60,000. Thirty years later, it had risen to 435,000. Likewise, Missouri's population grew significantly after statehood. Between 1820 and 1861, writes Diane Mutti Burke, "more than a quarter of a million free people from the Upper South, many of them small slaveholders, migrated to Missouri[.]" Many settlers had become "increasingly dissatisfied with their economic circumstances and reasoned that they could improve their prospects in the West." In 1790, almost 12,000 enslaved people officially resided in Kentucky. By 1860, the figure had grown to roughly 225,000. In Missouri, the enslaved population rose from about 10,000 in 1820 to almost 115,000 forty years later.[229]

Forced westward migration was a profoundly traumatizing experience for enslaved men, women, and children. Francis Frederick from Fauquier County, Virginia, recalled his experience being part of "a sorrowful cavalcade… the sobbing women, wailing children, and men whose stony looks expressed nothing but despair; torn forever from their kindred[.]" The group traveled across the Allegheny Mountains to Wheeling, Virginia, from whence they traveled by boat to Kentucky. Enslaved African Americans in both states remained subject to brutal working

[228] Luke Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6; Nikki M. Taylor, *Driven Toward Madness: The Fugitive Slave Margaret Garner and Tragedy on the Ohio* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016), 25; Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks*, 13-15; Diane Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 27.
[229] Lowell H. Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 2; Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 24-25, 27.

conditions and cruel treatment. Freedom seekers launched daring bids for liberty by crossing the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers into Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.[230]

Figure 7: View of the Ohio River seen from below Cincinnati.

Source: Ohio River View Print. Ohio River Images Collection, SC 808. OHC, accessed Jan. 22, 2020. https://cdm16007.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/13080.

Newspapers in the Old Northwest published escaped slave advertisements. In 1804, the *Indiana Gazette* published a notice for "a young negro fellow named, JOE," who escaped across the Ohio River to Indiana. Meanwhile, in October 1818, James Matson of Bourbon County, Kentucky, reported that a "runaway negro man named JOSHUA, of a mulatto complexion, near six feet high, raw boned and tolerably well made," had escaped. Matson suspected that Joshua "has fled to the state of Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois, in company with a family by the name of Carpenter[.]" In 1805, David Jewel of Louisville posted a notice in the *Indiana Gazette* for three freedom seekers, "Two of which are men & the other a woman," who sought to reach Ohio passing as free African Americans. In 1818, A. Hugonin of Louisville reported

[230] Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society, 2003), 1; Francis Frederick, *Autobiography of Rev. Francis Frederick, of Virginia* (Baltimore: J. W. Woods Printer, 1869), 8-9, accessed May 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/frederick/frederick.html; Frederick's life and escape from enslavement can also be found in Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London: Wertheim, MacIntosh, and Hunt, 1863), accessed May 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/fedric/fedric.html.

the escape of an enslaved couple, Stafford and Betty, who had likely headed "out of state."[231] Over time, more notices appeared in newspapers for female freedom seekers. In June 1850, $75 was offered for "a dark colored NEGRO GIRL named Julia" if captured "out of the State." On some occasions, men and women fled across the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers with their children. In 1853, a notice appeared in the *Daily Courier* for Henry Morehead and his wife, Mary, who fled with their three children, aged four, two-and-a-half, and seven months respectively. Some advertisements state the intent of freedom seekers to reach Canada. In 1854, the *Louisville Daily Courier* claimed that a freedom seeker named "LILA or DELILA ALLENSWORTH," who was "supposed to be assisted in making her way to Canada."[232]

While most freedom seekers came from the Upper South, smaller numbers managed to escape from the Mid- and Lower South. Tennessee enslavers often published escaped slave notices for slave refugees that fled to Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In March 1820, David Dunn reported that two men, John and Joe, who were likely "about Nashville, if not on their way to the free states, as Joe had once before made the attempt to get to the state of Ohio, and was taken up in Kentucky." Later that year, a Nashville enslaver reported the escape of two men, Davy and Clem, with the former reportedly escaping "on horseback." Some North Carolina enslavers also reported that freedom seekers had likely fled to the Old Northwest. In 1809, the Raleigh *Star* published a notice for a self-emancipator named Davy, whose enslaver wrote, "He can write, and perhaps has procured a free pass – I am apprehensive he has attempted to get to the State of Ohio, where he has once been." In 1839, the *Charlotte Journal* printed an advertisement for the forty-year-old Robbin, whose enslaver suspected, "it is probably he will make for Ohio or Indiana."[233]

Fewer notices were placed by Lower South enslavers. In 1822, the *Mobile Commercial Register* printed an advertisement for George W. Harvy [sic] and a woman named Polly from Montgomery County. It claimed that they would "no doubt travel as man and wife, as they lived in that way for several months," and that Polly, having stolen men's clothing, "will doubtless attempt to travel in the character of a man… They will undoubtedly endeavor to reach the free States of the Ohio river, or

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[231] "Twenty Dollars Reward," *Indiana Gazette*, Sep. 18, 1804; "FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD," *Western Sun & General Advertiser*, Apr. 3, 1819; "30 Dollars Reward," *Indiana Gazette*, Apr. 10, 1805; "100 DOLLARS REWARD," *Western Sun & General Advertiser*, Feb. 20, 1819.
[232] "$75 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jun. 19, 1850; "$500 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Dec. 13, 1853; "$200 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Courier*, May 31, 1854.
[233] "RUNAWAY," *Nashville Gazette*, Apr. 15, 1820; "$500 REWAR[D], For Davy and Clem," *Nashville Gazette*, Aug. 10, 1820. Advertisements located 'Freedom on the Move' Database, *Freedomonthemove.org*, accessed Mar. 5, 2019. https://app.freedomonthemove.org/search?limit=12&page=1&q=Ohio; "50 Dollars Reward," (Raleigh, NC) *Star*, Jul. 20, 1809; "$100 Reward," *Charlotte Journal*, Oct. 25, 1839. Advertisements located in 'N. C. Runaway Slave Advertisements' Database, accessed Mar. 5, 2019. http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/search/collection/RAS/searchterm/Ohio/order/nosort.

some of the Spanish Territories." In October 1823, M. C. Moorman of Limestone County, Alabama offered $150 "for apprehending THREE NEGRO SLAVES, if taken in the States of Illinois or Ohio, or if taken in the States of Kentucky or Tennessee[.]"[234] Likewise, few narratives or autobiographies detail the escape of slave refugees from the Lower South to the Old Northwest. John Brown escaped from the Mississippi River valley to St. Louis, where he crossed into Illinois and made his way through Indiana and Michigan. He later crossed into Canada and traveled to Great Britain.[235]

The Ohio River was a long, porous border that became the primary crossing point for freedom seekers escaping to the Old Northwest. Over the antebellum period, southern Ohio witnessed the arrival of thousands of slave refugees from Kentucky, Virginia, and elsewhere. Across the borderland, writes Ann Hagedorn, self-emancipators crossed at "Cincinnati, New Richmond, Moscow, Manchester, Portsmouth, Ironton, Gallipolis, Point Pleasant, and Marietta, among others." Cincinnati, the sixth-largest city by population in the antebellum United States, it was the largest urban center in the former Northwest Territory. In 1820, just over 400 African Americans resided in the Queen City. Thirty years later, however, the figure had risen to 3,000. Nikki Taylor writes that Cincinnati blacks "regularly provided assistance to runaways." Additionally, white abolitionists in the city aided refugees from the South. Refugees in the city typically sought to pass as free people of color. In Cincinnati's dockyards and wharves, self-emancipators posed as free black laborers.[236]

Kentucky enslavers often bemoaned the fact that freedom seekers regularly escaped to Cincinnati. Escaped slave notices regularly listed the Queen City as a likely destination for slave refugees. In July 1819, John Puckett of Salem in Livingston County reported the escape of an enslaved man named Thornton, who would "aim either towards Cincinnati, Ohio, or possibly to cross the Wabash [River] into Illinois." In 1831, Garland Tate of Louisville posted a notice for Sam Arthur, a twenty-six-year-old self-emancipator, who originally "came from Campbell [C]ounty, Virginia; and will probably aim for Cincinnati." Many freedom seekers

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[234] "250 DOLLARS REWARD," *Mobile Commercial Register*, Aug. 8, 1822; "ONE HUNDRED & FIFTY DOLLARS," *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, Oct. 28, 1823. Located via 'Freedom on the Move' Database, accessed Mar. 5, 2019. https://app.freedomonthemove.org/search?format=list&limit=12&page=1&q=Ohio.

[235] John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England. Edited by L.A. Chamerovzow* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1855), accessed May 25, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jbrown/jbrown.html.

[236] Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Stories of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 41; Taylor, *Driven Toward Madness*, 58-59; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 22, 28-29, 51; Joe William Trotter, Jr., *River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 26-27; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 222. According to Taylor, Germans comprised the largest immigrant group in antebellum Cincinnati.

took refuge with family members in the city. In 1853, the *Louisville Daily Courier* reported that twenty-one-year-old Derias would "endeavor to reach Cincinnati, as he has a brother living there."[237]

Other historical records illustrate Cincinnati's reputation as a beacon of liberty for self-emancipators in the borderland. On April 29, 1824, William Buckner of Paris, Kentucky wrote to his brother Thomas regarding the escape of a twenty-year-old enslaved man. On Easter Saturday, William claimed that "one of my negroes left home to go on a visit as I understood in the neighborhood… but after a constant and diligent search in all the neighboring country, I have become satisfied that he has gone, not to return, and my explanation is that he has made for the state of Ohio[.]" Buckner offered $100 for the freedom seekers if taken within twenty miles of Paris, and $200 if taken out of state. He requested that friends in Covington, Newport, and Cincinnati offer assistance in recapturing the self-emancipator, suggested informing ferrymen about the freedom seeker, and even bribing African Americans in Cincinnati for information. Buckner added that the man "has travelled [sic] with me frequently, and consequently would be able to make his way, better than common negroes[.]"[238]

Enslavers were not the only ones to document Cincinnati's position as a gateway for freedom seekers. Free African Americans also documented their efforts in aiding freedom seekers to Cincinnati. John Malvin, a free black activist who briefly lived in the Queen City, recalled helping freedom seekers from Kentucky across the Ohio River. On one occasion, Malvin aided an enslaved woman named Susan Hall and her son. One evening, he crossed the river and met the freedom seekers. After finding a small boat, the group sailed back to the Ohio shoreline. Malvin recalled, "I found shelter in a safe place in Cincinnati for the woman and child… I then sent her to Canada, where she married a man named McKinney, and raised a family." After Hall's enslavers learned of her escape, they notified Cincinnati's police force, and "the city was thrown into great commotion[.]" By this stage, however, Hall and her son were already gone.[239]

Self-emancipated refugees also noted that they escaped to the North and Canada via Cincinnati. Amy Clark from Bath County, Kentucky fled to the Queen City upon learning that her enslaver planned to sell her to his son-in-law. After being taken to Maysville, she secreted herself aboard a steamboat heading to Cincinnati,

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[237] "$100 reward!," *Indiana Gazette* (Vincennes, IN), Jul. 17, 1819; "Twenty-five Dollars Reward," *Louisville Daily Journal*, Jan. 5, 1831; "$100 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Sep. 14, 1853.
[238] William Buckner to Thomas Buckner, 29 April 1824. Folder 6, Buckner Family Papers, 1784-1991. Mss. A B925 2-19. FHS. Louisville, Kentucky. Also see Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland*, 129.
[239] John Malvin, *Autobiography of John Malvin: A Narrative, Containing An Authentic Account of His Fifty Years' Struggle in the State of Ohio in Behalf of the American Slave, and the Equal Rights of All Men Before the Law Without Reference to Race of Color: Forty-Seven Years of Said Time Being Expended in the City of Cleveland* (Cleveland: Leader Printing Co., 1879), 14-15.

where she stayed with local abolitionists. Clark recalled that she remained in the city for "about five years." During this time, she and her husband Joseph Barber, a UGRR activist, provided shelter to other freedom seekers. Clark claimed that they "kept the fugitives up stairs [sic], and he… would take 'em on to Lebanon among the Quakers." After leaving Cincinnati, Clark traveled onward to Windsor, Upper Canada, where she remained the rest of her life.[240]

Likewise, Thomas Johnson detailed his escape to the Queen City. After his enslaver's death, Johnson remained on the farmstead with his enslaver's wife. He told Benjamin Drew, "I used to take a great deal of care of the place, seeing the farming operations, and have been to Cincinnati to sell produce. The people all considered me trustworthy and honorable, and some of the white people said I could make greater crops than they could." Johnson had a family in Kentucky, and his wife "wished to leave for Canada, with the three youngest children." Not long after, Johnson decided to follow his wife and children to Canada. After absconding to the woods with "thirty-five dollars in [his] pocket," he waited until nightfall when he "crossed the river to Cincinnati." He wrote to his enslaver, promising to return if he could purchase his liberty. After she responded "promising a great many things," Johnson decided that he "might as well go on to Canada. I aimed for Toronto, but on my way fell in with a man on board the boat, who knew where my wife and children lived in Malden. I went there and joined them: and since that time, three others of my children have made their escape and are here."[241]

Johnson's testimony reveals that enslaved African Americans were quite familiar with Cincinnati. Joseph Sanford of Kentucky recalled that he was regularly sent to the city by his enslaver. Originally from Virginia, Sanford was removed to the Bluegrass State at ten years of age. Eventually, he was transferred to "a most cruel man." But Sanford was generally considered trustworthy. "There was a great many who had a high regard for me," he recalled; "I was respected by everybody – could be trusted, no matter with what. I used to do [the enslaver's] marketing, going to Cincinnati, sell his butter, flax-seed, potatoes, apples, peaches, yarn – every thing – and took every copper home." For enslaved people, the hiring system created an opportunity to enhance their spatial awareness and social network. "I wanted to be free," he recalled, "but was afraid to undertake it; for I thought if I were taken and carried back, it would be a great disgrace to me, as I was always trusted." By improving his knowledge of Cincinnati, Sanford greatly reduced the odds of recapture. Sanford later learned that his enslaver "was going to take away our holidays – we all resolved to break and run away, hit or miss, live or die. There were thirteen of us started away in company – not all from his place."

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[240] Amy Clark interview. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX55 06OH 045. OHC, accessed May 2, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/3914/rec/327.
[241] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 379-381.

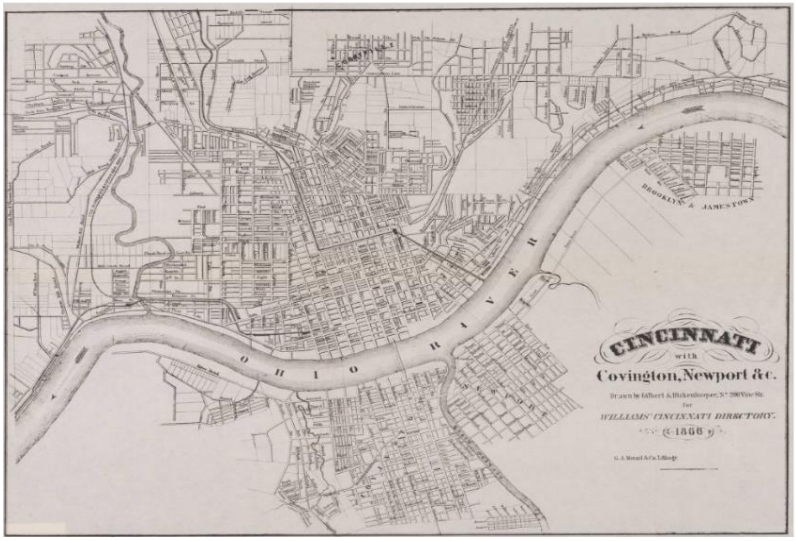

Figure 8: Map of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport, 1866

Source: "Cincinnati, Covington and Newport Map/" MAP VFM0426-4; 917.7178 C49w1 1866. OHC, accessed Jan. 20, 2020. https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/17334/.

The group made their way to Covington, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. Sanford noted that "the garrison were up, beating their drums," but he remained confident that they would make it to the North. "We divided at the last toll-gate," he remembered; "Some going through the gate and myself and little Henry going round. We then found a skiff and oars and crossed the Ohio into Cincinnati. I was so afraid I'd see somebody that knew me, I knew not what to do." They stayed in the city for about two weeks and journeyed northward to Michigan, where they crossed into Canada. John Hatfield, another member of the group, stated that he assisted another enslaved woman to the city via steamboat and that she "had got to a friend's house in the city… I went there and told the friend; he thought she was safe." He recalled, "I came into this country on account of the oppressive laws of the United States. I have as good friends in the United States, colored and white, as ever a man had… but the laws were against me."[242]

Cincinnati's steamboat trade, and its growing links to ports in the Ohio River borderland, offered enslaved people new opportunities to escape. As was the case elsewhere, male self-emancipators found it easier to secure passage aboard steamboats. Yet, some enslaved women also managed to sneak aboard vessels. In March 1833, Cave Johnson of Boone County, Kentucky claimed that a 'mulatto'

[242] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 358-365.

woman named Harriet, who had been hired out by her enslaver Polly W. Johnson, escaped aboard a steamboat to Cincinnati. The captain, a man named Anderson, apologized to Johnson over the incident. He claimed that "the woman told him that she was a free woman."[243] Moreover, the Ohio River, Mississippi River, and other national steamboat traders enabled freedom seekers from the Middle and Lower South to reach Cincinnati. John Warren from Wilson County, Tennessee recalled escaping to Memphis on foot with forged passes, before he managed to get "hired on a boat bound to Cincinnati. I saw the sign "Cincinnati," and went aboard: sailed that evening, and got safely to Cincinnati in five days. I stopped there two or three days, and then left for Canada."[244] Other records highlight Cincinnati's reputation as a beacon for freedom seekers. E.S. Abdy's journal from 1834 claimed, "A great many slaves – no less, probably, than 300 every year, pass through Cincinnati on their way to Canada." The report noted that free African Americans in the city "give them an asylum, and speed them on their road to the British provinces… The process of self-emancipation is, in fact, going on very largely[.]"[245]

By the 1850s, newspapers regularly reported on the escape of enslaved men and women to the Queen City. The *Cincinnati Columbian* wrote in 1855, "The travel over the underground railroad for the past few days has been… unusually active, and no fewer than seven lots of runaway slaves have arrived at this terminus within a week." Most were from Kentucky, although the "sixth lot was composed of two middle-aged, stout men, who had come on foot from Louisiana to this place, sleeping by day, and walking toward the North star at night." The two men were "sent over the underground railroad to Canada." Two years later, the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette and Advertiser* claimed that a "STAMPEDE of slaves from the plantation of Mr. D. S. Dillon, in Bourbon county, took place last week… Three men and two women fled, and were pursued 25 miles, but they escaped to the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati." In May 1858, the *Cincinnati Gazette* wrote, "During the last three weeks more than twenty runaways have passed through this city *en route* for Canada," and that one of them "was so *white* in features as well color, that he traveled through Kentucky and crossed the river unsuspected." Southern enslavers and politicians continued to lament the escape of enslaved people via the Ohio River borderland. In 1859, Thomas Bullitt of Louisville wrote, "They have been running off from the southern part of the state recently."[246]

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[243] Deposition by Cave Johnson. Guthrie-Caperton Family Papers, 1780-1939. Folder 88. Mss. A G984 84, 88. FHS. Louisville, KY.
[244] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 183-185.
[245] E.S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America, From April, 1833, to October, 1834* (London: John Murray, 1835), 23, accessed May 1, 2020. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.28464/1?r=0&s=1.
[246] "RUNAWAY SLAVES – THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD," *Cincinnati Columbian*, Jan. 29, 1855, reprinted in *Agitator*, Feb. 8, 1855; "A STAMPEDE of slaves…," *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette and Advertiser*, Oct. 12, 1857; "CAN'T STOP THEM," *Cincinnati Gazette, May 25, 1858*, reprinted in *ASB*,

Josiah Henson was one of the most well-known freedom seekers to escape from the South via Cincinnati. Born in Charles County, Maryland, Henson was later forcibly migrated by his enslaver to Daviess County, Kentucky. Along the way, free black activists attempted to liberate Henson. "At Cincinnati," he recalled, "… the colored people gathered around us, and urged us with much importunity to remain with them; told us it was folly to go on; and in short used all the arguments now so familiar to induce slaves to quit their masters." But Henson refused to escape and negotiated an arrangement with Riley to purchase his freedom. Upon learning that Riley planned to renege on the agreement and sell him, Henson and his family resolved to escape. They crossed the Ohio River into southern Indiana, from whence they traveled to Cincinnati. Two weeks later, the family eventually reached Cincinnati, where "we were kindly received and entertained for several days," before heading to Canada.[247]

Similarly, Edward Moxley from Boone County, Kentucky, and his freedom-seeking family members did not stay in the city for long. During an interview at his home in Sandwich, Upper Canada in 1895, Moxley recalled, "My father was a free man in Cincinnati. He bought his-self [sic]… We took de [sic] boat and come up to Cincinnati and shive [sic] de [sic] boat adrift and all walked up… We had a wagon in Cincinnati, and kep [sic] a going right for Dayton." The group journeyed onward to Xenia with help from African Americans in the region. They ultimately made their way to Sandusky where they secured passage aboard a steamboat to Detroit before crossing into Canada. Likewise, Anthony Bingey escaped with several family members from Newport, Kentucky to Cincinnati. In the Queen City, the group were aided by a free black man named James Williams, who "bought a team of horses and a wagon with their money and drove them within 30 miles of Sandusky[.]" Bingey and his family later relocated to Upper Canada.[248]

African Americans were not the only UGRR activists in the region. Cincinnati was also home to a prominent white abolitionist community. James Birney was one of Cincinnati's most prominent abolitionists. In 1836, he founded *The Philanthropist*, one of the most popular anti-slavery newspapers in the Old Northwest. Meanwhile, Quakers Levi and Catherine Coffin moved to Cincinnati in 1847. Before this, the couple had assisted freedom seekers in Newport, southern Indiana. "When we moved to Cincinnati," Levi Coffin recalled in his *Reminiscences*,

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May 29, 1858; Letter from Thomas W. Bullitt, 28 August 1859. Bullitt Family Papers Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003. Box 33, Folder 297. Mss./A/B937c. FHS. Louisville, KY.

[247] Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849), 1-4, 21-24, 33-35, 48-52, accessed May 1, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henson49/henson49.html.

[248] Edward Moxley Interview, Jul. 31, 1895. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX55 06OH 036. OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/4064; Anthony Bingey Recollections of the Underground Railroad, July 31, 1895. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX67 02CAN 016. OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/28122/rec/73.

"… my wife and I thought that perhaps our work in Underground Railroad matters was done, as we had been in active service more than twenty years." Little did he know, they would remain important players in the black freedom network.[249]

In his autobiography, Coffin describes his role in aiding freedom seekers from the Upper South. "There seemed to be a continued increase of runaways," he noted, "and hardly a fugitive came to the city without applying to us for assistance." Coffin described various incidents involving the sheltering and rescue of freedom seekers in Cincinnati. He wrote, "Our house was large and well adapted for secreting fugitives." Coffin detailed one incident involving "a slave girl who ran away from Covington, came to our house, and my wife let her assist the cook in the kitchen, until a suitable opportunity for her escape to Canada should arrive." In another case, Coffin described the arrival of twenty-eight refugees via Lawrenceburg, Indiana – "twenty miles below Cincinnati." He claimed that they were guided to the city by "a white man" who, although originally from Virginia, "hated slavery." Other passages in Coffin's autobiography discuss the arrival of a "slave family of ten, consisting of a man and his wife, and their eight children" from Kentucky, as well as a "husband and wife, [who] belonged to a man who lived ten or twelve miles from Cincinnati."[250]

Louisville was prominent another gateway for freedom seekers in the Ohio River borderland. J. Blaine Hudson writes that it was "the only major city in a largely rural state and as the only major city between Baltimore and St. Louis on the "slave side" of the border." Between 1830 and 1860, the city's free black population grew from just over 200 to 2,000. Unlike Cincinnati, however, most African Americans in Louisville were enslaved. Over 5,400 enslaved African Americans were recorded in the city in 1850. In 1836, the *Louisville Daily Journal* published a notice for Nancy, who supposedly fled to neighboring Charlestown, Indiana.[251] Meanwhile, the Louisville Mayor's Court records for the period June 22, 1831, to April 5, 1832 shed light on the city's diverse black population. Among the men and women listed throughout the records were free people of color and enslaved people in the city, as well as hired out enslaved men and women from neighboring counties. The sheer

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[249] Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland*, 199-203; Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad; Being a Brief History of the Labors of a Lifetime in Behalf of the Slave, with the Stories of Numerous Fugitives, Who Gained Their Freedom Through His Instrumentality, and Many Other Incidents* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1880), 297. For more on the life and activism of James G. Birney, see William Birney, *Sketch of the Life of James G. Birney* (Chicago, IL: National Christian Association, 1884), accessed May 25, 2020. http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=mayantislavery&cc=mayantislavery&idno=17865107&q1=underground+railroad&view=image&seq=1&size=100.

[250] Coffin, *Reminiscences*, 299 (first quote), 301 (second quote), 302 (third quote), 304 (fourth quote), 312 (fifth quote), 318 (sixth quote).

[251] Hudson, *Fugitive Slaves*, 29; Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks*, 15; "The Free Black Community of Louisville," *112ouisville.edu*, accessed Mar. 5, 2019. https://louisville.edu/freedompark/historical-obelisks/the-free-black-community-of-louisville; "$50 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Journal*, Jun. 24, 1836.

number of African Americans in the city, and their wide range of legal statuses, provided slave refugees with anonymity and protection. Of course, self-emancipators needed to remain careful; city police and slave catchers in Louisville were always looking for freedom seekers. Lurking among the crowds, freedom seekers sought to fly under the radar and escape unnoticed.[252]

Like Cincinnati, Louisville's role in the Ohio River steamboat trade provided freedom seekers with opportunities to escape to Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Newspaper notices illustrate that southern enslavers believed that self-emancipators had escaped aboard steamboats and other vessels. In 1834, the *Vincennes Gazette* printed an advertisement for two women who escaped aboard a steamboat to Shawneetown, Illinois. It stated, "It is supposed they have pass papers, and will attempt to escape to Canada, either through Illinois or Indiana." Meanwhile, in 1850, J. H. Owen of Louisville placed a notice for Lewis, who had previously been "hired as a fireman or second cook on many of the principal steamboats running from Louisville, Ky., to New Orleans, and is well known by a large majority of steamboat-men on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers."[253]

Other newspaper notices detail how self-emancipators escaped to the Old Northwest via steamboats In 1816, Montgomery Bell of Dickson County, Tennessee, placed an advertisement in the *Western Sun* for a self-emancipator named Buck, who worked "as a hand" aboard a barge which traveled along the Ohio River. While docked at Louisville in 1813, Buck allegedly "unshipped himself and travelled [sic] by land in company with a man that lived at that time 15 miles from Brownsville, Pa., as far as Chillicothe [Ohio]." Bell believed that Buck subsequently went "to Pittsburgh, or some part of the State of Pennsylvania or the State of Ohio or perhaps the adjacent territories." Meanwhile, in November 1836, Nashville enslaver Thomas Eastland posted in the *Louisville Daily Journal* for a freedom-seeking couple, a "mulatto" man named Alexander and his wife Rebecca, who escaped aboard the steamboat *Indian* to Louisville. Eastland firmly believed that the pair had "no doubt made for Canada."[254]

Elsewhere, freedom seekers escaped to the Old Northwest via southern Illinois. Andrew Jackson, a self-emancipator from Bowling Green, Kentucky, resolved to escape northward in the 1840s to escape permanently from bondage. He recalled in his memoir, "I heard a great many things about the Northern States, and some things not at all favorable to my welfare… But I made up my mind that if I could learn the way, I would try it." When the opportunity arose, Jackson collected

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[252] Louisville (Ky.) Mayor's Court. Record book, 1831-1832. 1 volume. Mss. BL L888h. FHS. Louisville, KY.
[253] "$200 REWARD," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Apr. 13, 1850; "50 DOLLARS REWARD," *Vincennes Gazette*, Jan. 4, 1834.
[254] Hudson, *Fugitive Slaves*, 65; "300 Dollars Reward," *Western Sun*, Jul. 20, 1816; "250 DOLLARS REWARD," *Louisville Daily Journal*, Nov. 8, 1836.

some supplies and fled into the nearby woods. He continued to journey on foot, traveling mostly at night and remaining in the woods to avoid being seen. Jackson eventually reached "a place called Baker's old Ferry, where I crossed into Illinois, in the county of Gallatin, and began to feel secure."[255]

Farther west, self-emancipated refugees from Missouri escaped to the former Northwest Territory via the Upper Mississippi River borderland. St. Louis was a popular gateway for freedom seekers in the region. "The flow of enslaved and free people of color in and out of the city," writes Kelly M. Kennington, "along with St. Louis' close proximity to Illinois and its location on the banks of the Mississippi River, contributed to its attractiveness for potential runaway slaves." In 1850, approximately 2,000 free blacks lived in the city. By the 1850s, notes Richard Blackett, escaped slave advertisements "blanketed their local newspapers with announcements of escape[.]" In 1851, M. W. Flournoy of Lafayette County, Missouri, placed an advertisement in the *Missouri Courier* for a self-emancipator named Lewis. Flournoy offered "One hundred dollars [was awarded] if taken in St. Louis" and $300 if taken out of state.[256]

Aside from St. Louis, freedom seekers from Missouri and elsewhere crossed the Upper Mississippi River at other points. Quincy, Illinois was another popular crossing point for freedom seekers. Thomas J. Moore, a UGRR activist in the region, wrote to abolitionist Theodore Parker in 1855 that the "principal underground Rail Road [sic] from Missouri to Canada, through this state, commences at Quincy and terminates at Chicago. And I think no slave has ever been recaptured on the route, though many violent efforts have been made." About forty years later, W.H. Collins recalled that black refugees "were concealed in the Town, till the pursuers crossed the river. They then were taken to Mendon, thence to Plymouth or Round Prairie, thence to Galesburgh [sic], thence to Princeton[,] Ottawa and Chicago[.]"[257]

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[255] Andrew Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson, of Kentucky; Containing an Account of His Birth, and Twenty-Six Years of His Life While a Slave; Five Years of Freedom, Together with Anecdotes Relating to Slavery; Journal of One Year's Travels; Sketches, etc. Narrated by Himself; Written by a Friend* (Syracuse, NY: Daily and Weekly Star Office, 1847), 9 (first quote), 17 (second quote), accessed May 20, 2020. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jacksona/jacksona.html.

[256] Kelly M. Kennington, *In the Shadow of Dred Scott: St. Louis Freedom Seekers and the Legal Culture of Slavery in Antebellum America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 107 (quote), 197; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 142-143; Frazier, *Runaway and Freed Missouri Slaves*, 100; "African-American Life in St. Louis," *NPS.gov*, accessed Jan. 17, 2019. https://www.nps.gov/jeff/learn/historyculture/african-american-life-in-saint-louis-1804-through-1865.htm; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 141; "$300 Reward," *Missouri Courier*, Sep. 4, 1851. For an excellent assessment of freedom seekers in Missouri, see Frazier, *Runaway and Freed Missouri Slaves*, 87-105.

[257] Thomas J. Moore to Theodore Parker, Feb. 6, 1855. Theodore Parker Papers P-175. Reel 3, Vol. 9. MHS. Boston, MA; W.H. Collins letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, Jan. 13, 1896. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX41 01IL 030. OHC, accessed Jun. 1, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/10307/rec/2.

Chicago was a popular destination for freedom seekers. Aside from its free black and white abolitionist populations, the Windy City served as a gateway to Michigan and Upper Canada. In 1850, the *Chicago Democrat* reported that a freedom seeker from Missouri escaped to Quincy where they purportedly took "the underground track for Chicago[.]"Eleven years later, the Ohio *Democratic Press* (relaying news from Chicago) claimed that 160 freedom seekers "left this city last night for Canada, *via* the Michigan and Southern Road. It is estimated that over 1000 fugitives have arrived in this city since last fall[.]"[258] In southwestern Illinois, freedom seekers took shelter in the forests and caves of Shawnee National Forest. Madison Frederick, a formerly enslaved person from Commerce, Missouri (roughly 130 miles south of St. Louis,), remembered that his grandfather used to abscond to the woods "an' stay for days at a time… But one time he ran away – crossed the [Mississippi] rivuh ovah heah [here] an' went up tuh Canada."[259] Meanwhile, many freedom seekers sought to cross the Mississippi River aboard steamboats. Thomas C. Buchanan notes that the Mississippi River trade "created a mobile class of slaves and free blacks that moved with ease through the economic arteries of the southern economy."[260]

William Wells Brown is perhaps the most well-known self-emancipator to have escaped via the Upper Mississippi borderland. He was hired out to work in several occupations, including working as a waiter on a steamboat. Later, Brown was hired out to work for "a slave-dealer named Walker," during which time he journeyed several times to New Orleans. On New Year's Day 1834, Brown secured passage aboard a steamboat to Cincinnati. He was aided by a white Quaker named Wells Brown. Brown made his way to Cleveland "where he found he could remain comparatively safe from the pursuit of the man-stealer."[261] Yet securing passage aboard steamboats in St. Louis risked raising suspicion among whites. Freedom seekers thus came up with other ways to cross the Mississippi. In September 1848, the *St. Louis Union* reported that a male freedom seeker seen in the city "took [to] the water and swam the Mississippi" upon being set upon by an officer. "When he reached the Illinois shore," claimed the *Union*, "he turned, and seeing no one in

[258] "A Fugitive Escaped," *Chicago Democrat*, reprinted in *Jeffersonian Republican* (Charlottesville, VA), Nov. 7, 1850; "Fugitive Slaves Leaving for Canada," *Democratic Press* (Eaton, OH), Apr. 11, 1861.
[259] Interview with Madison Frederick Ross ex-slave Commerce. *FWP, Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 10, Missouri, Abbot-Younger*, 1936. Manuscript//Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn100/; "Underground Railroad: Shawnee National Forest," *fs.usda.gov*, accessed Feb. 11, 2019. https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/shawnee/recarea/?recid=81899.
[260] Thomas C. Buchanan, "Rascals on the Antebellum Mississippi: African American Steamboat Workers and the St. Louis Hanging of 1841," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (2001), 798, 808.
[261] William W. Brown, *Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), ix-xvii, accessed Apr. 12, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown52/brown52.html.

pursuit, sat down upon a log and viewed, with apparent satisfaction, the barrier he had placed between himself and his pursuer."[262]

African American Settlements and Abolitionist Networks in the Old Northwest

Across the Ohio and Mississippi River borderlands, African Americans and white abolitionists maintained interracial UGRR networks which aided self-emancipators from the South. In 1838, the *Warsaw Patriot* reported that "some abolitionists from Cincinnati had visited the negroes in the fields, and induced them to enter into an agreement that they would run away from their masters… the abolitionists promising to receive them on the other side of the river, and send them to Canada." On one occasion, six self-emancipators supposedly escaped from somewhere between Florence and Covington and made their way across the river to Canada. Others were prevented from escaping after their plan was unearthed. "The wicked machinations of the Abolitionists [sic]," claimed the *Patriot*, "have in this instance been defeated; but this defeat will not discourage them – it will but stimulate them to renewed exertions, and more desperate attempts." Reflecting the sentiment of many Kentucky whites, the newspaper stressed the threat posed by northern UGRR networks. "If one of them gets across the river and reaches Cincinnati," it contended, "it is impossible to recover him. The Abolitionists [sic] there have every convenience for sending him to Canada."[263]

Across the Ohio River borderland, black activists and white abolitionists managed UGRR networks which aided slave refugees. In many places, these networks were characterized by forms of interracial cooperation. Black activists collaborated with white abolitionists to assist freedom seekers. At Ripley, Ohio, John Rankin, a white Presbyterian minister from Tennessee, and the formerly enslaved John Parker aided freedom seekers across the Ohio River. Under the cover of night, Parker would row his boat across the river to bring slave refugees to the Ohio shoreline. Parker and Rankin dispatched freedom seekers to UGRR agents elsewhere. In 1848, the *Maysville Eagle* reported, "we learn from a gentleman in Ripley that six slaves crossed the Ohio and were secreted in or near that place, and that the Abolitionists were in readiness to receive thirty-six more, whom they were every moment expecting." In 1852, the *Louisville Daily Courier* reported on a 'stampede'

[262] "A GOOD SWIMMER," *St. Louis Union*, Sep. 27, 1848, reprinted in *Buffalo Commercial*, Oct. 9, 1848. For the more detailed account of Brown's life and escape, see William W. Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, 1847), accessed Apr. 9, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown47/brown47.html.
[263] "ALARMING," *Warsaw Patriot*, Nov. 2, 1838, reprinted in *Indiana American*, Nov. 23, 1838.

of thirty-one freedom seekers from Augusta and Dover, who "were traced to Ripley on the river, and were pursued by their owners and others from this side." Southern whites were outraged by the supposed inaction of the Ohio authorities, which the newspaper called "very reprehensible."[264]

Testimonies from self-emancipators and UGRR activists highlight the role of escape networks in and around Ripley. Arnold Gragston, an enslaved man from Maysville, Kentucky, aided countless self-emancipators across the Ohio River to Ripley. Mobility was crucial to Gragston's activism; he stated, "It was 'cause he used to let me go around in the day and night so much that I came to be the one who carried the runnin' away slaves over the river." Gragston recalled his first passenger, an enslaved woman on a neighboring farm. After some hesitation, he agreed to assist the woman in her escape. He recalled, "I don't know how I ever rowed the boat across the river the current was strong and I was trembling. I couldn't see a thing there in the dark, but I felt the girl's eyes." Over subsequent years, Gragston helped more freedom seekers on the respective journeys across the Ohio River. "I soon found myself goin' back across the river, with two or three people," he remembered, "and sometimes a whole boatload… I used to make three or four trips a month." Once in Ripley, Gragston claimed that slave refugees were aided by Rankin and his associates. From there, many self-emancipators "went on North to other parts of Ohio, or to New York, Chicago or Canada[.]"[265]

Aside from individual activists, anti-slavery organizations in the area also assisted freedom seekers. In 1835, the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society was established to campaign for the abolition of slavery in the United States. John Rankin was appointed secretary of the organization, while others in the region quickly became members. The following year, the Gilead Anti-Slavery Society was founded in Clermont County, Ohio. John Rankin was among its members and delivered an address "upon the subject of slavery" before the society adopted its constitution. The society supported "the entire abolition of slavery in the United States" and committed itself "to elevate the character and condition of the coloured people by encouraging their intellectual [,] moral and religious improvement." Although it did not outright

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[264] Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 14-15, 32-34, 57, 231-237; Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan*, 346; "ATTEMPTED ESCAPE OF NEGROES," *Maysville Eagle*, reprinted in *Louisville Daily Courier*, Aug. 10, 1848; "SLAVE STAMPEDE," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Oct. 4, 1852. For John Rankin's Autobiography, see Autobiography of John Rankin. Rankin-Parker Collection (Folder 2). Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University Libraries. Durham, NC. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. Adam Matthew Digital. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 10 May 2018. For John Parker's unpublished autobiography, see John Parker's Story. Rankin-Parker Collection (Folder 3). Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University Libraries. Durham, NC. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. Adam Matthew Digital. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 10 May 2018. Rankin and Parker each detail their involvement with the UGRR in Ripley.

[265] Interview with Arnold Gragston. *FWP: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 3, Florida, Anderson-Wilson with combined interviews of others*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Materials. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn030/.

declare its involvement in the regional UGRR, John Rankin's involvement suggests that its members were at least amenable to his cause.[266] Farther east, freedom seekers from Kentucky, Virginia, and elsewhere crossed into Ohio at other points. Writing in 1894, Gabe Johnson of Lawrence County recalled that refugees regularly crossed the Ohio River at Ironton, Burlington, Guyandotte, and Gallipolis among other locales.[267]

Activists and abolitionist organizations operated elsewhere in the Ohio River borderland. George DeBaptiste, a free-born black Virginian, was involved with the rescues of hundreds of freedom seekers at Madison, Indiana. Like Parker, DeBaptiste sailed men and women across the Ohio River. Likewise, Elijah Anderson, a free black blacksmith in Madison, also assisted freedom seekers to Levi Coffin's home in Newport, Indiana. While most freedom seekers escaped without direct assistance from the formal UGRR, the contributions of agents and conductors proved invaluable to many freedom seekers. Madison soon became home to a significant anti-slavery population over the antebellum period. In 1839, activists in Jefferson County, Indiana founded the Neel's Creek Anti-Slavery Society, an auxiliary to the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society. Members of the society resolved that "slavery is a great moral, political, and social evil," and called the interregional slave trade "a heinous crime – an entire subversion of all human rights, and a direct contradiction of the Declaration of Independence of our beloved country[.]"[268]

Black settlements proved the central focus of the Old Northwest's UGRR. As free-born and manumitted blacks moved to Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois over the antebellum period, they established rural communities in each state. One recent study claims that over 300 black farming settlements across the former Northwest Territory.[269] According to Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, black rural communities were "conduits for escape before the Civil War… [and] were positioned to offer sanctuary to anyone able enough to escape from slavery." The Gist settlements of Brown County, Ohio, became a beacon of freedom for slave refugees. Settled by freed blacks from Virginia, it soon attracted self-emancipators from the Upper South. Likewise, Poke Patch, a farming settlement near Ironton, received self-emancipators over the antebellum period. "During [its] early existence," writes LaRoche, "… the sole purpose of the tiny community may have been to harbor escapees as they moved northward along the Underground Railroad." In Orange County, Indiana, the Lick

[266] Ripley Anti-Slavery Society Minutes, 1835-1848. VOL 444. OHC, accessed Jun. 8, 2019. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/4800/rec/90; Gilead Anti-Slavery Society of Clermont County Minutes, 1836-1838. VFM 4655. OHC, accessed Jun. 8, 2019. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/3190/rec/62.
[267] Gabe N. Johnson's interview, Sept. 30, 1894. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX 57 08OH 028. OHC, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/6587/rec/51.
[268] Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan*, 202-205; Minute Book of the Neel's Creek Anti-Slavery Society, 1839-1845. ISL. Indianapolis, Indiana.
[269] Figure taken from Anna-Lisa Cox, *The Bone and Sinew of the Land: America's Forgotten Black Pioneers & the Struggle for Equality* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2018).

Creek settlement was founded near Paoli (fifty miles northwest of Louisville). By 1860, over 250 African Americans lived in the settlement.[270] Elsewhere, Keith Griffler writes that the Cabin Creek settlement in Randolph County, Indiana was a "fugitive-dominated African American community" which sheltered countless freedom seekers. Jacob Cummings, a freedom seeker from Kentucky, recalled taking refuge at Cabin Creek for almost six months before making his way onward to Cass County, Michigan.[271]

The Rocky Fork settlement (near Alton, Illinois) was another primary destination for freedom seekers, particularly from Missouri. In September 1852, eight self-emancipators escaped from St. Genevieve, Missouri to the settlement. Unfortunately, they were captured shortly afterward. Others escaped Miller Grove, an African American settlement just outside Shawneetown, Illinois. Henry Goings recalled stopping at "a colored boarding house" in Shawneetown during his escape (although he did not stay for long for fear of being caught). He secreted himself aboard an Ohio River steamboat to Portsmouth, Ohio, from whence he traveled north to Canada. Aside from the black community itself, freedom seekers took refuge in the natural landscape to remain hidden. Sand Cave in Shawneetown National Forest, notes LaRoche, "provided refuge near Miller Grove" to refugees from Missouri, Kentucky, and elsewhere.[272] Brooklyn, Illinois was another prominent site of refuge for African American freedom seekers. Situated just opposite St. Louis, the rural black community regularly attracted self-emancipated refugees from Missouri and elsewhere.[273]

Aside from free black communities, some slave refugees received assistance from white abolitionists in central Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In Randolph County, Illinois, white activists aided freedom seekers from the Upper South. William Hayes, a Reformed Presbyterian farmer who moved to southwestern Illinois in lands and opportunities, was a prominent UGRR activist in the region. In 1842, Hayes received

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[270] LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 2 (first quote), 57-70, 71-83 (second quote on pg. 74); Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom*, 93; Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 13; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 224; "Lick Creek African American Settlement," fs.usda.gov, accessed Feb. 22, 2019. https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/hoosier/specialplaces/?cid=fsbdev3_017495; "Poke Patch Settlement," *OhioHistoryCentral.org*, accessed Feb. 22, 2019. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Poke_Patch_Settlement.

[271] Keith Griffler, "Beyond the Quest for the 'Real Eliza Harris': Fugitive Slave Women in the Ohio Valley," *Ohio Valley History* 3, no. 2 (2003), 8; Jacob Cummings Interview. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX44 F03 009. OHC, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/11411/rec/6.

[272] Henry Goings, et. al., *Rambles of a Runaway Slave from Southern Slavery* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 43-45; Blackett, *Captive's Quest for Freedom*, 137-139, 152; LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 35-37. For more on the Rocky Fork settlement, see LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 21-42. For the Miller Grove settlement, see LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 43-56, 92.

[273] For more on Brooklyn, Illinois, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 31-49.

a group of freedom seekers who had escaped from their enslaver (Andrew Borders) and transported them further north via steamboat. Borders subsequently took Hayes to court for his role in the escape. Borders appealed for financial compensation ($2,500). The Illinois Supreme Court eventually ruled in Borders' favor in 1844, although Hayes was not required to pay the complete sum. The legal suit cost the UGRR activist a great deal financially in the end, but he continued to assist slave refugees until he died in 1849.[274]

After escaping to the Old Northwest, freedom seekers often sought to build distance between themselves and the Upper South. From the Ohio River borderland, freedom seekers often made their way northward. R.G. Corwin claimed that UGRR stations existed in Lebanon, Springboro, Loveland, Harveysburg, Waynesville, Xenia, and Dayton. Writing to Siebert in 1892, Warner M. Bateman claimed that father's home in Springboro was "at times, and perhaps generally, one of the stations of the underground railroad[.]" Similarly, Elizabeth Nicholson, daughter of UGRR activists Valentine and Jane Nicholson, told Siebert that her parents were activists in Harveysburg. She claimed that Levi Coffin in Cincinnati regularly sent freedom seekers "up to their case, [where] the slaves would generally remain concealed during the day, and the next morning they would be taken up to Green Plains," a Quaker settlement in Greene County. Later, freedom seekers would be sent onward to Ohio's Western Reserve. Others took different routes and traveled onward to Sandusky or Toledo.[275]

Columbus, Ohio (a relatively small city at the time) was home to an early freedom network. John T. Ward recalled that Shepherd Alexander, a local black leader, "had a team which we used in conveying." He listed other UGRR activists in the city, including James Poindexter, David Jenkins, and Thomas Washington. Ward also noted that there were UGRR activists in Chillicothe, Worthington, and other nearby towns and villages. Edward L. Sebring of Worthington informed Siebert of his involvement in central Ohio's UGRR. He told Siebert, "In 1856 I was called upon to escort three colored persons to Ozam Gardner's. I went all seasons of the year. I suppose I went twenty times with colored men, and sometimes I had one and sometimes I had ten." Sebring also documented activists in nearby Columbus and

[274] For more on William Hayes, see Carol Pirtle, "A Flight to Freedom: A True Story of the Underground Railroad in Illinois," *Ohio Valley History* 3, no. 1 (2003), 3-16; Calarco, *People of the Underground Railroad*, 158-159.

[275] R.G. Corwin letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, Sept. 11, 1895. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX59 11OH 016, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/8009/rec/28; Warner M. Bateman to Wilbur H. Siebert, Sept. 1, 1892. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX54 03OH 044, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/2442/rec/8; Elizabeth Nicholson letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, June 9, 1892. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX59 11OH 020, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/8445/rec/4.

Clintonville. Meanwhile, Samuel Chamberlain detailed UGRR stations in Reynoldsburg and Granville, Ohio.[276]

Freedom seekers also made their way north via southeastern Ohio. Eliakim Moore described various UGRR operations in Athens and Meigs Counties, Ohio. "There were some very active men in Rutland," he noted; "All along the Meigs County border the fugitives came, all headed for Zanesville, Ohio. They came from New Albany and from Rutland, a noted point." Moore claimed that freedom seekers also fled across the river near Athens, Ohio, and "make for the Sunday Creek Valley towards Zanesville." Similarly, Peter Smith described a freedom network that ran along the Muskingum River. UGRR activists operated in Pennsville, Malta, Deavertown, and Zanesville. Hudson Champlain Ward also detailed the growing traffic of freedom seekers on this route. While living at Zanesville, he recalled that refugees "came from as far as [North] Carolina. Came sometimes from Gallipolis, sometimes from Pomeroy and through Deavertown[.]" One activist at Deavertown, Benjamin Graham, "used to help the fugitives; he and others there used to get some colored man to carry them in a covered wagon, bring them to the Putnam side."[277]

Peter Stokes' letters to Siebert yield insight into the experience of freedom seekers. Stokes and nine others (his brother, two sisters, and six children) resolved to escape from Bracken County, Kentucky. "On Sunday night," he recalled, "we started across the River in 2 small boats and turned 'em both adrift, and then set out for Felicity [between Ripley and Cincinnati]," where they knew an acquaintance. Upon arrival, the group found that "Kentuckians had surrounded the place, and we couldn't get there." Stokes' group was hidden in a barn on the Ohio River called "Canada." After two weeks, they moved onward through Clermont County until they reached Cadiz, where they met "a colored man by the name of Brown." About one-and-a-half weeks later, the group was taken to Cleveland, and from there went to Detroit. They subsequently crossed the Detroit River into Windsor.[278]

Meanwhile, Elias Tetrick, a Methodist minister at Winterset in Guernsey County, Ohio, recalled his involvement in the regional UGRR between 1847 and

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[276] John T. Ward interview, Jun. 15, 1892. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX55 05OH 016. OHC, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/3647/rec/2; Edward L. Sebring account of Jason Bull. WHSC, MSS116AV BOX55 05OH 040, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/3718/rec/52; Samuel Chamberlain account of abolitionist activities, Apr. 18, 1892. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX55 05OH 051, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/3645/rec/45.

[277] Eliakim H. Moore interview by Wilbur Siebert, Mar. 9, 1892. WHSC, MSS116AV BOX53 01OH 067. OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/1510; Peter Smith letter, Dec. 3, 1895.WHSC, MSS116AV BOX59 10OH 007, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/7673/rec/24; Hudson Champlain Ward recollections of the Underground Railroad. WHSC, MSS116AV BOX59 10OH 006, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/7843/rec/41.

[278] Peter Stokes interview with Wilbur H. Siebert, August 3, 1895. WHSC, MSS116AV BOX 54 03OH 027. OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/3037.

1865. "One load I took," he claimed, "had eighty-six men and two women all armed. The women had their bowie knives in their sleeves and the men revolvers. I delivered them at New Cornerstown. It was liberty or death with them. Sometimes they'd be covered with a blanket or quilt."[279]

Daniel Howell Hise, a white abolitionist in Salem, recorded the arrival of freedom seekers at his home. On April 8, 1849, he noted the arrival of "seven fugitive slaves, (by way of the Underground Railroad) from Wheeling, [West Virginia]." On April 22, he noted that he "met some fugitives" while traveling to Woodland, Ohio. In December 1850, Hise recalled that four freedom seekers (three from Virginia, one from New Orleans) arrived in Salem. Meanwhile, the following September, he documented the arrival of three self-emancipators from Parkersburg, Virginia, one of whom "was well armed with [a] stock knife and [a] brace of pistols." On March 24, 1852, another UGRR conductor "got my carriage yesterday to take a fugitive slave out to another station; she hailed from Wheeling."[280] Elsewhere, John Ratliff claimed that UGRR agents in Cincinnati cooperated with activists in southern and central Indiana. He wrote that Coffin and others directed freedom seekers to Wayne County and Grant County, Indiana. Ratliff believed that most were sent to Michigan. He added that Battle Creek, Michigan was "a comparatively safe retreat for the flying fugitive."[281]

African Americans and white abolitionists were not the only ones involved in the Old Northwest's freedom networks. Tiya Miles and Roy E. Finkenbine recently demonstrated that freedom seekers sought refuge with indigenous communities in the Old Northwest (primarily in a region commonly referred to as 'Indian Country'). After escaping from the South, an unknown number of African American refugees took refuge with the Wyandots, Shawnees, Ottawa, and other indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, there are only scant references to self-emancipators seeking sanctuary with indigenous groups in historical records. Josiah Henson briefly mentions receiving assistance from "Indians" during his escape. Nonetheless, it remains clear that they performed an important role in forging freedom networks in 'Indian Country' and provided assistance to southern black refugees. Diane Miller describes a 'tri-racial' UGRR in the region.[282]

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[279] Elias Tetrick Interview by Wilbur H. Siebert, n.d. WHSC, MSS116AV Box 55, vol. 5.OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/1826/rec/111.
[280] Daniel Howell Hise excerpted diary, 1848-1862. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX61 14OH 036. OHC, accessed May 1, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/5695.
[281] John Ratliff letter to Wilbur H. Siebert, March 22, 1896. WHSC. MSS116AV BOX43 02IN 084. OHC, accessed May 27, 2020. https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/26126/rec/50.
[282] Roy E. Finkenbine, "The Underground Railroad in 'Indian Country,'" in Pargas (ed.), *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, 70-92; Miles, *Dawn of Detroit*, 53; Henson, *Life of Josiah Henson*, 54-55; Diane Miller, "Wyandot, Shawnee, and African American Resistance to Slavery in Ohio and Kansas," (PhD diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2019), Ch. 3.

Freedom seekers often sought refuge in regions with strong anti-slavery sentiments. Ohio's Western Reserve was perhaps the most well-known abolitionist bastion in the former Northwest Territory. Over the antebellum period, it became home to prominent abolitionists and African American communities, most notably Oberlin (discussed later). Meanwhile, other slave refugees traveled to Cleveland, a relatively small yet growing city in the Old Northwest. By 1860, about 800 African Americans lived in the city. Free black activists in the city, such as John Malvin, were integral to the city's UGRR network. Slave refugees heading to Upper Canada often traveled to the province via Cleveland. The city's rail and maritime routes enabled self-emancipators to travel to Canada more quickly. In 1854, the *Cleveland Herald* noted that six freedom seekers in the city "immediately took the Canada train." Two years later, the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* claimed that "some seventy-five fugitives have passed through the city during the last six or eight weeks. They were from Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina."[283]

Michigan was an appealing destination for slave refugees. Aside from its geographical distance from the Upper South, as well as its proximity to Upper Canada, the state was home to burgeoning African American and white abolitionist communities. The Wolverine State, notes Roy Finkenbine, "acquired a reputation among antebellum Americans – black and white, slave and free – as a beacon of liberty on the Great Lakes." Over time, black activists and white abolitionists forged important UGRR networks for freedom seekers. Finkenbine adds that the state soon became "a hotbed of antislavery organizing and political opposition to the extension of slavery into the new territories of the American West." Michigan's black population grew more slowly than Ohio's or Indiana's. In 1840, only 707 black people were officially recorded in the entire state. Ten years later, the total number had risen to 2,583. Roughly half of Michigan's black population lived in either Wayne County (mostly in Detroit) or rural Cass County.[284]

[283] Kenneth L. Kusmer, "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, accessed, Jan. 15, 2019. https://case.edu/ech/articles/a/african-americans; "Malvin, John," *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, accessed, Jan. 15, 2019. https://case.edu/ech/articles/m/malvin-john; "Six colored passengers…," *Cleveland Herald*, Mar. 6, 1854, reprinted in (Pittsburgh, PA) *Daily Morning Post*, Mar. 23, 1854; "We learn from…" *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, Dec. 12, 1856.

[284] Roy E. Finkenbine, "A Beacon of Liberty on the Great Lakes: Race, Slavery, and the Law in Antebellum Michigan," in Paul Finkelman and Martin J. Hershock (eds.), *The History of Michigan Law* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 83 (first and second quotes), 85.

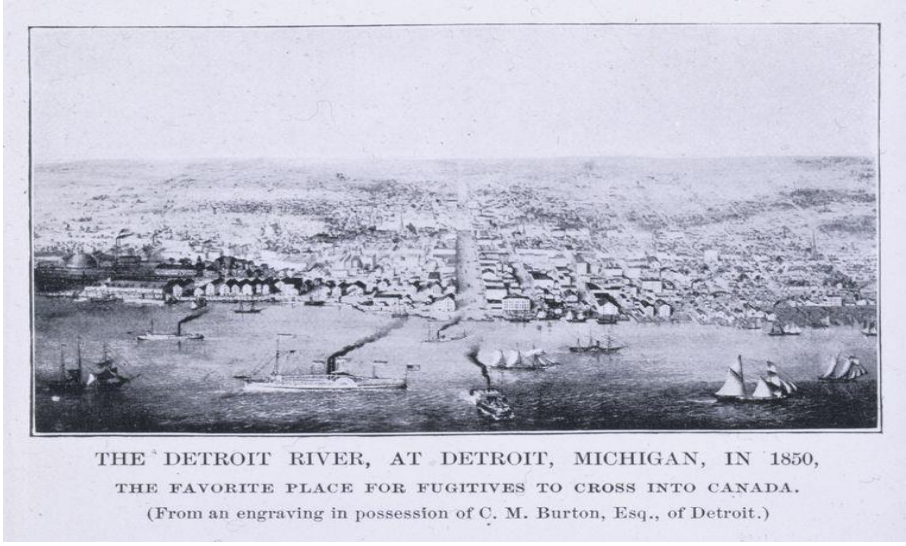

Figure 9: Detroit River, c. 1850

Source: "The Detroit River, at Detroit, Michigan, in 1850, the favorite place for fugitives to cross into Canada. (From an engraving in possession of C.M. Burton, Esq., of Detroit." Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division. NYPL Digital Collections, accessed January 21, 2020. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-5238-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

Detroit was one of the most popular transnational gateways for slave refugees heading to Canada. One traveler, J.G. Kohl, recalled in 1861, "At Detroit the immigration of black fugitives is more numerous than at Niagara… Thousands are said to have passed that way during these few years past."[285] Self-emancipators from Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and elsewhere in the South made their way to Detroit on foot, by horseback, and aboard steamboats. In early November 1859, the *St. Louis News* reported that the "Negro exodus from Missouri continues… Last Friday there arrived in Detroit, Michigan, bound for Canada, twenty-six negroes all the way from Missouri, having been carried through by the agents of the Underground Railroad."[286]

[285] J.G. Kohl, *Travels in Canada, and through the states of New York and Pennsylvania.* Vol. 2 (London: G. Manwaring, 1861), 170, accessed May 28, 2020. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.36889/1?r=0&s=1.
[286] "Twenty-six Missouri Negroes Arrived in Canada," *St. Louis News*, reprinted in *Press and Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Nov. 11, 1859.

Aside from its location, Detroit's growing African American population undoubtedly contributed to its appeal for freedom seekers. By 1840, almost 200 African Americans officially resided in Detroit. African Americans formed protective societies to assist and defend self-emancipated refugees. Free black activist William Lambert and others formed Detroit's Colored Vigilant Committee (CVC) in 1842, which shielded free African Americans and aided freedom seekers into Upper Canada. On January 10, 1843, William Lambert proclaimed at Detroit City Hall that the CVC was founded, "to lay the foundation for the triumph of the just principles of liberty, and the right of all men to enjoy an equal protection, under the government in which they live[.]"[287]

CVC members played crucial roles in assisting freedom seekers. George DeBaptiste transported freedom seekers to Canada aboard his ship the *T. Whitney*. Meanwhile, Madison J. Lightfoot and William C. Munroe, two prominent members of Detroit's Second Baptist Church, also assisted freedom seekers in the city. As Barbara Hughes Smith notes, black churches in Detroit "formed essential links in the chain that provided safe haven and assistance to refugees from bondage throughout the antebellum period."[288] The Detroit River border zone became a widely used transnational gateway for African American refugees heading to Canada. In 1851, the *Kentucky Tribune* claimed that a freedom-seeking mother escaped across the river with her eight children. In 1859, the *Detroit Advertiser* reported that 75 refugees "arrived in Canada by one train, from the interior of Tennessee. This is probably the largest that ever escaped in one company." It added that the UGRR "was never before doing so flourishing a business."[289]

By setting foot on Canadian soil, slave refugees understood that they could obtain formal freedom. Some freedom seekers framed crossing the river as a religious experience. Richard Warren, a self-emancipator who escaped from Tennessee to Detroit in 1845, wrote in his autobiography, "When I arrived in the city of Detroit I had to stand and wonder at the goodness of the Lord, who had brought me through the dark and angry waters, and bid me to look upon the soil upon which I could tread

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[287] Herb Boyd, *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination* (New York: Amistad, 2017), 21-42; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: Vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 398.

[288] Roy Finkenbine, "A Community Militant and Organized: The Colored Vigilant Committee of Detroit," in Smardz Frost and Tucker (eds.), *A Fluid Frontier*, 154-164; Smardz Frost, "African American and African Canadian Transnationalism," 78-88; Barbara Hughes Smith, "Worship Way Stations in Detroit," in Smardz Frost and Tucker (eds.), *A Fluid Frontier*, 115. For more on the Detroit River border zone's UGRR Network (especially the role of women activists), see Margaret Washington, "'I Am Going Straight for Canada': Women Underground Railroad Activists in the Detroit River Border Zone," in Smardz Frost and Tucker (eds.), *A Fluid Frontier*, 165-184.

[289] "FUGITIVE SLAVES," *Kentucky Tribune*, Apr. 1, 1851; "Great Stampede of Slaves," *Detroit Advertiser*, reprinted in *Jeffersonian* (Stroudsburg, PA), May 19, 1859..

a free man. I thought I should never sufficiently praise him for the wonderful love and kindness to me, in bringing me from bondage to liberty."[290]

Elsewhere in Michigan, Ypsilanti saw the arrival of numerous freedom seekers from the South. "For at least a decade," writes Carol Mull, "the city had a growing black population and an active network helping freedom seekers." Cass County became a popular destination for manumitted and slave refugees. In 1849, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that fifty black migrants passed through Indiana *en route* to southwestern Michigan. The group, which was comprised of forty freed blacks and ten self-emancipators, had sent agents to the region in search of a suitable place for settlement. By 1860, approximately 600 African Americans resided in the region (although the real figure was likely higher). Geographical proximity and local freedom networks enabled freedom seekers in southwestern Michigan to escape to Canada quickly if threatened with recapture. In 1857, the *Detroit Tribune* reported that detectives arrived in Ann Arbor in search of freedom seekers. In response, local black activists quickly placed them on "cars on the Underground Railroad."[291]

Born into a Quaker family, Laura Smith Haviland was among the most well-known women abolitionists in the state. In 1829, she and her husband Charles moved to Raisin, Lenawee County where they purchased lands in the Michigan wilderness and established a farm. According to Stacey Robertson, "Haviland cooperated with her African American neighbors and friends to house and hide fugitives as well as to ensure their long-term safety." Laura and Charles "employed escapees and free blacks" on their farm and admitted African Americans to the Raisin Institute. Haviland and other female abolitionists established anti-slavery societies and organized fairs and meetings across the state. Women abolitionists, argues Stacey Robertson, "found that contact with slave men, women, and children was a transformative experience. Housing, feeding, and communicating with those who had experienced chattel slavery awakened women to the real-life horror of the institution."[292]

Haviland's memoir *A Woman's Life-Work* offers an invaluable glimpse into black freedom networks in the Old Northwest. During a visit to Cincinnati, Haviland recalled, "at early dawn, nine slaves crossed the [Ohio] river, and were conducted to one of our friends on Walnut Hills for safety, until arrangements could be made to forward them to Victoria's domain." According to Haviland, the group was

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[290] Richard Warren, *Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Rev. Richard Warren, (A Fugitive Slave) written by himself* (Hamilton: Printed at the Christian Advocate Book and Job Office, 1856), 14, accessed May 5, 2020. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.50755/1?r=0&s=1.

[291] Mull, *The Underground Railroad in Michigan*, 25, 136; Grace Shackman, *Ann Arbor Observed: Selections from Then and Now* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 186-188; Cox, *The Bone and Sinew of the Land*, 191 (second quote); "Immigration of Colored Persons to Michigan," *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 7, 1849; "FUGITIVE SLAVE CASE AT ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN," *Detroit Tribune*, Dec. 1, 1857, reprinted in *Agitator*, Dec. 10, 1857.

[292] Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, 167.

comprised of two families that fled across the Ohio River upon learning that "there was a prospect before them of being taken down the river… They had with them their five little folks, that seemed as full of fear as their trembling parents." Haviland and the others met with William Beard, a "well-known Quaker conductor," who agreed to transport the family in his wagon. A few weeks later, she learned that the family had arrived safely in Canada.[293]

Haviland wrote that a local committee informed her of "two young men just arrived, who were secreted in the basement of Zion Baptist Church (colored)." The two freedom seekers, James and George, had escaped from their enslaver who lived "only twenty-five miles from the [Ohio] river[.]" Haviland and the others quickly arranged for their transportation out of Cincinnati. "I took their measures," she remembered, "to procure for each a Summer suit, and went to our store of new and second-hand clothing, at Levi Coffin's, where anti-slavery women met tri-monthly, to spend a day in making and repairing clothing for fugitive slaves." Haviland directed the pair to "a safer hiding-place, until a way opened for them to go to a Friends' settlement, about eighty miles distant[.]" At this stage, Haviland claims that George returned to Kentucky to rescue his wife, Liz. He pretended that he was 'sick of freedom' and called abolitionists "the greates' [sic] rascals I ever seen" to convince his enslaver to take him back. One night, George gained permission from his enslaver to visit Liz, who lived on a neighboring farmstead. "The plan," recalled Haviland, "laid in his midnight visit was to start after sundown, and go until dark in the direction of the place each had their permission to go, and then go for the Licking River… He was to secure the first skiff with oars he could find to aid them down the river with all possible speed to the Ohio." George and Liz eventually found the skiff and set about rowing to the Ohio River. Along the way, they were questioned by white men on the Licking River shoreline but managed to evade them. They subsequently reached the Zion Baptist Church in Cincinnati, where it was decided that they would travel with Haviland to Michigan.[294]

The escape of John Little and his wife illustrates the added mobility afforded by steamboats. Having fled from North Carolina to Chicago, they subsequently headed to Detroit via steamboat, where they crossed into Canada. Six months later, they decided to resettle in the Queen's Bush, where they hoped to obtain lands. They "went to Buffalo – thence to Black Rock [New York] – thence to St. Catharines." In September 1852, the *Sandusky Commercial* reported, "Our city has been thrown into intense excitement last evening," it claimed, "by an attempt to arrest two negro men,

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[293] Laura S. Haviland, *A Woman's Life-Work, Labors and Experiences of* (Cincinnati: Waldron and Stowe, 1882), 111-112. 'Victoria's domain' refers to Queen Victoria.
[294] Haviland, *A Woman's Life-Work*, 112-121. For more on the contributions of women abolitionists to the UGRR and nineteenth-century abolitionist movement in North America, see Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

two negro women, and several children, on board the Arrow, and the moment of her departure for Detroit." Later, the *Buffalo Commercial* claimed, "at Sandusky about thirty [freedom seekers] reached there and crossed into Canada. On his way to Malden, the captain of the steamer informed him that over 200 had crossed between those two points. At another point on the lake, eighteen embarked on one boat on a certain night, and during the last week over forty crossed from Cleveland."[295] Josiah Henson also recalled escaping to Canada aboard a steamboat at Sandusky, Ohio. He met a ship captain who "sympathized with [him]… and offered to take me and my family to Buffalo[.]" The family sailed to Buffalo, before crossing the Niagara River. Henson recalled, "my first impulse was to throw myself on the ground, and giving way to the riotous exultation of my feelings, to execute sundry antics which excited the astonishment of those who were looking on."[296]

Some freedom seekers that escaped to Canada wrote to their former enslavers. On June 28, 1835, Zephaniah Franklin wrote to his former enslaver Adam Beatty of Washington, Kentucky: "here I am now at my own disposal and in the full free enjoyment of free Exercise of my talents whatever they may be, no more shall I fear nor feel the sharp Lash, no more shall I be afraid of the frown and displeasure of my Tyrant Master[.]"[297] On January 13, 1854, James Johnson, who escaped from Louisville to Chatham, Upper Canada, wrote to his former enslaver, "I have made Sure my escape out of the house of bondage and arrive[d] safe in [C]anada… I like this pleasant place very much, and now I can Say that I am free in the land of liberty." Interestingly, Johnson claimed that his enslavers were not the reason behind his escape. Rather, he showed some affection toward his former 'masters.' He wrote, "if I never see you again in this world I pray I meet you in heaven[.]"[298]

Some refugees in Canada placed 'information wanted' notices in newspapers. In April 1855, Charles Fisher of Toronto published a notice in the *Provincial Freeman* to "receive any information" regarding any of his enslaved family. Meanwhile, John and Emaline Hall of St. Catharines sought information on her brother, William Buck, who "was recently in the State of Indiana, on his way to Canada West, and it is presumed that he has reached the province."[299] In 1854, Robert Brown, who escaped from Frankfort, Kentucky, wrote to his wife Millie (which was sent to his former enslaver), "I am now living in Chatham [,] Canada West and I am

[295] Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery*, 215-216; "THE MANHUNTERS BAFFLED," (Sandusky, OH) *Sandusky Commercial Register*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Nov. 5, 1852; "RUNAWAY SLAVES," *Buffalo Commercial*, Dec. 2, 1852.
[296] Henson, *Life of Josiah Henson*, 48-59.
[297] Letter from Zephaniah Franklin to Adam Beatty, 28 June 1835. Beatty-Quisenberry Family Papers, 1796-1962. Box 2, Folder 12. Mss./A/B369. FHS. Louisville, KY.
[298] Letter from James Johnson, Fugitive Slaves in Chatham, Canada West, to his Former Master, Jan. 13, 1854. Gorin Family Papers, 1780-1991. Folder 1. Mss. A G669 1-20. FHS. Louisville, KY.
[299] Charles Fisher, "Information Wanted," *PF*, Apr. 21, 1855; John Hall, "Information Wanted," *PF*, Apr. 21, 1854.

doing very well and enjoying excellent Health." Brown inquired if it was possible to purchase his wife's freedom for $750.[300] In the Canadian Maritimes, Thomas H. Jones sought to raise funds to free his son in North Carolina. In 1859, Jackson Whitney in Sandwich wrote to his former enslaver William Riley; "There is only one thing to prevent me being entirely happy here," he wrote, "and that is the want of my dear wife and children, and *you* to see us enjoying ourselves here together."[301]

Conclusion

Slave refugees availed of various escape routes to the North and Canada. While those in the Mason-Dixon borderland and the Atlantic coast typically aimed for the northern Mid-Atlantic states and New England, self-emancipators in Kentucky and Missouri escaped predominantly via the Old Northwest. Freedom seekers fled to African American communities and settlements with the aim of passing as free people of color. Urban centers like Philadelphia, New York City, Boston, and Cincinnati were popular destinations for freedom seekers given their free black populations, transportation links, and socio-economic opportunities. But self-emancipators fled to virtually every town, city, and rural community with sizable African American populations. While most slave refugees remained in the northern US, thousands journeyed onward to Canada (either directly from the South or following a brief stay in the North).

African Americans, Quakers, white abolitionists, and even indigenous peoples formed an interracial network that assisted freedom seekers in the North and Canada. UGRR networks on the Eastern Seaboard were more organized than their counterparts in the Old Northwest, but it is clear that black freedom networks were largely a series of loosely-structured, overlapping networks. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates that family ties and kinship networks were an integral facet of escape to the North and Canada. While previous histories depict self-emancipation as an overwhelmingly individual and solitary act, abolitionist records reveal that various types of family units – couples, single-parent families, two-parent families, and extended families – fled from the South together. Part II of this study (Forging Freedom) will examine the experiences of slave refugees in the northern US and Canada. Chapter Three will focus on the efforts of slave refugees to acquire land, labor, and access to education.

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[300] Brown, Robert (a runaway slave). To "Millie," but sent to "Mr. Lander" Brown, Frankfort, Ky., Dated Chatham [Canada] March 8th, 1854. Orlando Brown Papers. Folder 38. MSS. A B879/38. FHS. Louisville, Kentucky.

[301] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 212-214, 406-407.