



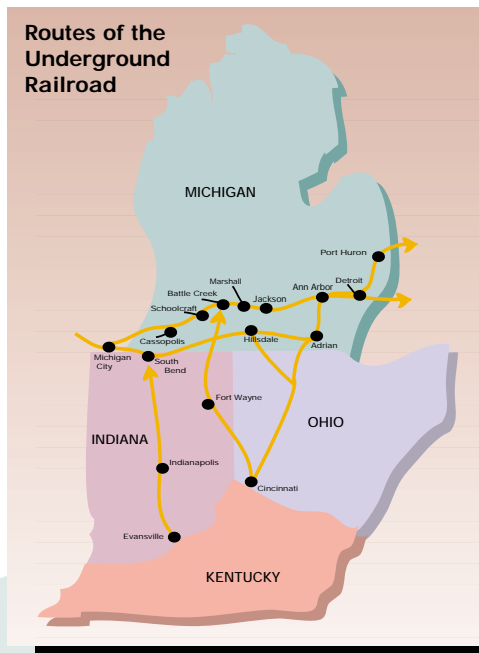
THE Underground RAILROAD

The “**Underground Railroad**” meant freedom for thousands of slaves in the South. The Underground Railroad was not a real railroad; it was the name given to the route of roads and homes used to help slaves escape from their southern masters. Many slaves escaped to the northern United States and Canada where they could be free. Many slaves came to Michigan from Kentucky.

Escaping was dangerous. If they were caught, slaves were often whipped or beaten and made to wear chains. Many who made it to the North worked to help other slaves escape through the Underground Railroad. The routes they took were kept secret. Escaping slaves, or **fugitives**, traveled by foot, horse, train or even fancy

carriages. They often wore disguises. Railroad terms, like “**depot**” and “**conductor**,” were code words.

In most towns in southern Michigan there were conductors, or people, who helped protect those running away from slavery. Slaves were hidden in homes or barns during the day. These places were called depots. At night, they went to a depot in the next town. Some of the slaves went to Canada. Some chose to stay in Michigan.



This painting shows slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad during winter.

The Crosswhites

Adam Crosswhite and his family escaped from slavery in Kentucky and settled near Marshall in Calhoun County. Adam feared that **slave catchers** from Kentucky might come to Michigan to take him and his family back. He told his neighbors of a signal he would use in case of danger. The signal was a shot fired from a gun.

One morning in 1847 the neighbors heard the signal and ran to his house. At the door were four Kentucky men. They had come to take the Crosswhites back to slavery. A group of one hundred blacks and whites gathered at

the house. They stopped the Kentuckians while Adam, his wife and their four children escaped by train to Detroit and then to Canada.

The Kentuckians were angry. They went to court. The Marshall people were charged with keeping them from taking back their legal property. The Marshall people had to pay money to the slave owners. But the Crosswhites were safe in Canada.

In 1850 the United States passed the Fugitive Slave Act. This law strengthened an existing law that made it illegal for people to help slaves escape and allowed slave

catchers to go to **free states** to find escaped slaves. Many people in Michigan disagreed with this law, so in 1855 Michigan passed another law that said state and local officials could not help slave catchers. The Underground Railroad ended when the Civil War started in 1861.



This handbill was given out in Detroit in 1853. It asked people to donate farm tools to slaves who had escaped across the Detroit River to Canada.



Historical Society of Battle Creek

SOJOURNER TRUTH escaped from slavery in New York in 1827. Later she made her home in Battle Creek. As an abolitionist, she made powerful speeches against slavery. After the Civil War she traveled across the country speaking out for the rights of blacks and women.

DETROIT

Michigan's first African American congregation was started at the *Second Baptist Church* in 1836 by thirteen former slaves. Located near the Canadian border, the church was an important stop on the Underground Railroad. A room in the church where slaves hid is now used to teach about the Underground Railroad. Leaders of the **abolitionist** movement, such as Sojourner Truth, John Brown, and Frederick Douglass, were involved with the church. In 1838, at age twenty, Frederick Douglass fled from slavery in Maryland. Through his speeches and writings against slavery he became a famous abolitionist. Douglass gave an antislavery speech at the Second Baptist church in Detroit in 1859. The Second Baptist Church's address is 441 Monroe Street, just east of the intersection of Gratiot Avenue and Woodward Avenue in Detroit.

Take your PARENTS to Michigan's Underground Railroad SITES!

KALAMAZOO

The *Dr. Nathan Thomas House* was the home of two of Michigan's most active Underground Railroad participants. Between 1840 and 1860 Nathan and his wife, Pamela, helped more than 1,000 fugitive slaves. Dr. Thomas took the fugitives to Erastus Hussey, who lived in Battle Creek. The Thomas House is at 613 East Cass Street in Schoolcraft.



Darryl Meredith

For tours write to:
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Society, P.O. Box 638,
Schoolcraft, Michigan 49087.



Roger L. Rosenreiter

BATTLE CREEK

The *Underground Railroad Monument* honors the thousands of slaves who risked their lives to find freedom in the North. The man shown on the **memorial** is Erastus Hussey. He was a conductor. Erastus and his wife, Sarah, helped more than 1,000 slaves escape. Harriet Tubman, the woman shown on the memorial, was called the Black Moses because she helped many slaves find freedom. Harriet made nineteen trips south, helping three hundred slaves escape. During the Civil War Harriet was a Union scout and a nurse. The Underground Railroad Monument is in Linear Park between Capitol Avenue and Division Street in Battle Creek. While in Battle Creek, you can also visit the *Sojourner Truth Monument* located in Monument Park.

Vocabulary WORDS



Abolitionist: A person who speaks out against slavery and works to end it.

Conductor: A person who helped escaped slaves along their route.

Depot: A safe house where escaping slaves, or “passengers,” could rest.

Free State: A state where slavery had ended or had never been an institution.

Fugitive: A person escaping.

Handbill: A printed piece of paper that is handed out for information.

Memorial: Something that commemorates a person or an event.

Slave catcher: A person who captured escaped slaves and returned them to their owners. They were often paid in reward money.

Underground Railroad: A secret network of “stations” and safe houses that helped fugitive slaves find sanctuary in free states or Canada.

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For more information, contact *Michigan History* magazine at (517) 373-3703 or visit us on-line at www.sos.state.mi.us/history/mag

What Did You Learn?

1. **What was a “depot?”**
 - a. a safe house where escaped slaves could rest
 - b. a place to deposit money for the abolitionist movement
 - c. a jail where escaped slaves were held
2. **Who was Adam Crosswhite?**
 - a. a slave catcher from Kentucky
 - b. an abolitionist
 - c. an escaped slave who moved to Michigan with his family
3. **What did the Fugitive Slave Act do?**
 - a. allowed escaped slaves to be free
 - b. it made it illegal for people to help slaves escape
 - c. it made slavery legal in Michigan

BONUS:

What Michigan city is the Underground Railroad Monument in?

- a. Battle Creek b. Grand Rapids c. Detroit

S Y B N R E N R U O J O S G D W A H O T
 E D E A K M H G E T I H W S S O R C G V
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Find the following
**UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD**
words

**ABOLITIONIST
SLAVERY
CROSSWHITE
SOJOURNER
DOUGLASS
FUGITIVE
FREEDOM
HUSSEY
MARSHALL
CONDUCTOR**