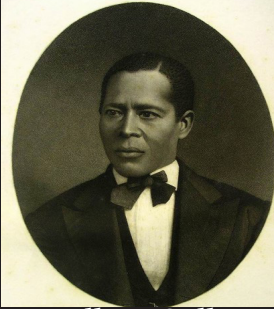


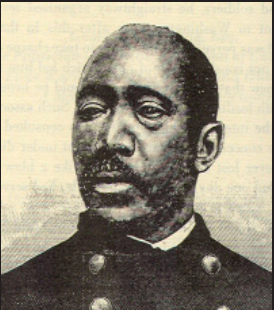
These Abolitionists and Freeman left historic footsteps throughout Franklin County



William Still



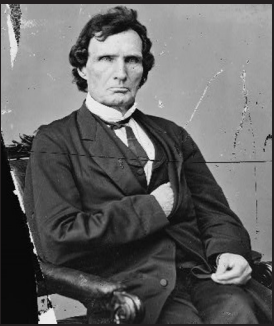
Joseph Winters



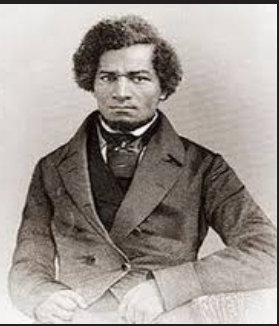
Martin Delany



John Brown



Thaddeus Stevens



Frederick Douglass



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Franklin County Underground Railroad

"A hazardous area of 100 miles which contained the most secretive, tangled lines of the Underground Railroad."

-Charles Blockson about Franklin County

In the early days of America, the spirit of freedom and opportunity attracted many settlers to Franklin County. This same spirit of freedom extended beyond the colonial period as the condition of slavery came to an end in the North and accelerated in the South.



As early as the 1780s, people who did not believe in slavery helped escaping slaves move north. By the 1830s, the anti-slavery movement gained momentum and the effort to help slaves escape was known as the Underground Railroad. From 1830 to 1860, the Underground Railroad supported from 40,000 to 100,000 people succeed in escaping slavery. (www.history.com, A&E Networks' History Channel, 2016)

Franklin County brought together a number of assets. It offered multiple entry points. It was a key location immediately north of the Mason Dixon Line and had the protections of mountains, forests, and caves plus substantial free black populations throughout the county. Its location put it front and center as a key passage point on the road to freedom.

The Mercersburg black population was the largest in Franklin County. Just eight miles over the Mason-Dixon Line, Mercersburg offered a number of escape routes that were former Native American trails. Escaping slaves could follow Warm Springs Indian Trail, which parallels today's Route 75, into Mercersburg. From here, they traveled to Chambersburg to the safe houses along current day Route 30, and then to Shippensburg, along present-day Route

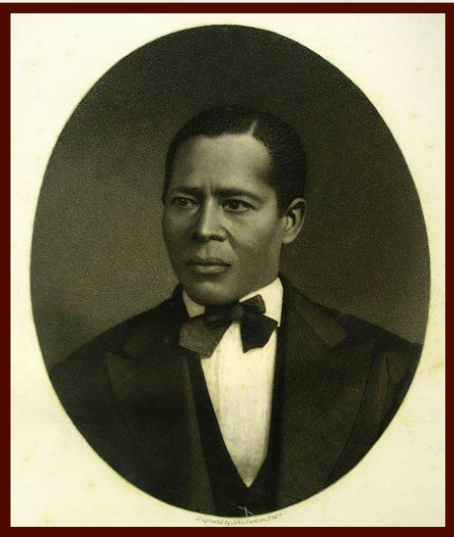
11. From Shippensburg, escapees made their way to Carlisle, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York state and onto total freedom in Canada. Some escaped slaves settled along Fayette Street in Mercersburg. The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, believed to be part of the Underground Railroad, was located in this neighborhood as is the Zion Union Cemetery, where many USCT are buried.

The Jacob Shockey farm, near Rouzerville and just across the Maryland boundary, was at the foot of the South Mountain range. The forest sheltered the fugitives by day, and under cover of darkness, Shockey would guide the group eight miles to the Hiram Wertz farm near Quincy. From the Wertz farm, the escapees traveled another eight miles to an African American community near Thaddeus Stevens' Caledonia Iron Works, which parallels current-day Route 997. The community, sometimes called Africa had the third largest black population in 1850 Franklin County.



Caledonia Iron Works was near an African American community that had sprung up called Africa.

During much of the 1830s and 1840s, Thaddeus Stevens fended off bankruptcy, and much of his financial instability was due to his iron business. Stevens appears to have sought money, in large part, to keep his struggling Caledonia Ironworks afloat because it and the surrounding 20,000 acres he owned were conduits to the Underground Railroad, in addition to being the region's largest employer of African Americans. (Hock, Brad; Thaddeus Stevens in Gettysburg: The Making of an Abolitionist, 2005)

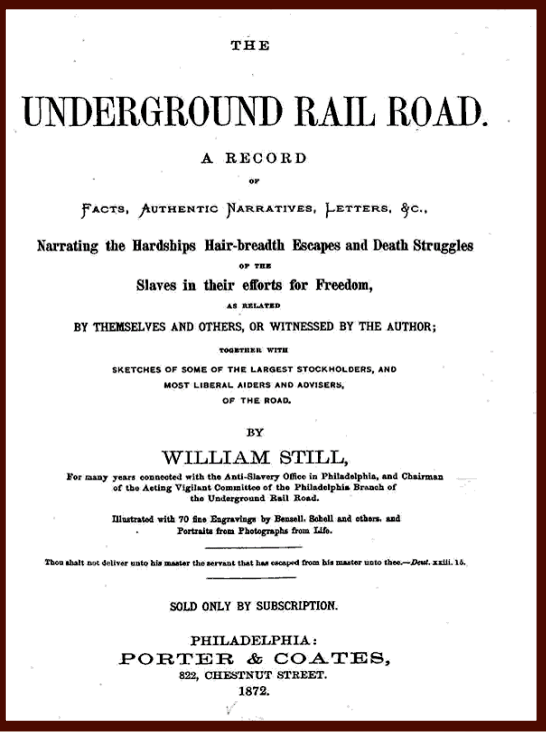


William Still’s accounts of escaped slaves often included Chambersburg.

William Still was an African-American active in anti-slavery activity in Philadelphia. He compiled a catalogue of the stories of escaped slaves. Chambersburg appears as a central location in a number of accounts. Another Franklin County connection to Still is through his daughter, Virginia. Virginia Still married Matthew Anderson, who was born and raised in Franklin County PA. When Matthew Anderson wrote his biography, he recalled, “Among the earliest impressions made upon my childish mind were the tales of horror about the South told by the fleeing fugitive as he lay in the secret enclosure of my father’s house where he was concealed.” Matthew Anderson’s father was Timothy Anderson, who owned 58 acres of land on Ridge Road in the



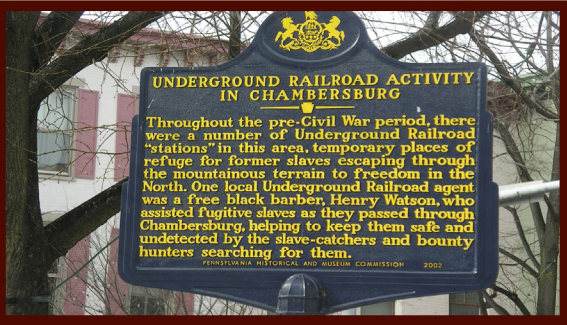
Anderson House, home of Timothy Anderson near Greencastle who allegedly hid escaping slaves.



William Still compiled a catalogue of stories from escaped slaves.

Greencastle area of Franklin County PA and from this account helped escaping slaves.

In Chambersburg, a historic marker on Memorial Square marks the Underground Railroad activity of Chambersburg. A number of Chambersburg’s black citizens participated in the Underground Railroad. The concentration of black population was in the South Ward. Henry Watson, a local barber, and Joseph Winters, an inventor and author, were two



known agents of the Underground Railroad. Watson and Winters were instrumental in the Chambersburg meeting of John Brown and Frederick Douglas in the months before the Raid of Harpers Ferry.

Martin Delany, who became the first African-American field officer in the Civil War, spent ten years growing up in the South Ward of Chambersburg. Along with his mother, Martin Delany fled Virginia as a boy because he learned to read and write, which was prohibited to blacks by Virginia law. Both he and his mother were free from birth. He moved from Chambersburg to Pittsburgh at age 19 and excelled as a doctor, journalist, and active abolitionist.



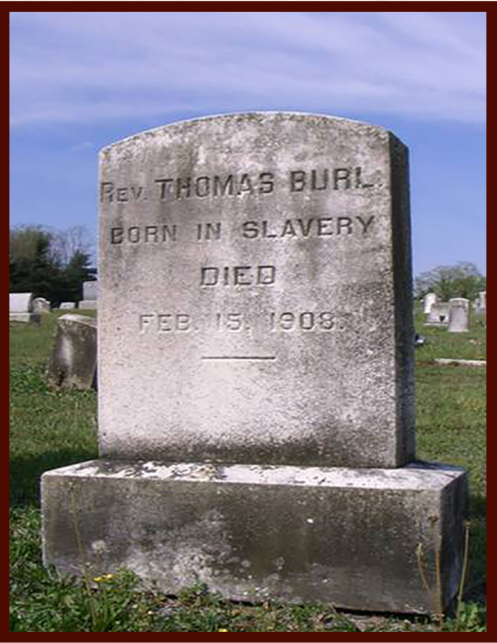
The Mary Ritner House, located on East King Street in Chambersburg, was the supply base for abolitionist John Brown before his Raid of Harpers Ferry.

It was not by happenstance that active abolitionist John Brown chose Chambersburg as his supply base and northern staging area for his Raid on Harpers Ferry. Chambersburg had excellent access to rail and satisfied his need for a northern location that was still close enough to the south for Brown to deploy his plan. In the summer of 1859, Brown and several of his associates, including John Henry Kagi and John Cook, stayed at the boarding house of Mary Ritner on East King Street in Chambersburg. Mary Ritner was the daughter-in-law of Pennsylvania’s abolitionist gover-

nor Joseph Ritner. Abraham Ritner, her husband, was an abolitionist, also. His job as a conductor of the Cumberland Valley Railroad provided an easy opportunity to conceal escaped slaves in the trains heading north to Harrisburg, Philadelphia, or New York.

Pennsylvania was for several reasons an important link in the Underground Railroad. First was its 200-mile border with Maryland. Then easy access to the Potomac and Susquehanna Rivers and the tangle of waterways and railways that connected the state to Richmond, Baltimore, and the Chesapeake Region make it an obvious exit point from the south. Finally by the 1800s, Pennsylvania was home to more than 16,000 blacks and by 1830 that number had tripled, making the state a logical place for a fugitive to expect to find a community to blend in. (Miller, Randall & Pencak, William; Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth, 2002)

Franklin County PA was an epicenter of Underground Railroad activity.



Rev. Thomas Burl, born in slavery and died a free man.