

## FREEDOM SEEKERS & FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Franklin County is home to three cemeteries where USCT are interred, many serving in the 54th and 55th Massachusetts. Zion Union Cemetery in Mercersburg is the final resting place of at least 38 USCT. Mount Vernon, the older portion of the Mount Lebanon Cemetery, along Route 30 in Chambersburg holds the graves of 26 USCT. In Shippensburg, 23 USCT are interred at Locust Grove Cemetery.



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



Zion Union Cemetery

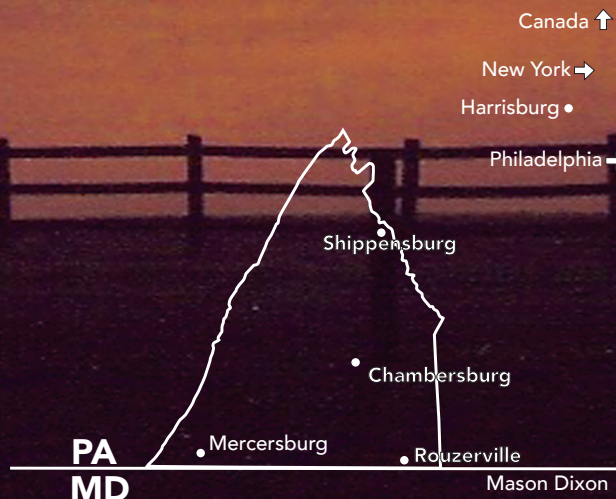


Locust Grove Cemetery

## Underground Railroad of Franklin County, PA Roads to Freedom

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

- Charles Blockson  
about Franklin County



## FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM



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.

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.
- It had the protections of mountains, forests, and caves plus substantial free black populations throughout the county.

## SOUTH MOUNTAIN ROAD TO FREEDOM

Escaping enslaved used the Potomac River to move north, departing near Knoxville. Once on land, they used the shelter of the South Mountain, moving toward Boonsboro and Smithsburg and then into the Waynesboro area. This route runs along the South Mountain range. Ringgold Pike (MD 418) crosses the Mason Dixon Line and becomes Midvale Road (State Route

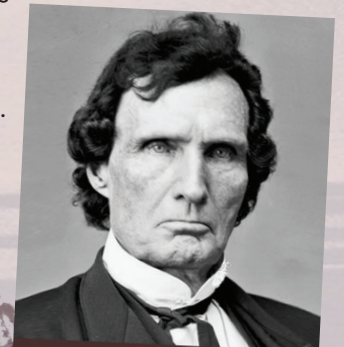
2007) and runs through Rouzerville. The Shockey farm was the first stop in PA in the shadow of South Mountain. Many escaping slaves slept their first night on free soil at the Shockey farm.

**Left onto PA 16 W and quick right onto Old Forge Rd. Travel about 3 miles to Mentzer Gap Road and turn onto Rt. 997.**

The Hiram Wertz farm was the next stop, about eight miles from the Shockey farm. Wertz's son wrote, "(They came) to my father's barn, where they arrived generally in the very early morning and I fed them and guarded during the day."

**Continue on Rt. 997, bear right on Route 30 and turn left into Caledonia State Park.**

The next stop was Caledonia furnace, owned by Thaddeus Stevens. About 25 families of color lived near Greenwood. Robert Black, another captain of the Underground Railroad worked with William Hammett, the superintendent of the ironworks to move them onto Pine Grove furnace to Mt. Holly Springs or to Boiling Springs. If this route was not safe, escapees could be moved to Gettysburg.



**Thaddeus Stevens,**  
Owner of Caledonia Ironworks,  
believed in equality.



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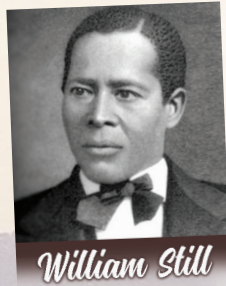
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## These Abolitionists and freemen left historic steps throughout Franklin County.

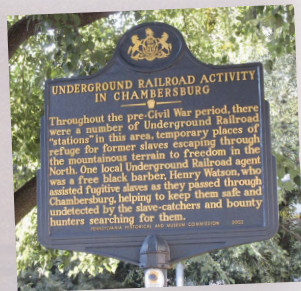


*William Still*

William Still was an African-American involved 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 Greencastle area of Franklin County PA and from this account helped escaping slaves.

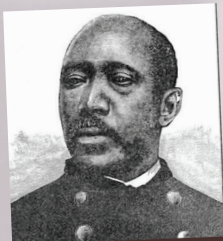


**Anderson House, home of Timothy Anderson near Greencastle who hid escaping slaves.**



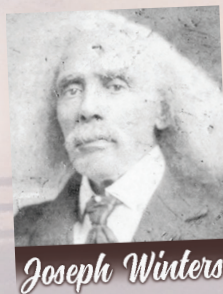
In Chambersburg, a historic marker on Memorial Square marks the Underground Railroad activity of Chambersburg. A number of Chambersburg's black citizens participated in the Underground Railroad. The concentration of black population was in the South Ward. Henry Watson, a local barber, and Joseph Winters, 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 Douglass in the months before the Raid of Harpers Ferry.

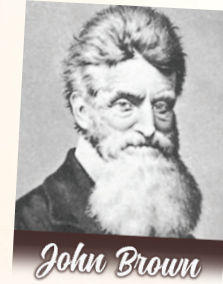


*Martin Delany*

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.



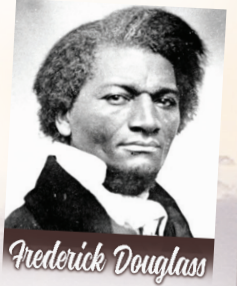
*Joseph Winters*



*John Brown*

It was not by happenstance that 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 governor 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.



*Frederick Douglass*



**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.**

### More Freedom Routes

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.

### Franklin County's key location put it front and center along the road to freedom.

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 and begin a new way of life. (Miller, Randall & Pencak, William; Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth, 2002)

Franklin County PA was an epicenter of Underground Railroad activity.

