

**The Underground Railroad in Chautauqua County:
Selected excerpts from sources shown on the county UGRR map of February, 2013.**

Wendy J. W. Straight and Douglas H. Shepard, Ed., 2013

Sources Excerpted Here

- (1) Anon., *History of the First Baptist Church*, Jamestown, NY, 1827 - 1915, Journal Press, Jamestown, New York, 1915. (Map abbreviation: Jamestown Baptist)
- (2) Bailey, William S., "The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York," *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, William Doty, Ed., Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940. (Map abbreviation: Doty/Bailey)
- (3) Bates, Samuel P., *History of Erie County*, Warner Beers and Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1884. (Map abbreviation: Bates)
- (4) Gourdey, Erma, et al., *Busti Centennial Booklet*, 1923. (Map abbreviation: Gourdey)
- (5) Lockwood, C.R., "Interview with Catherine Harris," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011. (Map abbreviation: Lockwood)
- (6) Price, Albert S., *History of Chautauqua County and its People*, Vol. I, John P. Downs and Fenwick Y. Hedley, Ed., American Historical Society, 1921. (Map abbreviation: Downs/Price)
- (7) Richards, June T., *Carroll Sesquicentennial Booklet*, 1975. (Map abbreviation: Richards)
- (8) Shults, Chas. J., Ed. *Cherry Creek Illustrated: a History, 1900*, Chas. J. Shults, Cherry Creek, New York, 1900. (Map abbreviation: Shults)
- (9) Whitney, Oliver, and Alice V. Peterson, *French Creek 150 Years*, Roger L. Westley, Clymer, New York, 1979. (Map abbreviation: Whitney and Peterson)

Newspapers Excerpted Here

- (10) *The Fredonia Censor* (Map abbreviation: Censor)
- (11) *The Westfield Republican* (Map abbreviation: Republican)
- (12) *The Jamestown Morning Post* (Map abbreviation: Post)

Other References Excerpted Here

- (13) *Historical Sketches of the Town of Portland, comprising also the Pioneer History of Chautauqua County, with Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers*, by H. C. Taylor, M.D., (W. McKinstry & Son, Fredonia, NY, 1873, p.196.)
- (14) *The Early History of the Town of Ellicott, Chautauqua County, N.Y., compiled largely from the Personal Recollections of the Author*, by Gilbert W. Hazeltine, M.D. (Journal Printing Company, Jamestown, NY, 1887, pp. 348-349.)

- (1) Anon., *History of the First Baptist Church, Jamestown, N.Y., 1827-1915*, Journal Press, Jamestown, N.Y., 1915). (Map Abbreviation: Jamestown Baptist)

But few people who lived subsequent to the Civil War can realize or comprehend the intensity of the political excitement, or the hostility of personal feeling created by that contest, and in the discussion of the question of slavery which led up to it. The Jamestown Baptist

Church took an active part in both the discussion and the struggle. Soon after the completion of the first church edifice – 1833 or 1834 – one Elder **Blakesley**, a young Baptist clergyman came to Jamestown in the interests of the anti-slavery movement. The apologists for slavery also appeared with a political orator and a joint debate was held in the old Congregational Church. The pro-slavery orator claimed the right to speak first, and by his blundering manner and misquotations of Scripture, made a poor showing. Mr. **Blakesley** replied, and fearlessly and skillfully met every pro-slavery argument. The interest and excitement engendered by Mr. **Blakesley's** lectures awakened a demand for a full and free discussion of the slavery question. When it was known that every other suitable place was closed to the continuance of the discussion, the Baptists opened their church and bid Mr. **Blakesley** welcome. A number of lectures were given in the church, attended by large and over-flowing congregations. The excitement increased rapidly, and it was soon learned from his opponents that the life of the speaker was in danger. A young cabinet maker, **Styles** by name, however undertook to act as a body guard, and being an expert with a six-shooter, and a giant in frame, the would-be assassins took notice and acted accordingly. A final mass meeting was appointed to be held at the church for the purpose of concentrating the strength of the movement. Early in the morning on the day of the meeting, a mob appeared on Brooklyn Heights with a cannon and a captain from Mud Creek. They maintained a continuous fire until the hour of the meeting when they filed down the hill for the Baptist Church. On their arrival the citizens had filled the church and the front doors were barred. The mob filled the front yard and surrounded the house. Being unable to enter the house they burst in the back windows of the church and as the speaker proceeded with his address, pelted him with stones, brickbats, jack-knives and other missiles. Many were standing on the tops of the seats inside the house, while a prominent citizen of the town, a Justice of the Peace, was emptying asafetida from his pockets on the hot stove that the fumes might compel the congregation to leave the church. The plan was frustrated, however, by one who stood near and brushed off the material.

For the protection of the speaker from the infuriated mob, it was decided to open but one front door for exit. This was done, and as the people were filing out, the mob grappled with a man supposed to be **Blakesley** and threw him to the ground, but the man was soon discovered to be a prominent citizen of the town. While this exciting scene was in progress, centering upon itself all attention, the other door was opened and Mr. **Blakesley** quietly escaped to the home of B. F. **Van Dusen**, at the northwest corner of Prendergast Avenue and Fourth Street. Reviewing past history at this distant day, the church may well congratulate itself that its members have contributed their full share in forming a public sentiment against slavery and thus preparing the way for the acceptance of the memorable proclamation of the martyred **Lincoln**, when he gave freedom to all slaves in the United States, and ushered in for four millions of souls a jubilee of jubilees.

From the time of the event just related during all the controversy over slavery, members of the church provided stations, and took an active part in the management of the “underground road” to Canada, run in the interests of fugitive slaves. Deacon John C. **Breed's** pig pen was one of those stations. And when the storm broke with all its ferocity, Baptists were not found wanting. They take pride in the fact that the Rev. J. **Scofield**, at one time the Baptist pastor at Sinclairville, provided the country with a distinguished Major General for that war, in the person of his son John M. **Scofield**, who was born near Sinclairville aforesaid. And the pioneer Baptist of the county, was the grand sire of those four **Cushing** brothers, thunderbolts of war. The most conspicuous Baptist who represented the county in the Civil War was Rev. J. C. **Drake**, pastor of

the Westfield church, who resigned at once on the breaking out of the war, raised a company of volunteers and became its captain, and served with such energy and efficiency, that he was later chosen colonel of the 112th N.Y. Vol. Inf., the “Chautauqua regiment,” and offered up a soldier’s supreme sacrifice on his country’s altar at the Battle of Cold Harbor.

In the minutes of the Harmony Baptist Association for 1865 are recorded the names of the following members of Baptist churches of the Association who gave up their lives in defense of their country: John **Peterson** and Milton **Lewis**, Busti; Kingsley **Faulkinson**, Clymer; William **Chamberlain**, First Portland; Benjamin F. **Hurlbut**, North Harmony; Thomas **Sparks** and James **Becker**, Sherman; Rev. J. C. **Drake** and Bolivar **Hurlbut**, Westfield; William **Osborn** and D. H. **Slade**, Harbor Creek. The Jamestown church lost none of her sons, though several served in the army. The most noted of whom was Orville A. **Ross**, son of Asa and Abigale **Ross**, and brother of Mrs. Heman **Fox**, Mrs. Hiram **Washburn** and Mrs. Henry **Barrows**, all members of the church. He enlisted at eighteen years of age, first in Co. B, 72nd N.Y., and later in the 120th N.Y. Vol. He served through the war, was severely wounded in Virginia, and was commissioned a lieutenant for gallant and faithful service. Andrew J. **Bowen** served as an officer in the 49th N.Y. and Heman **Fox** and Jerome **Hibbard** served in the 112th N.Y. Vol., the first named as an officer.

- (2) Bailey, William S., “The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York, *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940. (Map Abbreviation: Doty/Bailey)

The history of that branch of the Underground Railroad which crossed the State line at or near Sugar Grove, passed through Busti and Jamestown and thence across Lake Erie or to Buffalo and on to the “railroad’s” terminal in Canada can never be more than a meager outline.

The Underground Railroad maintained no advertising department. It shunned publicity. Search through the local newspapers of the entire decade following the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 brings to light but a few vague references to its operations. Its offices, stations and eating houses are today but traditions; its engineers, conductors, agents and dispatchers have passed on and, if they left records of its operations through this locality, their records have disappeared. And yet there is no doubt that these stations were open day and night, and this in spite of the penalty of \$1000 fine and imprisonment for giving a meal or any help to the unfortunate passengers on their way to freedom; nor is there any doubt that the business of the Underground Railroad in Chautauqua County was efficiently, though silently, conducted in the shadow of darkness and in profound secrecy.

To the fugitive slaves, furtively passed from station to station over various routes that converged through Chautauqua County toward Buffalo where freedom lay just over the river, the final stages through this county must have inspired both new hope and increased apprehension of capture as they neared journey’s end. Frank H. **Severance** in his “Old Trails on the Niagara Frontier,” perhaps had this in mind when he wrote that “of all the trails that led to the Niagara Frontier none have a greater significance in American history than that known as the Underground Railroad.” The same historian considers the ferry at Buffalo, over which the escaping slaves began to pass as early as 1830, the most vital part of the Underground Railroad. He states that the travel over the eastern and western routes was insignificant compared with that over the routes through western New York and Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. Of these central

routes, **Severance** writes that in this State the most active part in the Underground Railroad operations was borne by the western counties.

The men and women of this region who operated the Underground Railroad were actuated by the highest ideals. They denied the validity of the Fugitive Slave Law. They justified their illegal acts by their belief in a higher law that gave the man of color the same inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that they themselves enjoyed.

That the operation of the road through this region was characterized by many thrilling incidents, my research reveals – though, save in a few instances, too dimly to be made into history. If it serves no other purpose, I hope this paper may result in bringing forth all of this unwritten history that may still be available. Not definitely within the scope of this paper, it is nevertheless of interest to note, in connection with this history of a phase of the anti-slavery movement, that in 1817, when the law which provided for the final extinction of slavery in New York State became effective, eight slaves were held by and were the property of Chautauqua County slave-owners.

From local sources the most distant identification of the underground road is its passage through Concord, a village near Corry, Pennsylvania, whence it came through to Busti via Sugar Grove or its immediate locality. The entire State of Pennsylvania was interlaced with Underground Railroad trails. One well-defined route extended from Baltimore via Bellefonte and Punxsutawney to Warren, so it is certain that many escaping slaves were passed through Jamestown on their way to points on Lake Erie and Buffalo.

Between Lottsville and Sugar Grove, James **Carter** cared for the fugitives; and in Sugar Grove, Dr. James **Catlin** and wife, the latter also a physician, were especially active and fearless in helping slaves on their way to freedom. There does not appear to have been a station in the village of Busti. In fact, as one informant who was a participant in the village life of that day described the village feeling, the popular sentiment was not with the Abolitionists and did not approve their slave-running activities. For this reason, the slaves seem to have been harbored on farms at some distance from the village. These hiding places or stations included the homes of Squire **Plumb**, who was a prominent figure in the work; the Rev. John **Broadhead**, an old-fashioned circuit-riding minister and the father of James **Broadhead** of Busti, to whom I am indebted for valuable assistance in the preparation of this paper; Levi **Jones**; Humphrey **Pratt**; and William **Storum**, the latter a colored man who was held in high esteem.

Of Squire Alvin **Plumb**, I am told by Mrs. S. C. **Irvin**, a former resident of Busti, that he was the leader of the Abolitionist movement in that locality and that his home was the principal station of the Underground Railroad in Busti. A daughter, Harriett **Plumb**, later gained prominence as a suffragist leader. An interior concealed room in the **Plumb** house is reputed to have been the hiding place in which escaping slaves were kept, occasionally for considerable periods. Mrs. **Irvin** states that Squire **Plumb** was an intellectual man of unusual ability. At a later date her grandfather, then living in the old **Plumb** house, found a copy of *Virgil* that had belonged to the squire. While it was safe to do so, Squire **Plumb** sent his colored charges to school at the old schoolhouse on top of the hill. It came to be not unusual to hear these carefree Negroes, whose entire worldly possessions were carried in a bandanna handkerchief, singing their songs of the South as they passed up and down the hill to and from school. The teacher of the school at or about this time was Alice **Lord**, later Mrs. O. B. **Butler**, of Lakewood. The locality of the **Plumb** home was called Pine Ridge, and one of the ancient trees that gave the place its name is still standing.

Another name inseparably connected with the Abolitionist movement in Busti was that of another member of the Underground Railroad group, William **Storum**. The following brief account of William and Sarah **Storum** is taken from "The Rev. J. W. **Loguen**, as a Slave and as a Freeman" (Syracuse, 1859).

*Mr. and Mrs. **Storum** emigrated from New Hartford, in the State of New York, to Busti, in 1816, when Chautauque county was new. They travelled in an ox cart, with all their effects, and purchased and took possession of one hundred and forty acres of good land, cleared and subdued it to a high state of cultivation, and made it one of the best farms of the county. They were both slightly tinged with African blood; but nevertheless were estimated by their lives and character among the well-informed and estimable citizens.*

*While at the College, Mr. **Loguen** also had charge of a class of Sunday scholars at Utica. There he met, for the first time, Caroline **Storum**, on a visit to her friends. An intimacy commenced between him and Caroline, which ripened into mutual attachment, and resulted in their marriage on the day of the election of General **Harrison** in 1840, at the house of her father and mother, William and Sarah **Storum**, of Busti, Chatauque county, N.Y.*

Caroline was privileged with the best education country opportunities afforded. The standing and respectability of the family always protected her against prejudice of color, which affects so many of her race.

*This connection was a fortunate event in the life of Mr. **Loguen**. Mrs. **Loguen** was about twenty years of age when married – of pleasing person and address, amiable, and of that best of breeding which undervalues the shining and superficial, and highly esteems the intellectual and substantial, the useful and the good – qualities which fitted her to instruct her household, and even her husband, in some things (Mr. **Loguen** often says he wishes he was as well educated as his wife) – and to receive, comfort and bless the hundreds of fugitives from slavery who found asylum at her house, -- which, therefore acquired the eminently appropriate appellation of the Underground Rail Road Depot at Syracuse.*

Mr. **Loguen**, himself a fugitive slave, was described by writers of his day as a man of noble qualities, a respected and beloved citizen of Syracuse for many years, and later a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal church. During this time he was publicly known as the head of the Underground Railroad in Onondaga County, said to have been the most important station in the State; he lectured in Chautauqua County during the presidential campaign of 1852.

Of the number of slaves who came or passed through Busti over the Underground Railroad no data are available. My informant, James **Broadhead**, related that Negroes had come "one or two at a time," until the winter of 1850-51, when a group of seven came together to the **Storum** place. Of these, Harrison **Williams** remained with the **Storums**, one went to Levi **Jones**, one to Squire **Plumb**, while others were hired by friendly neighbors. Apparently the protectors of the slaves did not at that time fear attempts of capture by the owners of the Negroes under their protection. And now we come to the event that revealed Busti to be no longer a safe haven for runaway slaves, an event that stirred the entire region and gave it an object lesson of the horrors of slavery that must doubtless have led the Abolitionists along this part of the Underground Railroad to redouble efforts in passing the Negroes on to freedom.

On the morning of September 30, 1851, the colored lad Harrison **Williams** was kidnapped by a party of slave owners. From Edward O. **Jones**, of Evanston, Illinois, a son of Levi **Jones**, I secured the following account. Mr. **Jones** was seven years old at the time. A party of the runaway slaves had gone to Jamestown a few days before this kidnapping, attracted by the visit of Dan **Rice's** circus. In the group was a slave named Sam **Smith** who was working for

Levi **Jones**. These Negroes did not return to Busti till after three days when Sam **Smith** came to the **Jones** farm at night and said he had seen his master on the streets of Jamestown. Since that encounter the slaves had concealed themselves in a swamp. Levi **Jones** evidently kept a watch for the slave owners, for when they came to his farm searching for Sam **Smith**, who was still hidden, he tried to beat them to the **Storum** farm, but his horse was not fast enough. On reaching the **Storum** farm the slave hunters, in three carriages, went at once to the barnyard, where they found Harrison milking, threw him into their conveyance and quickly drove toward Jamestown. Levi **Jones** followed and in Jamestown tried to recruit enough men to effect a rescue, but he could not arouse sufficient interest. However, he and Silas **Shearman**, who joined him in Jamestown, followed the party toward Fredonia, but returned at night after an unsuccessful pursuit.

Following the capture of **Williams** the other slaves were taken to Dunkirk by their friends and sent across the lake to Canada. The slave hunters were said to have followed their human property as far as the boat, but were not in sufficient force to take the slaves from their friends. Two weeks later the slave Sam **Smith** wrote of their safe arrival in Canada.

Mr. **Jones** explained the capture as due to the previous return from Busti of two slaves who went back after their wives but were recaptured and beaten until one revealed the location of the others who had escaped. We can best gain a realization of the depths to which this man hunt, following so closely upon the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, stirred the outraged sentiments of the locality from an editorial in the Jamestown "Journal" three days later:

Seizure of a Negro Boy – A Hard Case

*On Tuesday morning last our citizens were thrown into a state of considerable excitement by the passage through the village of three carriages containing a strong guard of armed men and an alleged fugitive from Slavery in the State of Virginia. The facts as we learned them were that the person in custody was a colored boy by the name of Harrison, about 17 years of age, who arrived in the adjoining town of Busti about seven or eight months since. For most if not all of this time he has been at work for Mr. Lewis **Clark** of that town, and proved an honest and industrious boy. Early on Tuesday morning, as he was engaged in milking, the party of men above named drove up, pounced upon him without process, bound him with chains, and drove off. The whole transaction was conducted with so much rapidity, that no opportunity was given for alarm, and the party proceeded without molestation. No halt was made here, but we learn that they proceeded to Dunkirk, and from thence by boat to Buffalo. Who the claimant or agent is, or by whose warrant the boy was seized, or before whom he is to be "examined," we have been unable to learn. Certain humane gentlemen followed the captors to see that if the boy should be remanded into slavery, it be done legally, and these are all the particulars of the affair that we possess. For an observance of legal forms, trust must be placed in the captors.*

Whether we look upon this seizure as a successful operation of the Fugitive Slave Act, or as an instance of the loyalty of the people in submitting to its execution, it is a hard case. To see a young boy isolated from kindred and without paternal home, endeavoring to earn his bread by honest industry, roughly seized without process by a party of armed men, manacled and smuggled away before a foreign tribunal, with no right to establish his freedom if he is free, nor offer any evidence in self-defence [sic], appears to our Republican senses as a sad falling off from the practice of human justice, and a perversion according to the provisions of the Act, and as "nominated in the bond," and all those who were its instruments, in the eyes of the law, "All, all honorable men;" but if there is one stain upon our national fame more foul than another, that Act is the one; and if there is a degradation lower than man in his frailty ordinarily sinks, the

persons, the things, who for money voluntarily become agents in the seizure and enslavement of persons having every natural right to be Free, are aided in the above seizure, and that one who was applied to, very promptly declined.

We claim to be, and are, law-abiding citizens, and shall probably loyally observe all enactments that are by the constitutional authorities declared to be constitutional; but we reserve to ourselves the right to think and speak of them according to the dictates of our sympathies and our judgments. Thus we have done, and thus we shall always do.

Notwithstanding the sentiment reflected by the “Journal” editorial my informants Messrs. **Jones** and **Broadhead** agree that the Abolitionists were not popular in Busti. Mr. **Jones** told me they were looked upon as “bad” men and that the only men in the village who voted the Abolitionist ticket in the early fifties were Squire **Plumb**, Levi **Jones**, and William **Storum**, though the majority of the people were in sympathy with the runaway slaves. Mr. **Broadhead** recalled that on the morning of the kidnapping much ridicule was hurled at the Abolitionists and that the feeling toward them in the village was very bitter.

An interesting sequel to the **Williams** kidnapping is told by James **Broadhead**. On Christmas day, 1864, Mr. **Broadhead**, then in the Union army, was in camp near Culpepper, Virginia. Having secured passes to town, he and Byron **Aylesworth** encountered a Negro who impressed Mr. **Broadhead** as a man he had seen before. This Negro proved to be Harrison **Williams**. He told his former Busti friends that he had not been punished after his capture, but had soon been sold into Georgia. He had entered the war as body servant to his master, had been captured with him by the Northern troops after Gettysburg, and at this time was a hostler in the Union army.

The Jamestown “Journal” of September 14, 1855, copies from the Romney (Virginia) “Intelligencer” an article to the effect that a Captain **Harnes**, of Hardy County, had been informed by a friend residing in Jamestown that his Negro man who, eight or nine years before, “had left his comfortable quarters with his master and taken up his abode in Jamestown,” was at that time in jail in Buffalo for a misdemeanor. **Harnes** and three friends came to Buffalo to secure possession of the Negro, but did not succeed.

In Jamestown the affairs of the Underground Railroad seem to have been directed by Silas **Shearman** who was known as its agent. It is perhaps needless to say that the records of the period reveal Mr. **Shearman** as an ardent Abolitionist. The Jamestown station was the old **Shearman** home which stood at the corner of Pine and Fourth streets until 1910, when it was demolished to make way for new buildings. Frank E. **Shearman**, Sr., a grandson of Silas **Shearman**, related that he well remembered his grandfather telling his experiences as the Underground Railroad agent, or conductor, of how it was not an uncommon experience for him to come down in the morning and find his kitchen filled with escaping slaves who had been brought to Jamestown during the night, or directed to his home at the last station. Mr. **Shearman** would feed the group of hungry passengers and secrete them during the day in the hay in his barn which was at the rear of Stillers Alley. His duty then was to collect sufficient funds from the railroad supporters, if money was needed, and to arrange transportation or guidance to the next station. Mr. **Shearman** was certain his grandfather frequently sent the runaways to a station in the village of Ellington. This statement was confirmed by Austin H. **Stafford**, whose memory of the activities of the Ellington Underground Railroad station was very clear.

Though careful search was made through the newspaper files of 1850-60, only one reference was found to the actual workings of the Underground Railroad in Jamestown. The “Journal” of March 4, 1859, contained the following:

Last week a passenger on the “Underground Railroad” reached this “station” in a needy condition and was promptly assisted by the Agents here. He was one of a party of nine, owned by a man in Southern Virginia, all of them having started for Canada together and doubtless reaching the Queen’s domains before this. His master owned 500 slaves; he had never been whipped or badly treated, and but for the increasing years of his master and the certainty of a “sell out” at his death they never would have left. One of the Agents states that the road is in good condition and doing a thriving business. Bueno!

“The Centennial History of Chautauqua County” states that in the early fifties Jamestown had a colored population of 118, including both slave and free. These colored people lived in that part of the community known as Africa. The same work states that the following Jamestown citizens were active in the affairs of the Underground Railroad: Silas **Shearman**, Phineas **Crossman**, Dr. William **Hedges**, Varanes **Page** and Mrs. Catherine **Harris**.

It is reported that there was an Underground Railroad station also at Falconer. Bert **Mosher** relates that when in 1860 his father moved into the old Edward **Work** house, which formerly stood on the corner now occupied by the Falconer Bank, there was a room on the second floor the only access to which was a very skillfully concealed entrance from above. The general supposition has been that this concealed room was used for secreting slaves who came to the place as an Underground Railroad station. The existence of this station, however, cannot be definitely established.

The Ellington station was conducted by Joseph B. **Nessle**, Mr. **Stafford’s** stepfather, at his home in Ellington village. Mr. **Stafford** well remembered the frequent signal at the door during the night and of hearing his stepfather open the door and admit the conductor and his party. With the curiosity of a boy, young **Stafford** often stole down to see the strange visitors who he recalls as extremely shy and in constant dread of capture. After the slaves had been fed by Mr. **Stafford’s** mother, Mr. **Nessle** would immediately harness his horses and the same night drive on to the next station which was conducted by James **Wells** two miles north of Leon Center. The Leon station was in a more secluded location and the slaves could be secreted there during the day with greater security. Mr. **Stafford’s** only knowledge of the route beyond Leon was that it led to Buffalo. At the time Mr. **Stafford** as a boy saw the slaves brought to his home he did not know the identity of the conductor but later coming to Jamestown to work he recognized Silas **Shearman** as the nocturnal conductor who brought the slaves from Jamestown to the Ellington station.

In 1854 there was formed in Ellington a Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society which was active in supporting the fugitive slave cause until the war. Every year this society sent a box of clothing and supplies to the Underground Railroad headquarters at Syracuse or Philadelphia. Of their work locally I have no record. Mrs. **Brooks**, mother of John M. **Brooks**, M.D., appears to have been a leading spirit of this society, and a series of letters she wrote to William **Still**, for many years connected with the anti-slavery office in Philadelphia and chairman of the acting vigilant committee of the Philadelphia branch of the Underground Railroad, appears in **Still’s** “The Underground Rail Road” (Philadelphia, 1871). In a letter of December 7, 1859, Mrs. **Brooks** wrote that she was

... thankful for the growing interest there is for the cause throughout the free States, for it certainly is on the increase, even in our own locality. There are those who, five years since, were (ashamed, must I say it!) to bear the appellation of “anti-slavery,” who can now manfully bear the one and then still more repellant of Abolitionist. All this we wish to feel thankful for, and wish their number may never grow less.

*The excitement relative to the heroic John **Brown**, now in his grave, has affected the whole North, or at least every one who has a heart in his breast, particularly this portion of the State, which is so decidedly anti-slavery.*

*I have just learned that John **Brown**'s body passed through Dunkirk, a few miles from this place, yesterday. A funeral service is to be preached in this place one week from next Sabbath for the good old man.*

The most prominent figure in the history of the Underground Railroad in Chautauqua County was that of Dr. E.M. **Pettit**, of Fredonia, who died in 1885 at the age of eighty-three. Dr. **Pettit** was an active and fearless agent and conductor and the **Pettit** house was a noted station on the line that followed the lake shore from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Buffalo. Dr. **Pettit** wrote some serial sketches of the history of the Underground Railroad for the Fredonia "Censor" in 1870, which were reprinted in 1879 in a volume of 174 pages. **Siebert** makes frequent reference to Dr. **Pettit**'s book.

Of the total number of slaves who reached Canada through the Chautauqua County route of the Underground Railroad I have found no estimate. The total number who escaped from the South during the thirty years preceding the Civil War was between thirty-five thousand and seventy-five thousand. The financial loss to the South has been estimated at \$30,000,000. As there were nearly four million slaves in 1860, it is apparent that, compared to the total slave population, the number who reached Canada by the Underground Railroad offered the South no serious menace.

The outstanding history of the organized movement in the northern States for aiding fugitive slaves to reach the free soil of Canada is Wilbur H. **Siebert**'s "The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom" (New York, 1898), with an introduction by Albert **Bushnell Hart** and an extensive bibliography. **Siebert** lists the following as active participants in the movement in Chautauqua County: Andrew **Cranston**, Rev. Mr. **Frink**, **Knowlton**, Dr. J. **Pettit** and Eber M. **Pettit**. In Cattaraugus County, he includes **Wells**, who conducted the station at Leon. He gives two routes through the angle of southwestern New York, one hugging the shore of Lake Erie through Westfield and Fredonia, the other from Franklin, Pennsylvania, to Jamestown and thence via Ellington to Leon. At Leon, he states, the route branched, one line running to Fredonia and thence northward, the other following a more direct route to Buffalo.

In its larger aspect, the Underground Railroad had a profound effect upon the nation during the period 1830 – 60. While the secret activities of the militant anti-slavery element supplied the reason for the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the law, instead of stopping the channels and thereby arresting the escape of the liberty-seeking slaves, actually increased the number of those participating in the work of the Underground Railroad. The slave-owners naturally charged the loss of every slave that disappeared to the hated system, the profound secrecy which enshrouded the railroad's operations contributing to exaggeration of its extent and aggressiveness. Thus the Underground Railroad became one of the greatest forces that brought on the Civil War.

The operations of the Underground Railroad are a closed but still thrilling chapter of the history of pre-Civil War days. Its agents secreted, fed, and by night transported their unfortunate charges, without reward, always in danger of arrest and punishment by fine and imprisonment, and not without conflict with the sentiments of their non-Abolitionist neighbors. For even in Jamestown an anti-slavery speaker of the time was saved from mob violence only by the physical strength and fearlessness of a minister of the Gospel, the Rev. Hiram **Eddy** of revered memory.

And so, let us not withhold the tribute that is due the moral and physical bravery of the men and women who manned the section of the Underground Railroad that wound through the valleys and over the hills of the Chautauqua region.

[Author's note: Read before the New York State Historical Association at Chautauqua, August 24, 1934. The author has been interested in this phase of the history of the county for many years.]

- (3) Bates, Samuel P., *History of Erie County*, Warner Beers and Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1884. (Abbreviation: Bates)

The first anti-slavery society in the county (which was also one of the earliest in the State), was formed in 1836. Col. J. M. Moorhead was chosen President, and William Gray, Secretary. The principal members were Philetus **Glass**, Dr. S. **Smedley** and Truman **Tuttle**, of North East; Col. [J.M.] **Moorhead**, Mr. **Jessup** and Samuel **Low**, of Harbor Creek; William **Himrod**, Alex **Mehaffey** and Aaron **Kellogg**, of Erie; Giles and Hamlin **Russell**, of Mill Creek; Stephen C. **Lee**, of Summit; Rev. T. H. **Burroughs**, of Concord; and William **Gray**, of Wayne. Another society was formed in North East about the same time, with Truman **Tuttle** as President, James **Duncan** as Vice-President, Dr. B. **Smedley** as Secretary, and E. L. **Loomis** as Treasurer. An anti-abolition meeting was held the same year in Springfield.

The "underground railroad," which was the name generally given to the system by which slaves from the South were run away from their masters, was in full operation in this county from about 1840 to 1860. The slaves usually made their escape from the South by way of Washington County, Penn., and from there were helped through Allegheny, Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer and Crawford Counties, to the lake shore. There were regular stations along the route, where zealous anti-slavery people openly defied the law and gave the runaway slaves food, shelter and money. The chief "station agents," as they were jokingly called in Erie County, were William **Gray**, Stephen C. **Lee**, Hamlin **Russell** and William **Himrod**. The slaves were secreted in Erie until a good chance offered to send them to Canada. Many romantic stories are told of the skill and desperation displayed in keeping the slaves from being captured and returned South by the officers of the law.

- (4) Gourdey, Erma, et al., "Address Delivered by Eleazer Green at the Busti Centennial, August 18, 1923," *Busti Centennial Booklet*, 1923. (Map Abbreviation: Gourdey)

It may not be inappropriate in speaking of the early history of the Town of Busti to mention some things in connection with what was then known as the underground railroad.

I will speak briefly upon that subject now: History tells us that the "Underground Railroad" was a secret or "underground" organization of Abolitionists, who in defiance of the law of the land, assisted the runaway slaves to reach Canada from which could not be brought. I believe it is generally understood at the present time by those reasonably well informed of Busti's early history that at least one track of that railroad extended through the Town of Busti.

Things that a boy may see and hear may not impress him deeply at the time but in after years he may recall occurrences and realize that they had deep significance. Things that I saw and heard in my boyhood I now fully believe were conclusive evidence that a tract of that railroad extended from Sugar Grove north along the Wellman Road. I well remember that as a small boy on many occasions as I would go to the barn early in the morning to feed the cows and climb up to throw down the hay I would discover a negro upon the mow. During the day food

would be brought him from our house or from the house of our neighbor, Ransom **Curtis**; and from the ample and appetizing supply I am sure that my mother and Mrs. **Curtis** were in full sympathy and accord with the actions of their husbands.

During the day a conference would invariably be held between my father [Eleazer **Green**, Sr.] and Mr. **Curtis**. Being the youngest of my family and not considered of sufficient age to absorb or intelligently impart information, I would sometimes be near during such an interview. I would hear it planned that either my father or Mr. **Curtis** would start, after nightfall, with a horse and wagon and the negro. This, one of them would do, as always driving north; where they went, no one knew. Those who were old enough to realize what was being done knew that inquiries would not elicit information and made none. The younger ones, if they made inquiries, were told that "father would be back before long." But the negro never came back. Sometimes when father went he would be back when I arose the next morning. When the trip was a short one, he was undoubtedly met by another "conductor" on the road who took the negro to the next station. Sometimes father would not be back until nearly or quite night of the next day, then the trip probably extended to Barcelona where a rowboat would be ready for a trip across the lake to freedom. In those days starlit nights and the north star were important aids to the slave seeking freedom.

Who, aside from my father and Mr. **Curtis**, were conductors of this particular branch of the underground railroad I am not sure, but from conversations that I have heard between my father and a man who, in my boyhood days was known as Uncle Ed **Wells**, I strongly suspect that he was an official upon that road.

Undoubtedly the underground railroad men were sometimes imposed upon, for although my father never mentioned, so far as I know, the underground railroad or his connection with it, in later years, I have heard my mother banter him about driving all night to take to Barcelona a negro who it was soon afterwards learned, had for years been a barber in Westfield.

When one realizes the dangers attending the participation in the underground railroad work and that it required courage and a conviction that it was a duty to violate the law of the land and obey what was by them believed to be a higher law, -- he can but admire, yes, cherish the memory of such men. They were unassuming, industrious, intelligent, honorable and fearless, and, only for this one exception, law-abiding. I revere the memory of those fathers and mothers.

(5) Lockwood, C. R., "Interview with Catherine **Harris**," The Evening Journal, Jamestown, New York, May 10, 1902, reprinted in The Post Journal, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011. (Map Abbreviation: Lockwood)

Slaves Helped to Escape from the South into Canada – Recollections of Aged "Conductors" – A Period of Great Excitement and Peril – C. R. Lockwood's No. 17

.... Before the year 1850, the north and south got "by the ears" on the question of slavery; parties, too were rampant, while the slave was on the qui vive for his and her liberty; and, in aid of this ambition to flee from the said to be "land of the free," to an asylum of liberty, the "underground railroad" was organized and set in operation over extensive sections of our country.

This road derived its charter from the hearts and consciences of the people; and received its support from the pockets of generosity. Its motive power was not confined to say one or two agencies, but included wood, coal, horse, oxen and single or double wagon, wheelbarrows,

floating rafts, railroads, and along lake, pond, or river, no matter when or where, only to get out and away from the slave pen to the air of freedom.

“Old Jamestown” was a way station on the line of this road and from the early ‘50s it became notorious for its generous hearts and substantial help. At the time, generally posted from outside show, as to these fleeting incidents, but not cognizant of the inside workings, we solicited information from others, among whom we recently called upon our aged friend, Mrs. Catherine **Harris**. From her we have been pretty thoroughly informed; and the threads of progress are so interwoven in our local fabric that we feel in duty bound to spread it before the people. Said the old lady:

“Yes, I remember the old ‘underground railroad;’ it was here and I worked on it; this place of mine was the depot where slaves came and were brought, Silas **Shearman**, Dr. **Hedges**, Phineas **Crossman** and others, friends of the slaves, used to come here; and they would bring here runaway slaves. At one time three were brought; at another time, nine came, and so on; but at one particular time 17 were brought here and came, so that they were all here together; eatables were also brought here by their friends for me to cook, and feed them, which I did; others would help me.

“When the 17 were here they got scared and ran to hide; they saw some white persons coming and thought they were their masters and after them, and scattered like fury; but we talked with them and told them not to be afraid, and they quieted down; they said they had once been betrayed. I went to work and got them something to eat and they got rested and were taken away; I don’t know who took them or where they went; different ones came; Silas **Shearman** was one of the foremost workers; at one time he brought three here and wanted me to hurry up and get them something to eat and then he said, “They will be shipped off.” This was done, but I don’t know who took them.

“The slaves would talk but little; were very cautious; some of them told me that, after they started, their masters hunted for them; that they would lay down by logs in the woods and hide behind trees and see their masters go by; after they got by they would skip out and follow on, watching their masters. I can’t tell how many came to my house; but this continued for several years.”

Said the old lady: “I tell you, Mr. **Lockwood**, these were sorrowful times and how I did pity the poor creatures.”

We have conversed with Mr. **Crossman** about this matter, and he corroborates the old lady in all essentials; he remembers aiding the runaways; that his services were mostly confined in the village. In addition to the names of helpers, he mentioned Addison A. **Price** and Frank **Van Dusen**. He also said that Dr. **Brown** of Busti and Dr. **Catlin** of Sugar Grove, Pa., were workers and from them slaves reached Jamestown; that runaways came from different directions. Of those helping in the work, Mr. **Crossman** mentioned one **Page**, then living in Ellington, but now in Falconer, nearby. Of those who contributed to the enterprise from their pockets he named Alonzo **Kent**, Orsell **Cook**, Lewis **Hall**, Albert **Partridge** and Madison **Burnell**, all of Jamestown.

As for himself, said he:

“I took as many as five from the back door of the Silas **Shearman** house, on the east side of Pine street, took them in the night time, acted accordingly to understanding; I took them in covered carriages and carried them to one **Nessel’s** in Ellington Center; I took them up to the door, would ring the bell and someone would come and open the door and I would say “here he

is,” unload, turn and go away; the slaves would exhibit great fear, but keep ‘mum’ and obey orders.

“Silas **Shearman** was a great man in this work; he had as many as six at one time at his house, our correspondence was verbal, not so much or often, but we understood greatly from signs; that Addison **Price** took several at one time; this work continued for several years and Jamestown furnished a good quota of help.”

Knowing our old surveyor **Page**, we called him in and learned as follows:

“Yes, I was interested in the ‘underground railroad’ in 1851-2 and 3 and thereabouts; I am 73 years old; I resided in Ellington; I took runaway slaves from there, I think five or more; at one time I carried three in a sleigh; we worked in the night time; we were suspicious of strangers in town and watched them; we thought they came to the interest of the slave master; I took three at one time from Mr. **Nessel’s**, my team was got ready and the slaves got in the carriage and were covered up with blankets; I drove towards Sinclairville and came to a house where I saw the designated light and drove up; I rapped on my sleigh with my whip handle and someone came to the door; said I, ‘here they are,’ and the person came out, threw off the covering and told them to get out, which they did, saying nothing, and I turned round and went back, keeping still; this was about 3 o’clock in the morning; I put the team into the barn and went home. We understood each other and knew just what to do.”

We here present this connection to show the operation of the road from our village and onward. The numerous help on the road were very quiet; “blabbers” were not accepted and when found were stricken from the roll. Money compensation was out of the question, but the reward came in helping the unfortunate and feeding the hungry.

It has been estimated that not less than 30,000 slaves found refuge over this road from human slavery, principally going into Canada; and the insight here given is a key to the great workshop of this novel but substantial enterprise, which largely counteracted the effects of the fugitive slave law; and was one of the “cudgels” that lashed national duty into line, and blotted the curse of all curses from the American flag.

That “Old Jamestown,” was, at least, a partial helper in this noble work, is a fact of which we are proud.

- (6) Price, Albert S., *History of Chautauqua County and its People, Vol. I*, John P. Downs and Fenwick Y. Hedley, Ed., American Historical Society, 1921. (Map Abbreviation: Downs/Price)

Slavery was an institution which, we would think, must always have been far removed from the life of Chautauqua county; a matter for those distant Southern states whose prosperity depended on slave labor; or at least for those “Border” states which were of necessity more or less controlled by the institutions of their near southern neighbors. In general this is quite true. Yet even this distant community had some connections with that great national problem. And these connections, constituting picturesque exceptions to the ordinary course of life here, stood out by bold contrast.

Many of these incidents resulted from the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, one of the legislative compromises demanded by a powerful and aggressive South, resisted by an anti-slavery North, and found to be not easily enforceable. The quiet but stubborn resistance of the English Puritans to the tyranny of James I and Charles I found itself repeated in the resistance of their American descendants in the North to this law, regarded by them as unjust and tyrannical.

Upon its enactment, numbers of escaped slaves who had lived unmolested in the North fled in terror to Canada. Others stayed and took the risks of being captured. Under the operation of the law many were captured and returned to slavery in the South. These captures invariably aroused intense excitement and opposition in the communities concerned, with the result that North and South became more and more estranged and antagonistic by this irritating friction.

This law did not, however, prevent the slaves from attempting in considerable numbers to reach Canada and freedom. The northern people, smarting under what they chose to regard as the insult heaped upon them by the enforcement of the odious law, cooperated for a deliberate evasion of the law and for a determined opposition to its enforcement. They worked secretly and quietly, without any disturbance of the ordinary course of community life. This secret cooperation became known in the expressive phrase of the day as the "Under Ground Railroad," sometimes referred to by the initials U.G.R.R. The shortest routes from the South to Canada became known as the several "lines" of this railroad; and, in carrying out the technical terminology, those who assisted the fleeing slaves were dubbed conductors, engineers and trainmen.

Several of these well-established routes led through this county. A "trunk line" ran along the Lake Erie shore from Cleveland to Buffalo. Another began at the Ohio river near Marietta, Ohio; ran thence along the eastern border of Ohio through several counties to the village of Jefferson, the county seat of Ashtabula county. This county was the home of Joshua R. **Giddings**, Benjamin F. **Wade**, and several other strong anti-slavery leaders. From this point the "hill division" of the line passed through Monroe township, Ohio; across the State line and through the townships of Conneaut, Elk Creek, Franklin, McKean, Summit, Green and Greenfield in Erie county, Pennsylvania; thence through the townships of Mina, Sherman, Chautauqua, Stockton, Pomfret, Sheridan, and Hanover in this county; and on to Buffalo and Canada.

Still another branch came into the county from the south by way of Sugar Grove, passed through Jamestown, Ellington and Sinclairville; and then apparently north to join the other route.

In every centre there were brave men and intrepid women who at a large risk assisted the dusky fugitives, and so struck, as they believed, an effective blow for freedom. The runaways were hidden from sight during the day, fed, and often clothed. Under the cover of night they were silently and secretly carried forward to the next "station," where word of their coming had preceded them. The new hosts often indicated their readiness to receive the fugitives by previously arranged signals of lights in the windows, and other readily discernible signs. The transfer from wagon or sleigh, to house or other hiding place, was accomplished quickly and as quietly as possible to avoid the undesirable attention of any unsympathetic or even hostile neighbor. Authorities have estimated that by these secret operations no less than thirty thousand slaves were helped to reach Canada. The determined efforts of the slaveholders to follow and recapture their valuable slaves (a perfectly natural desire) served by aggravation to further the growing sentiment against slavery in the North, and to develop rapidly the activities of the Under Ground Railroad.

In Jamestown there was a settlement of free colored people in the district on North Main Street and West Seventh Street which was familiarly known as Africa. In this settlement one of the well-known and respected women was Mrs. Catherine **Harris**. Her house was one of the stations, where she harbored many escaping slaves during the troubled years, at one time secreting as many as seventeen. Many of the county's well known men received, harbored and then forwarded these fugitives. Silas **Shearman** of Jamestown was certainly one of the most

active. In Jamestown Dr. **Hedges** and Phineas **Crossman**, too were leaders, in the work. Others who assisted in this vicinity were Addison A. **Price** and his brother Wilson A. **Price**, of Jamestown; Dr. **Catlin**, of Sugar Grove; Mr. **Page** and Mr. **Nessel** of Ellington; Benjamin **Miller** of Stockton; Joseph **Sackett** near Cassadaga; Levi **Jones** of Busti; and Henry H. **Jones** of Kiantone. Many other helpers whose names have never been recorded took an active part in this dangerous work. Money was freely given by many anti-slavery people. Among those in Jamestown whose purses were always open, are remembered Alonzo **Kent**, Orsell **Cook**, Lewis **Hall**, Albert **Partridge**, and Madison **Burnell**. We should all like to pay equal tribute to those many conscientious patriots who with quiet consecration helped with money, time and steady effort, this great cause of freedom, whose names most unfortunately, have not been preserved in any written record. In all of these there survived the spirit which has made the Anglo-Saxon, at any cost, always stand against what he regarded as tyranny and injustice.

Among runaway slaves was Harrison **Williams**, who escaped from Virginia, arriving foot-sore and exhausted at the farm of William **Storum**, a free colored man, in Busti, in February or March of 1851. **Storum** kept him several months, supplying his wants and helping him back to health. He was a mere boy of seventeen. Early one morning in September he was kidnapped by his former master, who had learned of his hiding place. This man and some others, dressed as women, drove to the farm, went around to the rear of the house where **Williams** was milking, seized and bound him, and put him in the bottom of their wagon. They drove rapidly north through Jamestown by way of Forest Avenue, Roosevelt Square and North Main Street to Fredonia, and thence to Buffalo. The alarm quickly spread, and a man on horseback, outspeeding the captors, arrived before them in Jamestown. A crowd quickly gathered in the Square, but there was no time to organize any effort, and the captors dashed through the crowd and up Main street without being stopped. "Guinea" **Carpenter** addressed the crowd, urging action, and a pursuing party was quickly made up. But valuable time had been lost, and the captors, with relays of fresh horses, got safely to Buffalo. Here the owner established a legal claim. In the crowded court room a lane was opened through the crowd, and an effort was made to induce **Williams** to make a dash for liberty. The crowd intended to close behind him until he should reach the carriage which was waiting at the door to take him to a place of safety. Either he failed to understand, or lacked the necessary courage, for he didn't make the effort, and was taken back to Virginia.

James W. **Broadhead**, of Busti, whose farm was next to the **Storum** farm, and who knew all the circumstances of the capture, enlisted in the 112th N.Y. Regiment in the Civil War. On Christmas Day in 1863 at Culpeper, Virginia, Mr. **Broadhead** saw Harrison **Williams** in camp. After being taken back to Virginia he had been sold to Georgia, and went as servant to his new master in the Confederate army. With his master, he was captured by the Union army near the Rappahannock station in the fall of 1863, and became hostler for Gen. **Slocum**. Mr. **Broadhead** talked with him and verified his identity. This capture deeply stirred the county and is said to have stimulated the activities of the Under Ground Rail Road.

[Author's note:] Authorities: Contributed articles and news items published in the "Jamestown Evening Journal" on the following dates: July 21, July 22, 1896; Sept. 27, 1901; May 10, May 17, May 24, 1902; December 26, 1905; April 21, July 14, 1910.

(7) Richards, June T., *Carroll Sesquicentennial Booklet*, 1975. (Map abbreviation: Richards)

[Richard's] Note: The following account of Hiram **Thayer** was copied by Town of Carroll Historian June T. Richards from notes loaned to her by Charles **Oberg**. The notes were found in the attic of the **Thayer** home.

"... Hiram **Thayer** was in early life a Whig, later on, an Abolitionist. He was a member and stockholder of the Underground Road to get [an African American] to Canada and helped many a one through with money, food and shelter, and after all slaves were freed, he became strong in the Temperance Party and voted independently as he pleased. His grandson Frank E. **Thayer**, Jr., used to say he had heard him relate he always voted at town meeting. He would take his ballot and with pencil erase the names he did not care to support, very often leaving but two or three to vote for, and one time, he told his grandson he voted but thought it would not count much as he erased all but one name and then it did not please him and erased that too. He seemed to think he had done his duty as much as if he had voted for the whole ticket. He was a liberal giver to the different church organizations and benevolent societies, but never associated with any church. He gave liberally to the poor, always helping anyone in distress or in sickness.

"... In 1841 he built the house which now stands. He hired one E. **Eaton** as boss carpenter and told him at the first, 'There will be no whiskey furnished.'" When **Eaton** came to work and looked over the timber to be framed, it was mostly hewn 10 to 12 inches, some large, and nearly covering an acre of ground. **Eaton** said, "I will frame and get ready to raise, but you never get it up without whiskey,' and there was much talk about it. All the while framing was being done, which took from about April 15 to June 20, it was talked about and everybody for miles around had heard of it and many had said they would not help, but Thayer said if he could not get it raised without whiskey it could lay and rot on the ground. **Eaton** said it would take 15 men to help put the frame together in the forenoon, and 25 more for raising the frame in the afternoon. Two days before the raising, **Thayer** sent his two sons on horseback in opposite directions to invite men for help with mowing and notified them of the raising. They were told they would plenty to eat, but no whiskey...."

(8) Shults, Chas. J., Ed., *Cherry Creek Illustrated: a History, 1900*, Chas. J. Shults, Cherry Creek, 1900. (Map Abbreviation: Shults)

George H. **Frost** settled within what is now known as the village of Cherry Creek in the spring of 1823 and built the second house of logs within its limits, on the Northwest corner of Southside Ave. and Center Street, which he opened for the numerous purposes of residence, hotel, shoe shop and post office. He was a native of Massachusetts, having been born in the town of Dartmouth, near Brainard's Bridge in that state, April 14, 1796, but a short distance from the imaginary line, separating it from the state of Rhode Island. Mr. **Frost** migrated from the home of his birth to Nassau, Rensselaer County, N.Y., in about 1819, where he remained but a short time when he pushed his way westward as far as Bennington, Genesee County. There he married Zerviah M. **Sherman** and lived until he emigrated to Cherry Creek in the spring of 1823. But few settlers had reached the town at that time and the forests were with a few small exceptions unbroken, and bears, wolves and deer roamed unmolested. The wolves in particular were a terror to the inhabitants and no one ventured from their houses at night without a torch or weapon for their protection.

There were no highways. The settlers blazed their course on trees from one settlement or house to the other to insure against loss of route. For a number of years the nearest grist mill was at Sinclairville to which the settlers journeyed on horseback with their grist divided in a bag

across the horse's back in front of them. This was continued until the establishment of a mill at Clear Creek. Steadily the settlers increased in numbers and the forests receded before the settlers' ax. The fertile fields of the hills and valleys gradually became the scenes of waving grain and grazing herds. In March, 1830, the first Town meeting was held in Mr. **Frost's** log house. Mr. **Frost** was chosen Supervisor of the Town in 1834-5, and for many years held the office of Justice of the Peace. He was the first postmaster of the town. In early life he learned the trade of shoemaker and followed that occupation for some time after coming to Cherry Creek.

He lived in the Village until about 1839, when he purchased a large farm, since known as the **Frost** farm, situated in a pleasant valley about two miles northwest of the Village on the Fredonia road. Owing to the numerous settlers in the valley from the State of Vermont, it was named Vermont Hollow and still bears that name. Hither he came with his large family and by their combined industry the forests gradually gave place to cultivated fertile fields which annually yielded a moderate support for them. His near neighbors were Anson **Newton**, Harvey **Putnam**, Ira B. **Turner** and Elkeny **Steward**. His children having grown to manhood and womanhood, and excepting the youngest, established homes of their own, about 1865 he returned to the village where he passed in peaceful happy retirement the remainder of his declining years.

Mrs. **Frost** was born in the State of Rhode Island June 25, 1803, and died at Cherry Creek May 27, 1889, surviving him 17 years. Of their marriage twelve children were born. Francis S. January 15, 1821. She became the wife of Charles A. **Spencer** of Cherry Creek, who yet survives her in the 90th year of his age. She died on August 24, 1893. Fidelia, May 11, 1823, and died March 27, 1857. She became the wife of Judson **Sheffield** of Cherry Creek, who survived her until February, 1900. Admiral, June 19, 1825, and died in infancy. George N. October 21, 1826, now living in the Town of Cherry Creek. Ruth Eliza, December 30, 1829, and became the wife of Chandler **Johnson** of Charlotte, N.Y., and both of whom are now living in Lowell, Michigan. Mary A. April 6, 1831, and became the wife of William **Mount** of Cherry Creek and now lives with her husband at Corry, Pennsylvania. Sarah Emeline, December 22, 1833. Married Rev. William U. **Edwards**, and now resides with him in the Village of Kenmore, N.Y. Charles L. July 10, 1836, died June 19, 1862. Lilis, January 4, 1838, became the wife of Alonzo **Edwards**, then of Ellington, now of Forestville, N.Y. Isbond H. August 6, 1841, and now living in Cherry Creek, N.Y. Isadore, January 23, 1844, became the wife of Walter E. **Griswold** of Charlotte, N.Y., and now living with her husband at Kenmore, N.Y. Helen J., October 15, 1851, became the wife of Cyrus A. **Mount** of Cherry Creek, and died March 18, 1881.

Mr. **Frost** was born of Colonial ancestors at the time when the Revolutionary fathers, fresh from victorious fields were cementing the discordant states into a harmonious union in a lasting republic. He personally knew many of the veterans of the Revolution. In his early boyhood days he learned from them and from his parents' lips the cause, the story of the terrible struggle for the equal rights of men. Into the very fiber of his existence was born and bred an intense love of justice and of country and the eternal principle "that all men are created equal." During his long and useful life, if malice he had at any time, it was in the defense of these principles. For these principles, he early enrolled himself as a volunteer soldier in the defense of his country, in the struggle of 1812, when but 17 years of age. He suffered the hardships and dangers of a campaign and at the close of the war received an honorable discharge.

He was a man of strong earnest conviction. He loved truth for its own sake and combated error wherever he found it. One might as well have attempted to stay the thunderbolt as to

attempt to stay his utterance of what he believed just. Human slavery disturbed the peace and threatened the destruction of the Union from its foundation until the surrender of **Lee** at Appomattox Court House. It existed as a compromise with crime. It poisoned all the sources of power. To this crime ambition bowed and politicians, statesmen, judges and clergymen were parties. The real friend of humanity was denounced as an enemy of his country. From the time Mr. **Frost** became old enough to take an interest in public affairs, he was uncompromisingly opposed to the institution of slavery. His entire being revolted at this monster. No subject of public concern affected him more intensely. He believed that this government founded on the equal rights of men could not long survive with slavery.

His opposition to it was outspoken, earnest, and active. He denounced the Atherton Gag, advocated the Willmot Provision [Wilmont Proviso], strenuously opposed the Fugitive Slave Law, resisted the appeal of the Missouri Compromise, fought the Lecompton Usurpation and earnestly combated the whole Kansas Nebraska invasion. He believed Mr. **Seward** in his appeal to the higher law written as Lord **Broghan** said by the finger of God in the hearts of men and deeply deplored the fact that **Webster** in his vain hope of reconciling the sections had fallen below that level. He early allied himself with the Abolition party, in fact when it required no small degree of moral courage to take position in the ranks of that despised political sect.

His great opportunities for usefulness to the cause in his poverty, in the wilderness of Western New York were small compared to those of the leaders of the cause, but he belonged to, and for a long time was actively engaged in the services of the 'Underground Railroad,' so-called, and many a fugitive slave was assisted by him on his secret journey in his effort to escape bondage to Canada. In his house he sheltered and fed alike the traveler and the fugitive slave.

His early educational advantages were limited to a few weeks of schooling. But he availed himself of every opportunity afforded from the rugged school of experience to gain information and knowledge. His bump of common sense was large, his judgment good, his heart generous and his conclusions always just. He was widely read in the current literature of his day and kept abreast with public thought on all important questions. He was a believer in the Christian religion and a member and deacon of the First Baptist Church. In this belief he was as sincere and earnest as in any of the most positive convictions of his life. He died October 5, 1872, at his house in the Village situated just across the street west from where he settled, and is sleeping today in the shadow of a beautiful maple by the side of wife, children and grandchildren in the windowless palace on the hill in full view, from the site of his pioneer home and the home of his latest berth.

(9) Whitney, Oliver, and Alice V. Peterson, *French Creek: 150 Years*, Roger L. Westley, Clymer, New York, 1979. (Map abbreviation: Whitney and Peterson)

1842 – Marvin House [was] built by Orlando **Durkee**, a hotel keeper, at the intersection of Marvin and Belknap Roads. It was a prominent stagecoach stop between Erie and Jamestown, known too, as the Half-Way Stop. It was also the site of the Underground Railway during the Civil War era. [It was still standing in 1979] though vacant since 1972.

(10) *The Fredonia Censor* December 21, 1881

Westfield – David **Hall**, one of the pioneer settlers of Westfield, died there last week. He was one of the earliest members of the Baptist church and was known far and near by his good

works. For many years his house was an “underground railroad” station and many a panting fugitive slave he helped to liberty....*Westfield Republican* [newspaper].

(11) *The Westfield Republican* 28 June 1939, 5 July 1939, and 12 July 1939

[An excerpt from “Where Stands Our High School” by Elijah W. **Holt**].... The High School site, up to about 1855, was owned in parts by Samuel **Bissell**, Jonathan **Cass**, James **McMahan**, Chandler **Persons**, and Mrs. Austin **Smith**, daughter of Mr. **McMahan**. All of such former owners were well known pioneer residents of Westfield. Tradition relates that one of them, which one I never heard, lived in a house approximately where the school stands; and that perhaps before such house was built another house was erected at the northeast corner of the Main and Pearl streets, within the present school grounds. The last mentioned structure was later moved northerly to its present location; and is today the first house north of Main on the east side of Pearl [perhaps *9 Pearl Street*, no longer existing in 2013]. It is perhaps the oldest building still in existence in the village, being considerably over one hundred years of age. It is related that it was at one time a church or meeting house and at another time a wool warehouse. Finally it became a two-family dwelling, and for many years was occupied by the coachmen and gardeners employed by later owners of the premises — of which the school property is now part. Which one of said original owners of the land constructed the building I am unable to ascertain. At this stage of our history tradition again supplies us with interesting data. Westfield, for years before the Civil War, was strongly pro-abolition. Being on the direct line of travel between the southern slave states and Lake Erie, many escaping slaves passed through it to reach a safe haven in Canada. It is positively known that the Rossiter **Johnson** home on Clinton street [approximately *42 Clinton Street*, no longer existing in 2013], next to the present Methodist parsonage, was, for a long time, one of the “underground railroad stations” where slave refugees were hidden until, under cover of dark nights, they could be taken to Barcelona and transported across the lake beyond danger of recapture. And the tradition referred to is that one of the two houses above mentioned within the school site was also an underground station. It is a commonly known fact that the house which originally stood on the site of our high school [approximately *191 East Main*, no longer existing in 2013] was a station for runaway slaves. The story goes that upon one occasion the law officers went to such house to capture a slave there in hiding; but that the owner of the house, learning that the officers were coming, hid the slave under a load of hay, which he nonchalantly drove out of his yard while the outwitted officials searched his premises. He sold the hay at Barcelona to the skipper of some vessel bound across Lake Erie, and hay and slave were both loaded on the ship together. It is not reported whether the hay brought a good price or any price at all, but that the slave reached his goal and gained his freedom is vouched for. It would be interesting to learn which of the former owners names was the hero of the episode described; but as those aiding escaping slaves were breakers of the law and subject to heavy penalties, they usually kept their identities hidden, and the tradition recited has been careful not to fix the credit of the exploit upon the owner who should be eulogized. Doubtless, however, the story is literally true, as are many others of similar nature. In 1855 Dexter **Knowlton** moved to Westfield, purchased the school site and adjoining land, and erected what later came to be known as the “**Holt**” house [125 East Main, no longer existing in 2013]. Mr. **Knowlton** lived in the property only a few years; but the **Holt** family occupied it for a long

period and it came, therefore, to be generally associated with the latter family's name. The premises acquired by Mr. **Knowlton** extended along Main Street from Pearl Street easterly to the homestead then owned by Watson **Hinkley** [143 East Main, still standing in 2013] now owned by Mrs. Georgia **Skinner Darby**. Recently Mrs. **Darby** has acquired that part of the original tract lying east of **Holt** street, including the brick carriage house, which was formerly part of the **Knowlton** and **Holt** grounds. Such grounds, as occupied by the **Knowltons** and **Holts**, extended northerly to Washington Street, and eventually to Jefferson Street. All of the tract back to Washington Street, covering some seven acres in extent, comprised the improved premises maintained for many years in connection with the **Knowlton-Holt** property which I am about to describe. The architecture of the house built by Mr. **Knowlton** conformed to no particular period; but its designer evidently had a conception of both outer and inner beauty and simplicity. It was a structure pleasing and stately, void of the prevalent features of ornateness at that time too frequently in evidence. Prints of the house may be found in atlases published in Chautauqua County from the 50's to the 70's; and the writer has supplied with this article a photograph taken shortly before the house was destroyed by fire, which he hopes it may be possible to print herewith....

(12) *Jamestown Morning Post* July 18, 1923

The following story which was of deep interest to many people in this section of the county appeared in the "Saturday Times," then published in Jamestown, in the issue of July 18, 1891, written by its editor, Palmer K. **Shankland**, from facts gathered from many of the older residents of Busti:

*It is forty years ago that a most exciting incident [occurred], connected with the fugitive slave law, and which aroused the people to a high state of excitement. Harrison **Williams** was a runaway slave, who, with six other slaves had escaped from Virginia, and through the assistance of the "underground railway" made their way North and found refuge and shelter among the zealous and earnest members of the Abolition party who resided in the vicinity of Busti. **Williams** was about 20 years of age For four or five months he resided with a colored family by the name of **Storum** on a farm a short distance from Busti Corners, and during these days of fancied security he would often meet his refugee companions, who were quartered on vicinity farms, and give exhibitions of Old Virginia song and dance, which highly interested and entertained those of the neighborhood who were permitted to be present.*

*One morning in the fall of the year 1851 three covered carriages were driven into Busti, and proceeded direct to the home of Levi **Jones**. The occupants of the carriage were Deputy Sheriff **Cotton** of Fredonia, R. D. **Warner**, a liveryman, and a man known as "Jockey" **Wood**, both residing in Jamestown, and who had been engaged to assist the deputy sheriff. They were accompanied by three Virginians on the trail of runaway slaves. Levi **Jones** was an earnest Abolitionist, and at the time was sheltering one of the runaways, known as Sam Smith.*

*As it happened, when the party arrived at **Jones'**, the colored boy, Sam **Smith**, had gone away some little distance to a neighboring farm. A hasty search of Jones premises was made by the party, and failing to find any of the negroes they drove rapidly to **Storum's**. Harrison **Williams** was milking a cow in the barn when he was surprised by seeing his old master and the officers approach. No opportunity permitted for him to escape by running, so quietly had the approach of his captors been made. He was seized and an attempt made to put handcuffs upon*

him, when **Marinda Storum**, a grown-up daughter of **William Storum** made a fierce attack upon the party in an attempt to rescue and give **Williams** a chance to get away. She fought with the fierceness of one struggling for life, and before she could be repelled her clothing was nearly torn from her person. In the meantime **Henry Storum** and another colored man named **Lewis Clark** discovered the purpose of the capturing party. There was another runaway slave in the house at the time and they hastily assisted him to escape by a rear door, and then rushed upstairs in the house to obtain a couple of guns. But the captors of **Williams** wasted no time in ceremony, and after **Marinda Storum** was overpowered, **Williams** was placed in one of the carriages and the whole party were out of reach before **Storum** and **Clark** were ready for action.

The news of the slave-holders raid spread from house to house with surprising rapidity, and in twenty minutes, every Abolitionist in **Busti** knew of the outrage to their sentiment, and were aroused to the highest pitch of anger and resentment. Excited men flew from house to house calling upon volunteers for a rescue, but before any organized effort for the recapture of the colored boy could be, **Jabez Broadhead**, then a muscular and intrepid young man came dashing down to the "Corners," mounted upon a bay mare and carrying a musket in his hands. He was joined by **Norman Backus**, a cooper by trade, who seized a meat axe as his only weapon of offense, and jumping into a one-horse buggy, the two formed a cavalcade and started in pursuit of the sheriff's party, breathing vengeance and threatening to rescue the colored boy, even if it was necessary to make it a bloody encounter. Others made preparations to follow, and it is stated that the venerable **Hiram Knapp**, who is yet living, rushed over to his neighbor **Z. K. Fox**, and beseeched **Fox** to take his gun at once and join the pursuers. **Fox**, who was a moderate man, thought it would be consistent for **Knapp** to go himself, and said so. The latter replied that he had not had his breakfast, and besides he had no gun. **Fox** offered to loan him his musket, but the offer was not sufficiently tempting to be accepted, and the two neighbors failed to induce each other to shoulder arms and join in the chase.

Broadhead and **Backus** reached **Jamestown** without getting in sight of the slave-holders' party. The latter had driven through the village without detection, and taken the road leading to **Fredonia**. There was a strong anti-slavery sentiment prevailing in **Jamestown**, and its intensity was aroused by the passage of the obnoxious fugitive slave law a short time previous. When **Broadhead** and **Backus** brought the news of the slave-holders' raid, the leading Abolitionists of **Jamestown** were thrown into a ferment of excitement. Hasty consultations took place and plans were proposed to circumvent the purpose of the Southerners in taking the helpless colored boy back into bondage. **Silas Shearman** was then in the prime of his life, a man of undaunted courage and an acknowledged leader among the small band of Abolitionists of **Western New York**. He hastened to the office of Judge **Hazeltine**, in company with **Backus**, and made an application for a writ of habeas corpus, but, thinking that it might take up too much valuable time before he could get the writ, he decided to follow without. He went to **Frank Palmer's** newspaper office, where the only telegraph operator in the village was located, and sent a message to **George A. French** of **Dunkirk**, who was a prominent and zealous Abolitionist. He then went to a livery stable and secured a span of good horses and started alone in pursuit. It was surmised that the Southerners would go through **Fredonia** on their way to **Buffalo**, and **Mr. Shearman's** plan was to overtake them at the former place, secure a writ of habeas corpus from a **Fredonia** judge and effect the release of **Williams** before he could be carried out of the county. He knew that **George A. French** would arouse the friends of anti-slavery in the vicinity of **Dunkirk** and who would give him every possible assistance, and along the route the valiant members of the "underground railway" could be relied upon for any service to assist in the

recapture of the colored boy. At Stockton Mr. **Shearman** found that the slave-holders were about two hours ahead of him. They had stopped at Stockton for breakfast. His horses had commenced to show signs of fatigue, and Milton **Smith**, an Abolitionist, procured him another pair.

Driving to Fredonia, he discovered that the Southerners had taken a road bearing to one side of the village and were making a straight line for Buffalo. Mr. **Shearman** concluded to drive at once to Dunkirk, where he met George A. **French**. The latter sent a message to Abolitionist friends in Buffalo, warning them to be on the lookout, and to take prompt measures for the rescue of the refugee. Changing horses again, Mr. **Shearman** proceeded to Buffalo where he arrived a little after dark. He found that the Southerners had arrived there a short time previous and placed the negro boy in jail, in the custody of the sheriff of Erie County. The venerable Humphrey **Pratt** of Sugar Grove, who was also a member of the "underground railway" came to Jamestown in pursuit, as soon as he heard of the capture of **Williams**, and following on alone to Buffalo, where he joined Mr. **Shearman**.

Under the provisions of the fugitive slave law it was necessary for the Southerners to take **Williams** before the United States Commissioner and submit evidence that he was a runaway slave, and show their legal rights to his custody. Henry K. **Smith** was the commissioner and when the case came up for hearing before him the following day the court room was crowded with interested spectators, a large portion of whom were ardent Abolitionists who were anxious to secure the release of **Williams** if it were a possible thing. Feeling ran so high that it looked at one time as if he would be taken from his captors by force. Benjamin F. **Green**, a prominent advocate, who was afterwards a judge of the Supreme Court in this judicial district, was retained to defeat the attempt to carry the negro boy back into Virginia. He made a masterly and eloquent plea, and asked for the release of the boy on the ground that there was no complete identification or evidence to show that he was a runaway slave. Commissioner **Smith** decided in favor of the masters and gave **Williams** into their custody to be taken back South. There were angry murmurings over the decision, and Mr. **Shearman**, who was a spectator to the proceedings, was aroused to such a pitch of indignation that he denounced Commissioner **Smith** when the latter approached him after the adjournment of the court. As there was no further possibility of effecting the release of **Williams**, Mr. **Shearman** and Mr. **Pratt** returned to their homes.

Of course the capture of **Williams** caused consternation and fright among the remaining runaway slaves who were located between Jamestown and Sugar Grove. There were earnest and vigilant anti-slavery friends, like Dr. **Catlin** and Humphrey **Pratt** of Sugar Grove, John **Broadhead**, Thomas **Danforth**, Theron **Plumb**, and Levi **Jones** of Busti, Silas **Shearman** and numerous others of Jamestown, anxious to assist the refugees, but secrecy and courage were required to defeat the advantages which an obnoxious law gave to slave-holders to take possession of their slaves wherever found. The six runaways who came North with **Williams** were brought to Jamestown the same night that he was captured, and concealed in the swamp where Marvin Park now is. They remained there two or three days, then went back to Busti, staying there only two nights, and then were carried into Pennsylvania at night and concealed for two weeks, when they were quietly passed along the "underground railway" to Canada where they were safe from molestation.

A few months after the negroes had reached Canada, two of their number returned to Busti and expressed their intention of going to Virginia to try and effect the escape of their wives. They enlisted the sympathy of Elder **Burrows** of Sugar Grove, a strong Abolitionist, who determined to go South with and aid them in any possible manner in their undertaking. They went to Virginia and the negroes were recaptured by their old masters and returned into slavery,

while Elder Burrows had to exercise considerable caution and ingenuity in escaping from the angry slave-holders for the part he had taken.

Twelve years after these thrilling events had taken place, James **Broadhead**, who is now a well known and prominent farmer residing in Busti, was soldier in the Union Army stationed at Culpepper, Va. One morning he had occasion to visit the regimental quartermaster's headquarters, and there saw a contraband negro who had a strangely familiar countenance. **Broadhead** was in company with Byron **Ellsworth** and after the two had departed from the quartermaster's headquarters, **Broadhead** said to **Ellsworth** that he believed that the negro they saw was none other than Harrison Williams, the colored lad who was captured at **Storum's** in Busti. **Ellsworth** laughed at the suggestion, and said that he looked no more like Harrison Williams than a thousand others they had seen in the army, but **Broadhead** was so firmly impressed with the resemblance that he determined to go back and ask the colored man. He did so and it turned out that his surmises were correct. It was Harrison **Williams**, the runaway slave of twelve years before, captured at Busti. He was overjoyed at meeting **Broadhead**, whom he remembered well as a boy. **Williams** said that when he reached Virginia after his recapture he was severely whipped for running away, and shortly after was sold and taken into Georgia. There he remained a slave until the war broke out when he escaped into the Union lines, and at that time was serving as a hostler and servant to an officer on the staff of General **Scofield**.

The Marinda **Storum** mentioned in the second paragraph of the old Busti story, history books prove, met John **Brown** at Syracuse in 1859 and he told her about his plans to attack Harper's Ferry. She was probably the only person, outside of **Brown's** immediate officers, who knew of his plans for action at Harper's Ferry.

The Lewis **Clark** mentioned farther down in the story was the original negro about whom the character "George Harris" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written.

Commenting on the assistance given the Virginia slave owners by Deputy Sheriff **Cotton** who piloted the early party, Eleazer **Green** states that when, many years later, in 1873, **Cotton** was a candidate for the office of sheriff, he was overwhelmingly defeated by the persistence of the sentiment aroused against him because of his participation in the Harrison **Williams** kidnapping.

(13) **Anti-Slavery Society in the Town of Portland**

An excerpt from *Historical Sketches of the Town of Portland, comprising also the Pioneer History of Chautauqua County, with Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers*, by H. C. Taylor, M.D., (W. McKinstry & Son, Fredonia, NY, 1873, p.196.)

Antislavery and other Benevolent Societies have existed in town at various times. No records were kept and nothing definite can be written with reference to them. Without doubt they had their influence on the public mind and the first to some extent aided in establishing the great principles of the human liberty and civil and political equality that have since so revolutionized the sentiment of the whole country and wiped out the darkest stain upon our national escutcheon and the foulest blight upon the moral and Christian sentiment of Christendom.

(14) **An Abolitionist in Jamestown**

An excerpt from *The Early History of the Town of Ellicott, Chautauqua County, N.Y., compiled largely from the Personal Recollections of the Author*, by Gilbert W. Hazeltine, M.D. (Journal Printing Company, Jamestown, NY, 1887, pp. 348-349.)

A little more than 40 years ago a young man named **Blakesly**, a student at Oberlin college, considered it his duty to speak upon the crime of slavery during his vacation, and came to Jamestown for that purpose. He delivered three lectures at the Baptist church. There was great excitement when it was announced that there would be a lecture there upon the subject of slavery. At the conclusion a second lecture was announced for the next day. The excitement spread like wild fire. He was warned to leave town. Tar, feathers, etc., were plainly spoken of, and if he persisted, death to the Abolitionist more than hinted at. A third lecture was announced. Jamestown and vicinity was never more excited than then. On the afternoon of his last harangue the Baptist church was a dangerous place to be in. The church was crowded; more than half present were there for the lecturer's protection, but the crowd outside was double and triple of that within, gathered from all parts of the country. We believe that if some man in that excited crowd more crazy than the rest, could have reached the lecturer he would have killed him, and this was prevented by Hiram **Eddy**, who, when he left the church after the third lecture ran by his side with his right hand in his coat collar, and would occasionally give him a flying leap ahead of ten feet or more. The crowd pressing too hard, **Eddy** threw the little lecturer over a five-foot garden fence, and as he proved a good runner, was in a place of safety before the mob had realized what had happened.