

Underground Railroad LOCATIONS



Contact Us!

JACKSONVILLE AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF OUR HISTORY

MORGAN COUNTY UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Underground Railroad Committee is to promote awareness of the Underground Railroad era in Morgan County by providing research and educational opportunities. The Underground Railroad Committee is a sub-committee of the Morgan County Historical Society that was organized in 2003.

Within six months of its formation, the committee identified Woodlawn Farm as an Underground Railroad site with great potential for education and local tourism. On Dec. 29, 2003, the committee, with the assistance of the Morgan County

Historical Society, purchased Woodlawn Farm, developing the property into a living history museum to not only celebrate the courage of those involved in the Underground Railroad, but will also demonstrate what life was like on a farm in the mid-19th century. The committee also provides the education of Underground Railroad sites and their history through programs, events and tours.



For more information on the Underground Railroad or to arrange tours, call 217-243-5678 or visit jacksonvilleil.org

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Front Cover:

The Underground Railroad by Charles T. Webber,
courtesy of the Cincinnati Art Museum

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1 THE FORMER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

520 W. College Ave.

On Dec. 15, 1833, 32 men and women founded the Jacksonville Congregational Church. All holding anti-slavery beliefs, the church was soon dubbed “the Abolition Church” – not always a compliment in such a divided community. When the Underground Railroad became active in town, Deacon Elihu Wolcott was known as the “chief conductor.” Many members of this church bravely risked prison and fines by actively providing shelter, clothing, food, and transportation. The Congregational Church is recognized by the National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.



2 BEECHER HALL

Illinois College Campus • 310 Lockwood Place

Illinois College was founded in 1829 by the “Yale Band,” a group of Yale theology graduates who left Connecticut to found churches and a college on the western frontier. These young men were all opposed to slavery. The Rev. Edward Beecher was a good friend of the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy; together they founded the first Illinois Antislavery Society in Alton. After Lovejoy was murdered by a pro-slavery mob in 1837, students held a massive protest near Beecher Hall. Students, professors, and trustees of Illinois College all were active in the Underground Railroad. Beecher Hall and Illinois College are recognized by the National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.



BEECHER HALL AT ILLINOIS COLLEGE

3 WOODLAWN FARM

1463 Gierke Road

This farm was settled in 1824 by Michael Huffaker and his wife from Kentucky. Huffaker employed four freed Black families for whom he provided cabins. In 1840, he built the home that still stands on the property. People were accustomed to seeing Black workers on the farm and didn’t suspect this was a safe house for freedom seekers. Today, the farm is operated by the Morgan County Historical Society, which offers living history tours for guests and groups. Follow Morton Avenue east over Interstate 72 and underneath the railroad underpass to Arnold Road. Turn left and follow the signs to Gierke Road.



4 DR. BAZALEEL GILLETT HOUSE

1005 Grove St.



Construction began in 1833 and was finished shortly after buying it. Dr. Gillett, a physician who helped during the cholera epidemic of 1833, purchased the house in 1838. Dr. Gillett also helped found

Trinity Episcopal Church and was one of the trustees of the Female Academy, which merged with Illinois College in 1903. As an abolitionist, he allowed freedom seekers to hide in an abandoned cabin on his 10 acres of land. One story tells of three women who were hiding in the shed and were rescued by Prof. Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Illinois College.

5 ASA TALCOTT HOUSE

859 Grove St.

Now home to the Jacksonville African American History Museum, this was the home of Asa and Marie Talcott, founding members of the Congregational Church. Asa Talcott was also a bricklayer and plasterer. The home was built in 1833 with additions completed in 1844 and 1861. Benjamin Henderson, a free black man



and important conductor of the Underground Railroad, stated Asa Talcott was among those he could count on for help whenever he needed supplies for the freedom seekers. One story from February 1844 states an escaped slave was put in a haystack of Talcott’s barn while authorities searched for the fugitive.

6 HENRY IRVING HOUSE



711 W. Beecher Ave.

Henry Irving moved to Jacksonville in 1842 and was an active member of the Congregational Church. His obituary from the Jacksonville Daily Journal states, “For a

number of years after he came to this city, he had the honor to belong to the brave band of Abolitionists who did so much to help fugitive slaves to freedom... His house was more than once a refuge to the freedom seekers.”

7 AFRICA IN JACKSONVILLE

In the 1800s, most of Jacksonville’s Black population lived in a part of town known as Africa. The area was bordered by West Beecher Avenue (then known as College Street), South West Street, Anna Street, and South Church Street. Here lived Ben Henderson, famous for his work in the Underground Railroad, and the Rev. Andrew W. Jackson, pastor of Mt. Emory Baptist Church. In 1860, Africa had 156 residents. Many were former enslaved people who helped shelter freedom seekers on their way north.

8 PORTER CLAY HOUSE

1019 W. State St.

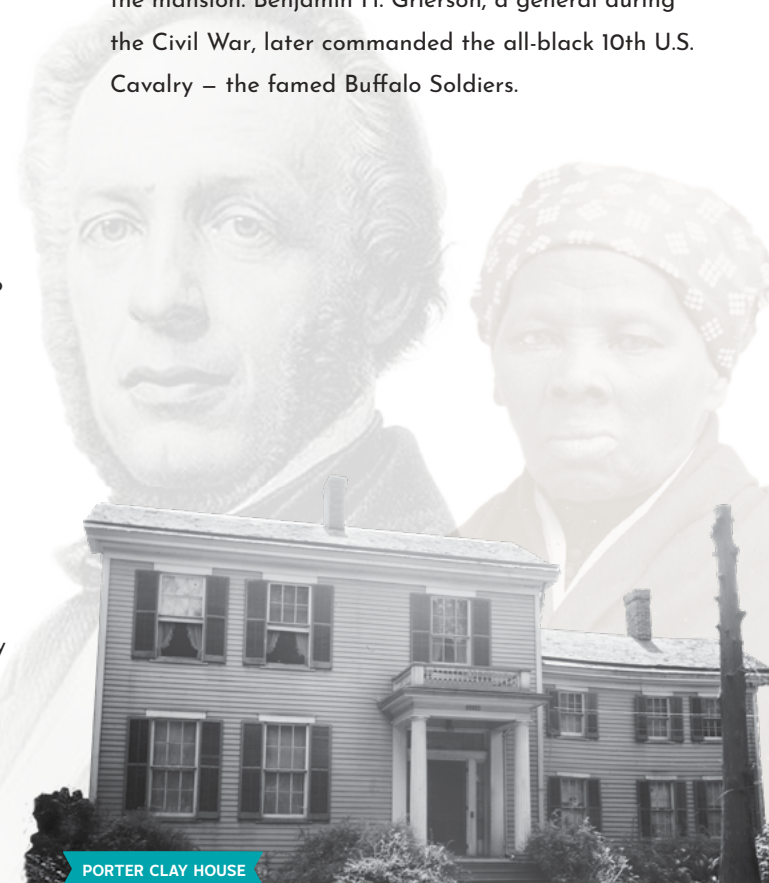
The home was built in 1834 on six acres of land owned by Elizabeth Hardin Clay, who had married Porter Clay, a brother of abolitionist Henry Clay – evidence of the divided stances not just throughout the federal and state governments, but within families too. Mrs. Clay came from Kentucky with two young, enslaved people, Emily and Robert Logan. After living a while in Jacksonville, the young people learned Illinois was a free state. Fearing Mrs. Clay would send them back into slavery, they fled the home and hid with friends in the

neighborhood known as Africa. Robert was re-captured and sent back to the South while Emily was hidden by friends in the Congregational Church until her freedom was granted by the Supreme Court.

9 GENERAL GRIERSON MANSION

852 E. State St.

Garrison Berry owned a small brick home that originally stood on this property. One night, he provided shelter for Emily Logan, who had just escaped from Elizabeth Hardin Clay’s home. The property was later purchased by the Grierson family and the original brick house was incorporated into the mansion. Benjamin H. Grierson, a general during the Civil War, later commanded the all-black 10th U.S. Cavalry – the famed Buffalo Soldiers.



PORTER CLAY HOUSE