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WYANDOT, SHAWNEE, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN RESISTANCE
TO SLAVERY IN OHIO AND KANSAS

by

Diane Miller

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: History

Under the Supervision of Professor William G. Thomas III

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2019

WYANDOT, SHAWNEE, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY IN OHIO AND KANSAS

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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From the colonial period, enslaved Africans escaped bondage. Colonial records and treaties reveal that they often sought refuge with Indian tribes. This resistance to slavery through escape and flight constituted the Underground Railroad. As European colonies developed into the United States, alliances of subaltern groups posed a threat. Colonizers and settlers aimed to divide and control these groups and arrived at the intertwined public policies of African chattel slavery and Indian removal. Tribal abolitionism and participation in the Underground Railroad was more pronounced than scholars have recognized and constituted an important challenge to the expansion of slavery.

Encounters between fugitive slaves and Indians occurred along the frontier of territory settled by whites. In the Northwest Territory, freedom seekers crossing the Ohio River from Kentucky met tribes such as the Wyandot and Shawnee. Sometimes they joined the tribes, and sometimes they passed through on their way to Canada. Historical accounts document Africans living amongst both the Wyandot and the Shawnee and help provided by tribes to escaping bondsmen. The Northwest Territory did not remain the frontier for long. By 1826, the Shawnee removed from Ohio to Kansas. The Wyandot held on longer and were the last tribe to remove in 1843. In Kansas, the tribes were again on the frontier. A familiar pattern developed of fugitives seeking refuge in Indian territory in Kansas.

Missionaries and Indian agents assigned to tribes in Kansas facilitated pro-slavery incursions. Methodist Episcopal missionary to the Shawnees, Thomas Johnson, for example, used enslaved labor at the school he established for tribes in the region. Some tribal leaders adopted the practice, but most members resisted. This internal struggle became a major front in the national debate between abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates on whether the federal government could limit slavery in new territories. The Wyandots intensified their opposition to slavery through the period of Bleeding Kansas, joining forces with Free State proponents. Through their activism, the tribes helped exclude slavery from Kansas.

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DEDICATION

To all who made the perilous journey to freedom, and to all who helped them.

They have been my inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I scarcely realized the journey I would be on when I returned to graduate school in 2005, twenty years after receiving my masters' degree. During these years, I worked for the National Park Service (NPS) where I was privileged to manage the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF). Learning from researchers and descendants who held memories of their communities' involvement with the Underground Railroad, I was struck by how these stories were often dismissed as myths. The research and documentation that I reviewed in my site visits told a different story. Motivated by a desire to see this local research taken more seriously, I returned to school. Perhaps, I felt, I could bridge a gap between the scholarly community and the avocational historians. Along the way, I gained knowledge to help contextualize the local stories.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Professors Jeannette Eileen Jones and Douglas Seefeldt (now at Ball State University) who both advised me until I reached candidacy. Dr. Seefeldt's enthusiasm for my work in public history helped my transition back to academia. Dr. Jones' steady and pragmatic guidance kept me focused on my goals. I could not have made it through the beginning of my program without their encouragement.

Professor William Thomas guided my dissertation work. I want to thank him for his patience and encouragement when my progress stalled. His guidance and insights on my topic contributed greatly to this project. The opportunity to work on the program committee for the Organization of American Historians 2018 conference with Dr. Thomas and his colleagues was an honor and pleasure that I will always value.

The University provided a supportive environment for the completion of my dissertation. I want to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Professors Katrina Jagodinsky, Jeannette Jones, and Ken Price. Because I moved to Delaware in the middle of my project, I was unable to interact with my committee members as much as I would have liked. I appreciate Dr. Price's willingness to join the committee at the end of the process after his colleague Dr. Susan Belasco retired. Dr. Belasco's early enthusiasm for my work helped motivate me. The history department supported my research with travel funds. This allowed me to access repositories in Ohio and Kansas at a time when I could not otherwise have done so.

Throughout my program at the University of Nebraska, I continued to work for the NPS and manage the NTF program. I am grateful for the financial support of the agency for my studies. I have had several supportive supervisors, but I want to give special thanks to Dr. Cal Calabrese, now deceased. Cal encouraged my initial foray back to school and his irreverent spirit challenged me. From my colleagues in the NTF program and from our many partners, I continue to learn. I want to thank the original members of the team: Guy Washington, Aaron Mahr, Tara Morrison, Dr. Jenny Masur, Barbara Tagger, and Cyd Martin. Collectively, they helped form my understanding of the Underground Railroad. The many partners and members of the Network to Freedom have ignited and sustained my passion for the story. None of this NPS work on the Underground Railroad would have been possible without the vision and encouragement of former Director Robert G. Stanton. His wisdom and encouragement have been indispensable to me over the years.

My deepest thanks are reserved for Dave Smith. Dave accompanied me on research trips and spent long hours discussing our discoveries. Without his friendship, love, support, and encouragement, the past fourteen years would have been insurmountable.

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INTRODUCTION

When considering America's racial past, scholars often examine minority groups in their relationship to whites, and typically not in relation to each other. Europeans colonized and settled the Americas through the dispossession of Native land and the subjugation of enslaved Africans. Yet, much of our culture and much of our history has separated the experiences of African Americans and Indians. The colonial imperative to separate the two groups persists in separate historiographical treatment through the twenty-first century. William Loren Katz reported "odd, mixed, or confusing reactions" following his 1986 foundational publication of *Black Indians, A Hidden Heritage*. By the early 2000s, however, he noted scholarly conferences held to discuss "the new field of Black Indian studies."¹ As recently as 2006, Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland edited a collection of essays whose goal was to "articulate in new ways this space where black experience meets native experience."² Specifically, they sought to explore the convergence of key themes in African diasporic studies—"migration, freedom, citizenship, belonging, peoplehood, and cultural retention and creation" with key topics in Native American studies—"tribalism, protection of homelands, self-determination, political sovereignty, and cultural-spiritual preservation and renewal."³ Much of the scholarship on African Americans and Indians focuses on slave holding among the Five Tribes, and the resulting conflicts over citizenship of black freedmen and their

¹ William Loren Katz, *Black Indians, A Hidden Heritage*, 25th anniversary edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), xii, xv.

² Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds., *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

³ Miles and Holland, 5.

descendants.⁴ Cooperation between the groups and abolitionism have received scant attention.

Uncovering African-Native American history is especially challenging. Historical narratives written by the dominant culture have omitted African Americans and Indians. Accounts of events written by participants often leave out involvement or presence of African or Native Americans. Sometimes they are overlooked when they appear in unexpected places. For example, George Catlin, when painting Chief Osceola at Fort Moultrie in 1837, neglected to paint or even mention any of the fifty-two Black Seminoles captured with him.⁵ Artist August Schoeff painted “Six Kickapoo Indians, Chief and Family” for Maximilian, based on an 1865 albumen print of a delegation of Kickapoo to the emperor’s court in Mexico. Schoeff’s painting did not include the delegates of African descent in the center of the grouping in the albumen print.⁶ This omission serves what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor termed “manifest manners” of colonialism. Lack of representation is a form of cultural annihilation by making invisible to the process of history making, those who are not included.⁷ The western practice of privileging textual documents over oral traditions also impedes including the perspectives of African and Native Americans in the national narrative. Researching the

⁴ Sakina M. Hughes, “The Community Became an Almost Civilized and Christian One: John Stewart’s Mission to the Wyandots and Religious Colonialism as African American Racial Uplift,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 26.

⁵ Katz, *Black Indians, A Hidden Heritage*, 3.

⁶ Bethany Montagano, “Blackening out History,” in *Indivisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, 2009), 43.

⁷ Drew Lopezina, “What to the American Indian Is the Fourth of July? Moving beyond Abolitionist Rhetoric in William Apess’s *Eulogy on King Philip*,” *American Literature* 82, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 675.

interconnected history of two marginalized, orally based cultures only serves to multiply the complexity.

As the United States developed, both chattel slavery and Indian removal intertwined the fortunes of these two groups inextricably. African American historians from Carter G. Woodson in the 1920s onward have identified the intermixing of Africans and Indians as early as the colonial period. Treaty terms often included provision for tribes to return African American slaves who had found refuge among them. Tribes always denied their presence and promised to return any future fugitives though there is no record this ever happened.⁸ Whites determined to maintain control of both groups to further the goal of expanding their society into new lands. Katz suggests there is evidence that one motivation for genocidal attacks on Indians was to prevent their alliance with enslaved Africans.⁹ The brutal measures implemented in seizing Indian land and maintaining slavery oppressed both groups. But the specifics of different situations led to divergent outcomes in the relationships between Africans and Indians. In some situations, African Americans and Indians became adversaries, such as with slave holding southern tribes or Buffalo Soldiers in the Indian wars of the late nineteenth century. In other circumstances, the two became allies, such as when tribes assisted or adopted self-liberated slaves.

Slavery was a contradiction at the heart of the founding of America. For the country “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created

⁸ Kenneth W. Porter, “Relations between Negroes and Indians within the Present Limits of the United States,” *Journal of Negro History* 17, no. 3 (July 1932): 308.

⁹ Katz, *Black Indians, A Hidden Heritage*, 5.

equal” was built upon the labor of millions of enslaved people. To justify this system, its protagonists claimed that it was a natural state for African Americans who had neither the ability nor the motivation to live independently of their masters. Frederick Douglass, however, incisively questioned “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”¹⁰

This contradiction was not completely lost on the Founding Fathers, according to Nicholas Guyatt. Products of the Enlightenment, they avoided the temptations of prejudice. Rather, they justified their policies as helping non-white people to become civilized and Christian. These ideals, however, were tempered by the reality confronting the new republic. From its beginning, the U.S. had large numbers of African Americans and Indians within its population. This posed the important question of how to incorporate (and control) these disparate groups. The possibility of integration and absorbing them biologically into the white population through intermarriage proved unrealistic and threatening to many. Contacts between Indians and frontier settlers demonstrated to corrupting influences of alcohol, violence and land seizures. White reformers believed that non-whites could only achieve their potential and equality, therefore, by separation. This belief led to the complementary movements for black colonization and Indian removal.¹¹

¹⁰ Frederick Douglass, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (speech, July 5, 1852), <http://masshumanities.org/programs/douglass/speech/>.

¹¹ Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 3–9.

Reformers, white and black worked against these policies, though with little agreement over goals and tactics. Many who opposed slavery focused on stopping the spread of the institution to new territories but were not inclined to challenge it where it already existed. Prior to 1830, the ideas of gradual emancipation and colonization of freed slaves in Liberia dominated the anti-slavery movement. Colonization appealed to those who may have abhorred slavery but did not support equal rights for blacks or those who were threatened by the presence of a free black population. African American abolitionists played an important role in challenging slavery as part of an interracial movement calling for immediate abolition and extension of civil and political rights to blacks. As lecturers, preachers, writers, newspaper publishers, and activists, African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, William Wells Brown, Sojourner Truth, Henry Highland Garnet, and Martin Delany, among others, agitated for an end to slavery and equal rights. Many abolitionists favored non-violent activism and moral suasion to achieve their goals. Some, however, urged political action or willingly broke the law to support the efforts of fugitive slaves to gain freedom.

Free blacks chafed under harsh Black Codes, but many understood that the colonization movement undercut their claims for the rights of citizenship. Observing the removal of tribes from their homelands, they drew a distinction between compulsion and self-determination. As people born and raised in America, they claimed their birthright citizenship entitled them to the same privileges and immunities as white Americans. Through the black convention movement, free blacks pushed back against colonization

and advocated for equal rights. The Indian removal project sent a clear cautionary sign of the possibility of enforced colonization.¹²

While free blacks were fighting legal and political battles for their rights, enslaved blacks were resisting their status. Of all the means of resistance, the one that alarmed slave holders the most was escape. Stealing oneself belied that myth that African Americans could not act or organize on their own and that slavery was a benevolent institution. Abolitionists used the testimony of escaped slaves to stir anti-slavery outrage.

Traditionally, the Underground Railroad has been understood as an organized effort by white religious groups, often Quakers, to aid helpless, enslaved African Americans. Indians are completely missing from the narrative. Historians typically date its beginning to the 1830s. Northern abolitionists were the heroes of the story—benevolent protectors of the enslaved African American—while Southerners were vilified. The North Star guided fugitives to Canada, or at least to northern free states, where freedom lay. The literature on the Underground Railroad has focused on individual actions in connection with journeys to freedom. The potential for organized networks and concerted action was generally dismissed.

Yet, the Underground Railroad at its core was the resistance to enslavement through escape and flight. African Americans self-liberated wherever and whenever they were held in bondage. While the term was not applied until the 1830s, the activity itself began from the earliest colonial era—enslaved Africans did not wait until railroads and their related terminology in the nineteenth century to self-emancipate. By placing the

¹² Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 35–49.

beginning of the Underground Railroad in the 1830s, when whites became actively involved, centuries of help to fugitives have been obscured. The accepted narrative of the Underground Railroad obscures the central role of African Americans themselves and assistance and shelter provided by Indians. The Underground Railroad is a story of self-emancipation and migration. Singly or in small groups, enslaved people began this journey unaided, and some completed it without help.

The efforts of thousands of enslaved men and women to liberate themselves, and of those who provided them with assistance, formed a resistance movement that had a critical part in driving the nation to Civil War. Fundamental to the Underground Railroad is the drive of human beings for freedom and self-determination. Toward this end, some enslaved people resisted by escaping and seeking a place where they could live freely. They went in any direction where freedom might be found, not just to the north. Crossing international boundaries to other nations where slavery was no longer legal was one strategy. Some freedom seekers settled in remote areas, such as swamps or the frontier. Native nations played an important role in these scenarios.

Following the Civil War, as the nation adjusted to a new society without slavery and struggled to make sense of the War's carnage, it became fashionable for abolitionists to publish reminiscences about their Underground Railroad exploits.¹³ Notable publications in this period included *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (1876) and *The Underground Railroad* (1872) by William Still, as well as a number of slave narratives

¹³ Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2015), 11; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

by fugitive slaves. Both Coffin and Still based their publications on diaries they had kept during their involvement with the Underground Railroad. Not surprisingly, both works characterized the Underground Railroad as a reflection of their authors. Coffin, a white Quaker from Indiana and Ohio nicknamed “President of the Underground Railroad”, focused on his “labors of a lifetime in behalf of the slave, with the stories of numerous fugitives who gained their freedom through his instrumentality.”¹⁴ Even from this subtitle, Coffin clearly conceived of fugitive slaves as requiring assistance to succeed in their freedom quest. Upon adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution, Coffin “resigned his position” as president of the Underground Railroad, noting

The title was given to me by slave-hunters who could not find their fugitive slaves after they got into my hands. I accepted the office thus conferred upon me, and had endeavored to perform my duty faithfully. Government had now taken the work of providing for the slaves out of our hands. The stock of the Underground Railroad had gone down in the market, the business was spoiled, the road was of no further use.¹⁵

Coffin placed the white abolitionists squarely in the center of the Underground Railroad and signified a structured, organized operation. While not minimizing the dedication of white abolitionists to the cause of freedom for the bondsmen, African Americans played a critical role in self-liberating and in supporting their brethren’s journeys.

¹⁴ Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad: Being a Brief History of the Labors of a Lifetime in Behalf of the Slave, with the Stories of Numerous Fugitives Who Gained Their Freedom through His Instrumentality, and Many Other Incidents* (Cincinnati: Western Tract Society, 1876), title page.

¹⁵ Coffin, 712.

William Still, in contrast, placed the fugitive slave at the center of the story in his 1872 publication *The Underground Railroad: A record of facts, authentic narrative, letters, & C., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their efforts of Freedom, as related by themselves and others, or witnessed by the author; together with sketches of some of the largest stockholders, and most liberal aiders and advisers, of the road.* Still was free-born to parents who had been enslaved. While his father was able to purchase his freedom, his mother made the heart-wrenching decision to escape, leaving two of her four children behind. Decades later, William Still was working at the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia when he heard his long-lost brother seeking information about his parents. He resolved to record the details of the fugitive slaves that he interviewed through his work as secretary of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee in order to help reunite other families. No doubt due to his personal connection to these stories, Still hid his diaries rather than destroy them after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. In 1872, at the request of the Society, he published his book based on these notes. Still illuminated the circumstances and agency of these freedom seekers, yet he also described the involvement of whites and blacks who were active in the movement.

Both Coffin and Still portrayed the Underground Railroad based on their personal involvement with the work and their publications reflected their realities. Published about a decade following the Civil War, they each were undoubtedly also influenced by the filters of memory and the question of what role African Americans would have in the political life of the nation. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, as Civil War

veterans associations were flourishing, abolitionists and Underground Railroad activists had their own project of remembering and telling their exploits. The chief audience for much of this remembrance were their families and communities. A number of participants passed knowledge of their exploits to younger generations at family gatherings in the tradition of African griots. Elders sometimes had their young family members repeat the stories or even write them down to ensure that they had the details correct. Some wrote their memoirs directly and these still remain in family papers or the records of local historical societies. A notable example of this occurred when a family in Kansas was cleaning out the attic of an elder who had passed away. Among his belongings they found a short hand written paper detailing his activities with the Underground Railroad in Ohio and Indiana. Not knowing what to do with the document, they sent it to the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office which forwarded it to researchers in Madison, the community described in the narrative. This document helped to make sense of historic figures and events which the researchers had been struggling to connect.

Operations of the Underground Railroad often were not recorded in sources that historians have traditionally privileged, such as government documents, correspondence, and newspapers. Incidents and events that were recorded in court documents and newspapers have been overlooked or not understood in their full context. The story of the Underground Railroad lived on in the memory of families and communities across the country. Inspired by William Still and writing in the early 1880s, Quaker physician Robert C. Smedley gathered material for an article on the operation of the Underground

Railroad in Chester County, southeastern Pennsylvania. The quantity of information led to a book based on interviews and correspondence with participants and “by the families having immediate knowledge of the transactions.”¹⁶ Noting that many of the participants had already died, Smedley was motivated to expand his original project so that their actions

should not be allowed to die with the times in which they lived. Many who had given largely of secret aid to the fugitive, had already passed away, and soon there would be none left but their descendants to tell of the perils and privations they endured to relieve and set free a ‘brother in chains,’ while they were confronted by a Government, and surrounded by a people adverse to negro liberty.¹⁷

Smedley has been criticized for emphasizing the role of Quakers, minimizing the involvement of African Americans, and not utilizing documents such as court records or newspapers.¹⁸ As Smedley was a Quaker and further, not a historian, this was hardly surprising. Smedley did, however, understand that the Underground Railroad was rooted in the actions of families and faith communities, and that uncovering the networks meant interrogating those sources.

The first scholarly effort to examine the Underground Railroad was undertaken by Wilbur Siebert, an Ohio State University professor working with his students. Beginning in the 1890s, Siebert and his students collected a vast array of correspondence, interviews, manuscripts, student papers, maps, photographs, and other materials related to the Underground Railroad, drawn from informants who had participated in or witnessed

¹⁶ Robert C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, Stackpole Books, 2005 with introduction by Christopher Densmore (Lancaster, PA: John A. Hiestand, 1883), 12.

¹⁷ Smedley, 9–10.

¹⁸ Smedley, ix.

the events. Compiling the reminiscences from participants, witnesses and descendants, Siebert created detailed maps of Underground Railroad routes, and lists of participants. He wrote and published two books based on these materials: *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898) and *Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroads* (1951). More importantly, his collection of research materials is housed in the archives of the Ohio Historical Society and is a vital resource for modern research on the Underground Railroad. While Siebert's work is not definitive, it remains one of the most systematic and largest studies of the Underground Railroad ever conducted. Siebert's informants were mainly white, leading to significant gaps in his understanding and portrayal of the Underground Railroad. The role of the African American community is under-represented and the Native American connection is almost completely absent.

Common wisdom relegates the study of the Underground Railroad to the realm of folklore because so much has been based on memoirs and oral testimony. This secret, illegal activity was thought to leave few documents which prove it existed. To some degree, this characterization is true, and the documents that are easily found for other topics are not present in great abundance for the Underground Railroad. Examining the Native American connection with this history is especially difficult, given the oral nature of both African and tribal cultures. While it is difficult to document the Underground Railroad and we will never know many of its secrets, it is possible to investigate. Much like a detective or lawyer, it involves corroborating disparate pieces of evidence to build a case.

By the mid-twentieth century, scholars began dismissing accounts of Underground Railroad activities as largely myth and hyperbole. Since much of what had been written relied on the testimony of participants and their descendants, critics characterized it as self-aggrandizing or the product of faulty memories. Because fugitive slave laws made this activity illegal, participants were often inclined not to write or speak openly about it. Some even deliberately destroyed letters or other documents cataloging their activities. In the case of African and Native American involvement, the oral natures of both cultures also affected the amount of written materials available. The Underground Railroad, common wisdom held, was illegal and secret and so therefore, could not be known.

Privileging written documentation over oral testimony contributes to the absence of these groups in the national narrative. Written sources and government documents sometimes impart a sense of accuracy that they do not contain. Census records for example, are only as accurate as the information provided to the census taker. For example, African American residents in New York prior to the Civil War provided different places of birth than they did after the war. Racial categorizations in census records are also problematic as they often depend on the census taker's visual assignment. Among Muscogee Freedmen in Oklahoma, for example, the census might record individuals who were full siblings, born from the same two parents, under different racial categorizations depending on their skin color. Historians need to scrutinize written documentation as closely as oral accounts.

Oral traditions are often an important tool for uncovering Underground Railroad history. Skeptics dismiss oral testimony as unreliable and self-serving. Such can be the case. Carefully analyzed and weighed along with other evidence, however, it can be useful. Many Underground Railroad oral traditions are merely community memories widely circulated with few specific details and unknown origin. Some, however, have a genealogy that can be traced to the originator as a participant in, or investigator or witness of, the events. They have been passed primarily through vertical transmission from one generation to the next, often in a very deliberate and almost ritualistic fashion. These surviving oral accounts have preserved their integrity as evidenced by accuracy, completeness, and retention of the originator's values. While there may be inaccuracies, typically they have an element of truth and specific details that can be sorted out and corroborated through other evidence. This is the starting point for further investigation.

Building a case for Underground Railroad involvement starts with creating a profile of the individuals or groups involved. For example, some families today may claim an Underground Railroad heritage though further investigation reveals their ancestors to have been slave owners. While this inconsistency may not preclude Underground Railroad involvement, it makes it less likely. More often, though, specific oral traditions are supported by evidence of abolitionism, specific connections to other known Underground Railroad operatives, or membership in churches of abolitionist Christian denominations. These associations can be documented through genealogical research, census records, letters to family members or associates, journal entries, newspaper accounts of events, court records of fugitive slave cases, membership in anti-

slavery societies, signing anti-slavery petitions, and similar sources. A preponderance of consistent evidence can support information from oral traditions or help interpret veiled references in written documents.

Many researchers investigating claims of Underground Railroad association have adopted a tool known as the “Wellman scale.” Judy Wellman has conducted several cultural resources surveys of sites related to the Underground Railroad, African American life, and abolitionism in New York. To test likely involvement in the Underground Railroad, Wellman and her team assessed each site according to a five-point scale. A level five site or person had conclusive evidence of involvement with strong primary source evidence of Underground Railroad activity. Level four sites and people were likely involved. Direct primary evidence may be lacking, but considerable secondary evidence or specific oral traditions showed Underground Railroad activity. Sites and people identified as level three had a good chance of involvement with some indication of abolitionist sentiments but no direct evidence of taking part in the illegal activities of the Underground Railroad. Level two indicated a possible connection, but no corroborating evidence. They categorized some sites or people as level one showing that there was evidence to believe Underground Railroad associations were unlikely.¹⁹

Underground Railroad skeptics often focus on the illegal nature of the activity and consequent lack of written documents to suggest that this history is unknowable. But this illegal activity resulted in court cases related to enforcement of the fugitive slave act.

¹⁹ Judy Wellman and Tanya Warren, “Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1860” (Waterloo, NY: Seneca County Historian’s Office, 2006), 7.

Records of these cases and civil claims for losses of enslaved property are compelling evidence, sometimes including detailed testimony. Government actions such as treaties and legislative records are another source of information. More broadly, the implications of the illegal nature of the activity did not always mean that operatives only knew others in their immediate vicinity. Some participants operated within a network of extended family and church connections—the people they knew best and could trust the most. For this reason, family history and genealogy are often the most useful tools for exploring Underground Railroad activities. Wyandot abolitionist Abelard Guthrie, for example, was first cousin to John Todd, a well-known Underground Railroad conductor in Tabor, Iowa. Several missionaries and teachers among the tribes in Kansas were known Underground Railroad conductors, such as Quaker Henry Harvey (Shawnee), Baptist Ira D. Blanchard (Delaware), and Congregationalist Elvira Gaston Platt (Pawnee)

Larry Gara, in his seminal 1961 work *The Liberty Line*, argued that much of the depiction of the Underground Railroad should be classified as folklore, rather than history. Gara astutely credited fugitive slaves themselves with agency in effecting their escapes. He also emphasized the role of the African American community, both slave and free, in supporting fugitives. Gara took issue, however, with portrayals of the Underground Railroad as organized. He concluded that there was not much support for the existence of a well-developed network as the abolition movement was too fractured for such organization. Most abolitionists preferred to focus on legal means of securing freedom for the enslaved or buying freedom for fugitives. “Contentiousness was quite common in antislavery circles and it is hardly probable that abolitionist groups which

were so often in disagreement with each other were at the same time joined in a secret and nationally organized conspiracy to aid fleeing slaves.”²⁰

Gara’s work, with its focus on the agency of fugitive slaves and dismissal of the Underground Railroad as more folklore than history, seemed to close the discussion on this topic. Few scholars addressed their attention to the Underground Railroad in the decades following *The Liberty Line*. Among descendants and in the communities where this history occurred, however, the memory of the Underground Railroad endured. Charles Blockson, whose great-grandfather James escaped from Seaford, Delaware, recounts “Though forty years have passed, I remember as if it were yesterday the moment when the Underground Railroad in all its abiding mystery and hope and terror took possession of my imagination” as he listened to his grandfather tell the story of his father’s escape from slavery.²¹ Discovering a copy of William Still’s book, Blockson found the stories of his great grandfather and another relative who had recounted their journeys to Still. Thus inspired, Blockson devoted years to studying the Underground Railroad and visiting historic sites around the country. National Geographic commissioned him to write an article on the topic, and the resulting 1984 cover story re-introduced the public to the inspirational story of the Underground Railroad. Blockson followed this article with a book in 1987 that, like Still, focused the story on the fugitive slaves themselves. Undue focus on assistance provided by white abolitionists, Blockson

²⁰ Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, reprint edition 1996 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1961), 73.

²¹ Louie Psihoyos and Charles L. Blockson, “The Underground Railroad.,” *National Geographic Magazine*, July 1984, 3.

observed, “tended to make the people whom the Railroad was designed to aid—the fugitive slaves—seem either invisible or passive and helpless without aid from others.”²²

Blockson’s observation points to a key question in considering the Underground Railroad—whether its defining feature is the fact of someone escaping or whether they were offered assistance. Railroad terminology began to be applied to this phenomenon in the 1830s as the railroad industry exploded across the American landscape and the abolitionist movement became more organized and vocal. Historians have often cited the 1830s as the beginning of the Underground Railroad. Yet, enslaved African Americans had been escaping bondage—and receiving assistance—for decades by this time. Their self-liberation, whether aided or not, is the essence of the Underground Railroad. By “stealing themselves,” enslaved people were, in fact, violating Fugitive Slave laws. Refocusing the study on the quest for freedom opens new lines of inquiry about the experiences and motivations of those who escaped, where and how they travelled, who may have helped them, and where they settled to create a life in freedom. This broader understanding of the Underground Railroad has informed the National Park Service’s National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF), a program established by Congress following a study conducted under the guidance of a federal Advisory Committee chaired by Charles Blockson.

As communities have documented their sites, stories, and heroes through the NTF program, the database of verified Underground Railroad sites across the country is growing. An important tool in uncovering this history remains the oral traditions passed

²² Charles Blockson, *The Underground Railroad: First Person Narratives of Escapes to Freedom in the North* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987), 4.

down through the generations. These oral testimonies, closely evaluated and corroborated with written evidence, reveal an intricate web of resistance. While some participation was serendipitous and fleeting, the picture that emerges is one of local and regional networks operating within the trusted circle of extended families and faith communities. These networks ebbed and flowed over time and space. At its root, the Underground Railroad was both a migration story and a resistance movement. African Americans were key participants in this work, both as self-liberators and as operators helping others to freedom. Rather than focusing on specific routes and stations implied by the railroad metaphor, analyzing the Underground Railroad through the evolution of networks and the variety of activities involved in supporting the movement, yields a more complete understanding.

With the passage of the Network to Freedom Act and the opening of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, renewed interest in the Underground Railroad resulted in a resurgence of scholarly and popular interest. Studies of the Underground Railroad in this period have generally assumed a local or regional focus. Keith Griffler's *Front Lines of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* and Cheryl LaRoche's *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance* both focus on the important role of the African American community in the north to the freedom movement. Crossing the Ohio River—the River Jordan—was an important milestone on the journey to freedom. Yet, the border regions were hotly contested and populated by both abolitionists and many pro-slavery advocates who enacted harsh Black Codes.

Often, the road to freedom for enslaved African Americans lay beyond the reaches of the state or federal governments. Fugitives escaped to the frontier during the colonial period when Europeans only controlled a portion of the continent. Indians, therefore, played an important, though little examined role. Oral and written African American traditions include the possibility and hope of such a safe haven as a predominant theme.²³ Historic accounts recognize the Five Tribes in the southeast, notably the Seminole, as offering refuge to escaping slaves. These societies, however, adopted slavery themselves by the nineteenth century.²⁴ Much of the literature about the interactions of Native Americans and African Americans in the ante-bellum period has focused on slave holding among the Five Tribes of the southeast. Scholars such as Annie Abel, Theda Perdue, Tiya Miles, Patrick Minges, Kevin Mulroy, Claudio Saunt, Barbara Krauthamer, and others have studied this history. The relationship of northern societies to African Americans and slavery has not received similar attention. While scholars have recognized abolitionist support for Indian rights, they have scarcely acknowledged abolitionism among the tribes themselves.²⁵

As tribes encountered the expanding European colonial and United States presence on the continent, they also encountered an increasing number of African

²³ Miles and Holland, *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*, 11.

²⁴ Katz, *Black Indians, A Hidden Heritage*, 54–56. Although the Seminoles nominally adopted slavery, Black Seminoles lived in separate villages and were only obliged to pay a tax to be used for the common defense. By the nineteenth century, Black Seminoles played critical roles as interpreters and advisors. They were a key part of the society's resistance in the Seminole Wars.

²⁵ Natalie Joy, "The Indian's Cause: Abolitionists and Native American Rights," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 2 (2018): 215–242. Joy argues that abolitionists linked their cause with the antiremoval movement, identifying the federal push for removal as support for expanding and protecting slavery. The inconsistency between anti-removalism and colonization revealed racist attitudes among some northern reformers.

Americans in their midst. Native societies, African Americans, and whites all interpreted their interactions through their own cultural and cosmological perspectives. Each made choices about the best strategy for surviving and thriving amid this cultural contact. The response of the Wyandots and Shawnees to this interaction varied from that of the southern tribes which embraced slavery. The tribes that settled in the Ohio valley brought their historical experiences of displacement and their own cosmological beliefs to bear on their relations with African Americans. By the time these tribes settled what became the Northwest Territory, their populations had been considerably depleted. Violence and disease had decimated the tribes and by the mid-eighteenth century, they sought to replace the deceased with newcomers. Captives were sometimes notoriously tortured and killed. Sometimes, however, the tribes adopted them and placed them in loving families.

Adopted captives and their descendants often became important members of their tribes. When Colonel Henry Bouquet entered Ohio in 1794 to retrieve captives from the French and Indian Wars, the Indians parted from the adopted members of their household with great sorrow and reluctance for, “once an Indian has adopted a captive, the captive was henceforth treated as a member of the family and not as a slave.”²⁶ Reverend James Finley, a Methodist Episcopal missionary who worked with the Wyandots described them as a humane and hospitable nation, citing as evidence they adopted most of their prisoners into their families. He identified that a greater part of the Wyandots were mixed with whites, as the descendants of Adam Brown, William Walker, Sr., Isaac Zane,

²⁶ Cyrus Cort, *Col. Henry Bouquet and His Campaigns of 1763 and 1764* (Lancaster, PA: Steinman & Hensel, 1883), 67.

and Robert Armstrong had become the strongest part of the nation.²⁷ Rather than following the emerging European conceptions of race, they held to Native American values of kinship and culture as determinants of belonging to the tribe. As Theda Perdue found among tribes of the Southeast, despite their mixed ancestry, these descendants lived deeply embedded in the life and culture of the tribes, not on the margin torn between two cultures.²⁸

Africans and Native Americans married and had children together, mixing the two groups in kinship networks.²⁹ Native societies when encountering Europeans and Africans focused on their inherent similarities and humanity, rather than physiognomic differences. In the early colonial period, mixing among European, Africans and Indians was common, particularly when they were enslaved or indentured together. Successful Underground Railroad work often relied on extensive kinship or faith-based networks. Children of mixed heritage could extend alliances and networks between the two groups.

While both were subjugated, the legal standing of blacks and Indians were different, complicating relationships between them. During the colonial period, indigenous people were enslaved, along with Africans. But their status as sovereign entities was recognized in the Constitution. They were regarded as “domestic,

²⁷ Reverend James B Finley, *History of the Wyandott Mission, at Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (Cincinnati: J.F. Wright and L. Swormstedt, 1840), 45.

²⁸ Theda Perdue, *“Mixed Blood” Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002).

²⁹ I. King Jordan, Lavanya Rishishwar, and Andrew B. Conley, “Native American Admixture Recapitulates Population-Specific Migration and Settlement of the Continental United States,” *PLoS Genet*, no. 15(9): e1008225 (September 23, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgen.1008225>. This analysis of genetic admixture between Native American, Europeans, and African Americans revealed a significant reservoir of Native American ancestry outside of recognized indigenous communities. The African descended group in the study data showed 85% African ancestry, 14% European, and 1% Native American. Western European descendants show extremely low admixture, with a median value of 99.8% European ancestry.

dependent nations,” an identity based on “a political status distinct from race.”³⁰ As such, they could be removed from their homelands by treaties, but not enslaved. Africans and their descendants, however, were never regarded as sovereign and were always vulnerable to enslavement. Unions between free and enslaved partners were fraught with difficulties as the enslaved partner did not have control over their circumstances. Offspring from mixed unions, particularly those who were racially ambiguous, began to bring freedom suits to challenge their enslavement.

In his essay in Martha Hodes’ *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, Daniel Mandell chronicles Indian and African American intermarriage in colonial New England through the story of Sarah Muckamugg. A Nipmuc Indian woman from Massachusetts, Sarah married and had children with two African American men, one enslaved and one free. These marriages demonstrate how alliances formed between Indians and blacks who shared a marginal status. Social customs and laws forbade both groups from marrying white partners. In the face of native de-population, and small numbers of blacks, both demographically imbalanced, few suitable partners were available. Indian women and African American men increasingly formed unions. These marriages were deemed desirable by the women looking for security and the best opportunity to care for their family in a changing world. Black men could be ensured their children were born free. Marriage to native women also gave them access to land and resources.

³⁰ Ariela Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 22.

These strategic alliances, however, were strained by the pressures of different cultural expectations of the matrifocal native peoples and the patrifocal Africans, intensified by their marginal status and lack of control on matters such as living arrangements. While the men who married into the native groups were not completely accepted into the community, their children who were raised and acculturated into the group—no matter their skin or hair color and “blood quotient”—were considered as full members.³¹ As the number of “mixed race” children increased, however, native communities faced the concern of children choosing between the ethnicities of their parents and the need to retain control over communal property and tribal sovereignty. Long after the colonial period, these dynamics can be seen among the Wyandot and Shawnee, both of which had significant numbers of members with mixed heritage.

For a century or more following initial European settlement, “race blindness” minimized social barriers that might inhibit these personal unions. The concept of immutable differences among the “races” evolved through the crucible of colonization of the Americas and the project of Europeans to delineate social boundaries. When Europeans colonized this continent, they justified their “right” to subjugate other people and lands through a religious lens of bringing Christianity to pagans. This rationalization became untenable in African slavery when the enslaved converted to Christianity. New

³¹ Daniel R. Mandell, “The Saga of Sarah Muckamugg: Indian and African American Intermarriage in Colonial New England,” in *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, ed. Martha Hodes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 83.

categories based on the “scientific” concept of race solidified by the eighteenth century. European categories based on biological differences supplanted religious justifications.³²

The increasing numbers of people with mixed heritage further complicated the conception of race, identity, and citizenship within tribes and the way in which tribes were regarded by outsiders. Mikaëla Adams, in *Who Belongs? Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* identified a key marker for tribal sovereignty as the right to decide who can claim citizenship, which she described as a “political act of self-determination.”³³ The criteria for citizenship evolved over time as tribes asserted a particular identity or strove to protect their resources. Prior to the nineteenth century, tribes determined membership based on kinship ties, shared cultural practices and a common language.

Rather than having their identity proscribed for them by whites, Nancy Shoemaker argues that Southeastern societies referred to themselves as “red” in contrast to the Europeans identity of “white”, and signifying the social relationships between the two groups. For the Cherokees, for example, these colors represented different moieties, each having specific roles within tribal life. The “white” chief was the civil leader while the “red” chief was the head warrior. White chiefs oversaw community resources, mediated differences and advocated peace. Viewed from this perspective, Indian leaders willingly accepted the role of “children” of the white “fathers”, as expressed in numerous treaties and negotiations. Following the American Revolution, however, the Cherokees

³² Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 631–36.

³³ Mikaëla M. Adams, *Who Belongs? Race Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

rejected these meanings and attempted to negotiate new understandings to counter America's burgeoning conquests.³⁴ Pan-Indian movements such as Tecumseh's and Pontiac's drew on the increasing sense of Indians as a distinct race in conflict with encroaching whites.

During the nineteenth century, historical developments and contacts with Americans led to shifts in the conception of citizenship. Increasingly, and particularly during the Jim Crow period, Indian identity and tribal citizenship came to be based on race. Their political status as sovereign nations came to depend on whites perceiving them as "Indian," resulting in strategic decisions about who could claim citizenship. Formerly fluid approaches to inclusion became more rigid as blood quantum and race came to overshadow other aspects of identity such as culture and affiliation. In time, the "possibility of mixed, intermediate, and hybrid identities" declined, forcing individuals into subjective categories and setting blacks and Indians against each other politically.³⁵ By the late nineteenth and twentieth century, tribes asserted their native identity by distancing themselves from blacks, in order to protect their fragile position in society.³⁶

³⁴ Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," 637–43.

³⁵ Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 12, 196.

³⁶ Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odysseys: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Tribal Recognition Policy in Three Louisiana Indian Communities*, *Narrating Native Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Both Klopotek and Maynor Lowery examine twentieth century efforts by groups that remained in the South following removal to gain federal recognition. Acknowledgement of their status as sovereign nations depended on whites recognizing them as "Indian." The process, while it can galvanize a community around shared history and purpose, ultimately involved determining who was not included as a member. In the bipartite racial universe of the Jim Crow South, the tribal groups distanced themselves from African ancestry, thereby reinforcing a racial hierarchy of white supremacy. The seeds of this sort of polarization were sown in the nineteenth century

This dynamic would play out among the Wyandot following the Civil War as the tribal council determined who retained citizenship status within the nation.

Inclusion of non-dominant groups as central participants in the story is a key element of social history. Rather than being a side-bar or after-thought, non-elites have become actors within the national narrative. Several studies in the 1990s examined the dynamics of frontier encounters between Europeans and Americans with Indians. Perhaps the most influential of these was Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. White's ground-breaking study centered on the frontier cultural "borderland" and the resulting "negotiations" that guided the encounter. White looks past the Anglo-American colonial experience to examine the interactions of Native Americans with the French and British empires. He found that they created new cultural forms by blending aspects of both Europeans and Indians. This "middle ground" allowed Europeans and Indians to interact and solve problems through a new "cultural logic". While ostensibly placing the Indians at the center of the story, White drew primarily from European sources which he attempts to read from a Native perspective. Jane Merritt, a student of White's at the University of Washington followed his example in studying the "cultural crossroads" in Pennsylvania between the British Empire and Iroquoian Confederacy and the English, German Moravian, Scots-Irish, Delaware and Shawnee settlers that inhabited the area. In *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1760*, Merritt argued that contact offered possibilities for creating new cultures through cooperation and negotiation of differences. To her analysis of Moravian mission records, colonial

records, treaties and accounts of negotiations between whites and Indians, Merritt adds genealogical charts of frontier families to show interracial ethnic associations.

Gregory Dowd turned his focus to the struggle for Native American unity in the trans-Appalachian West in *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*. As the American colonies were moving toward war with England, a diverse group of tribes, including Delawares, Shawnees, Cherokees, and Creeks were escalating their own struggle against colonial intrusion. In a study that transcended the boundaries of a single tribe or colony, Dowd detailed the interactions amongst the tribes as they responded to Anglo-American encroachment on native lands. He argued that the native response became a struggle between nativists who sought to revitalize traditional rituals and beliefs and accommodationists who sought peaceful relations and cooperation. Dowd's argument incorporated the importance of religion within political and military discourse and highlighted the native quest for self-determination. As does White, Dowd used government and missionary records to tell the story of the Native Americans.

Another important study of Native Americans in the colonial period explored the cultural transformation among the Creeks. Claudio Saunt's 1999 book *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*, documents the profound change the Creeks underwent from a hunter, gatherer society to a slave owning, agricultural "civilized" culture. The "new order" featured class and gender conflict, cultural disharmony, abuse of power, resistance, and civil war. Mixed race children of European men and Creek women became the agents of change as they were exposed to European influenced training and imposed new ideas on their tribal

community. Societal disarray culminated in the Redstick War of the 1810s pitting traditional-minded Creeks and African American slaves against the wealthy elite. Like White, Merritt, and Dowd, Saunt based his analysis on European sources. Saunt adds Spanish colonial records to his extensive archival research.

Saunt, White, Merritt, and Dowd all encountered a challenge that most social historians face when trying to give voice to the subaltern. Many of society's dispossessed groups do not leave the types of source material that historians traditionally analyze. In trying to give voice to the experience of these groups, scholars have adopted a variety of tactics. A common approach is to examine traditional sources from the perspective of the minority group, placing their experience at the center of the analysis. Pierre Bourdieu in his 1972 *Outline of a Theory of Practice* cautions against the difficulty in such an exercise. People within a society conduct their lives according to practices which will yield the most benefit. These may not be apparent to an historian or anthropologist observing the culture and the strategies may only be knowable to members of the group. The scholar, Bourdieu asserts, must pay close attention to his own internalized structures in order to isolate them from the group under consideration. Bourdieu remained skeptical about the possibility of success.

Herman Bennett challenged historians to understand subaltern groups as acting within their own cultural framework. Indian and African American identity should not be understood solely as resistance to oppression. Regarding the experiences of subaltern groups in the context of race relations with the dominant group privileges European values over the experiences and African and Indian cultural traits. These groups were not

solely on a quest for racial and social mobility within white society, but were seeking validation and status within their own communities. The cultures of subjugated people and their experiences interacting with the dominant power should be at the center of inquiry. He sought to study the formation of the free black community in Colonial Mexico for its own sake, not in opposition to the dominant white population or as resistance or cultural survival. Bennett saw instead a “cultural vitality” and found value in understanding how “individuals mediated their social experiences through friends and family, sex and marriage, orthodoxy and sin,” thereby affording a new conception of the subaltern experience.³⁷

Survival as individuals and as a people required creative strategies of identity and cultural adaptation based on the specific situations confronting these groups. Indians and enslaved Africans were not monolithic, and brought variations of cultures and cosmologies to the process. This study utilizes a “situational” approach to examine the interactions of two tribes of the Northwest Territory—the Wyandots and the Shawnees—with African Americans, slavery and the Underground Railroad.³⁸ It focuses on the period when the tribes had settled in the area that became the state of Ohio and their subsequent removal beyond the Mississippi River to Kansas Territory. They navigated these liminal spaces as they struggled to adapt to changes forced by encroaching white society. Working in the arena of public history, I balance community conversations and

³⁷ Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 3.

³⁸ Sarah Knott, “Narrating the Age of Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January 2016): 3–36. Knott articulates a “situational” form of historical narrative that is “marked by a heightened emphasis on place and mobility and a concern for people acting politically and locatedly (that is, from the vista of their own location).”

archival evidence. Combining public history and social history, this study focuses on experiences and actions of historic individuals in the situations they encountered.

The Wyandots were considered by the other tribes as the principal tribe in the region, a relationship that continued in Kansas. A tri-racial town, Quindaro, established on Wyandot land during the Bleeding Kansas period, was associated with Underground Railroad. The Shawnees were less visible about their response to slavery. Slave holder Thomas Johnson, the most prominent missionary to the Shawnees in Kansas, started a multi-tribe manual labor school on the Shawnee reservation. Under Johnson's influence, the Shawnee Mission became the site of early pro-slavery political activity during Bleeding Kansas. Other missionaries to the Shawnees, particularly Quakers, reinforced the anti-slavery impulses of many tribal members. There is evidence, for example, that the Shawnees engaged in sheltering fugitive slaves before their arrival in Ohio.

Recovering these stories, particularly in trying to convey Native and African American perspectives poses challenges in finding sources. This study draws from traditional sources such as treaties, historical accounts by missionaries and Indian agents and annual reports filed by Indian agents. The minutes of treaty negotiations recorded in the American State Papers provide a glimpse of Native peoples' perspectives. Personal accounts, such as in slave narratives, captivity narratives and memoirs add further detail. The accounts gathered by Underground Railroad scholar Wilbur Siebert in the late 1890s fall into this category. Oral tradition interviews with descendants provide perspective and context. Collectively, this evidence illuminates abolitionist sentiments and some degree of involvement with the Underground Railroad.

When the tribes removed to Kansas, more records become available. The Wyandot, in particular, was a highly literate tribe. A number of whites had been incorporated into the tribe. The mixed-race offspring were sometimes highly educated. For example, John McIntyre Armstrong, whose father was a kidnapped white man but whose great-grandfather was Wyandot principal chief Tarhe, was trained as a lawyer. He married Lucy Bigelow, the daughter of a Methodist Episcopal missionary, and she was adopted into the tribe. This couple were strong abolitionists and left many written documents. Correspondence, journals, and court records contribute to documentation from this period. By the period of Bleeding Kansas, territorial newspapers, Wyandot Indian Council records, and petitions from Shawnee leaders protesting against Thomas Johnson are also available.

As with the rest of the country, the tribes were divided over slavery. Both tribes had leaders who became slaveholders, likely in their quest to become “civilized” through adopting white agricultural practices. The influence of pro-slavery Indian agents and missionaries also had an effect. Their role in bringing slavery into Indian territory, ostensibly under federal sanction, exacerbated the debate over whether freedom was national and slavery had to be affirmed by specific local laws, or the reverse. Resistance to pro-slavery missionaries assigned to the Wyandots in 1846 led to church burning and violence. Despite the pro-slavery influence of officials and some Wyandot and Shawnee leaders, the people remained largely anti-slavery. The Wyandots in particular agitated on behalf of keeping slavery out of Kansas Territory. When Kansas Territory was opened to white settlement, slavery had failed to take root.

This study follows the intersection of the Wyandots and Shawnees with slavery. It begins by outlining the history of the tribes as they came to be settled in the Northwest Territory and their early engagement with the Underground Railroad as white society encroached on their territory. Next, an overview of the Underground Railroad in Ohio and Kansas provides the context within which tribal responses to slavery occurred. The study then traces the interactions of the Wyandots and Shawnees with slavery, abolitionism, and the Underground Railroad. This section is divided into three chronological chapters. The first details the situation in Ohio until the Shawnees were removed in 1826 and the Wyandots in 1843. Second, the study examines the years in Kansas while it was still Indian Territory, prior to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lastly, it covers the period of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War.

CHAPTER 1—CREATING A “GEOGRAPHY OF RESISTANCE”:¹ THE
OHIO VALLEY TO 1843

European colonization of North America devastated Indian populations and dislocated them from their traditional territories. As the colonies and then the United States took hold of land, existing conflicts among tribes were exacerbated. Competition to control fur trade with the Europeans contributed to tribal rivalries. As tribes fought each other and tried to adjust to smaller territories and rampant illness brought by the exposure to new diseases, they migrated to new lands. Some tribes, such as the Wyandots and the Shawnees, had tribal histories of migration for hundreds of years before the 1830 Indian Removal Act. They came to be settled in the Ohio Valley by the eighteenth century where they encountered African Americans who were enslaved in Virginia and Kentucky. The story of this migration impacted these interactions.

When Champlain arrived in Canada in 1608, he found the Iroquois at war with the Algonquian nations that surrounded them. Though also an Iroquoian nation, the Wyandots “were the head and principal support of the Algonquian confederacy.”² They were considered the strongest and oldest of all the northern tribes. Neighboring tribes looked to them for counsel and in most cases their decisions were considered final.³ Their leadership and influence were not challenged except by the Iroquois Confederacy. The

¹ Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014). LaRoche combined archeological evidence, geographical analysis, and oral histories to describe the cultural landscape of the southern edge of the free north as a “geography of resistance.”

² Albert Gallatin, *A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America* (Worcester, MA, 1836), 69.

³ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 44.

Wyandots, also known as Hurons, fought the Senecas for most of the seventeenth century. The Delawares, who considered themselves the grandfathers of the Lenape tribes considered the Wyandots their uncles. By the eighteenth century, when the Wyandots had finally settled in what is now Ohio, their right to this territory was not questioned. The Delawares, Shawnees, and other tribes who settled there, did so at the forbearance of the Wyandots.⁴ During the Revolutionary War, they were subjects of the British, and described by the Americans as the most powerful of all the British Indian allies. “This arose not so much from the numbers of their warriors, as from their superior intelligence,” which was attributed to their long association with the French.⁵ Though all tribes involved in the northwest Indian wars signed the Treaty of Greenville, “it was from the Wyandots, that the United States obtained the cession of the territory west of the Connecticut Reserve.”⁶ Missionary Reverend Finley reported that Between-the-logs, a Wyandot chief, commented that the Seneca on the Sandusky River had no right to sell the land without the consent of the Wyandots as they had only borrowed it from them. Finley noted that as a hospitable tribe, the Wyandots had allowed former enemies to settle on their lands when pushed out by whites elsewhere.⁷ They also allowed escaped slaves to settle within their territory.

Pre-contact, the Wyandots were located north of the St. Lawrence River in the area of modern-day Montreal. War with the powerful Seneca tribe, a part of the Iroquois

⁴ Gallatin, *A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America*, 68–69; Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 45.

⁵ Consul Willshire Butterfield, *Historical Account of the Expedition against Sandusky under Col. William Crawford in 1782* (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co, 1873), 163–64.

⁶ Gallatin, *A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America*, 72; Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 45.

⁷ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 45.

Confederacy, reduced their numbers and threatened their survival. Consequently, the Wyandots migrated down the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario to Niagara Falls. They soon abandoned this region when the Seneca migrated into western New York. From here they moved north and east toward Toronto where unfortunately they were still in reach of the Seneca. Moving northward again, the Wyandots settled in Huron Territory in the area between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. When the Jesuits first encountered the Hurons in the early seventeenth century, the Wyandots had already been accepted as part of the Huron Confederacy. This group, an alliance of several tribes, was aligned with the French. In 1649, an attack by the Iroquois destroyed the Huron Confederacy, killing hundreds of people and laying waste to the territory. The Huron, believing them indefensible, destroyed a number of other villages to prevent their supplies from being taken, and fled as refugees. The only group to keep their tribal organization, the Wyandots, settled on Mackinac Island in northern Michigan. This refuge was also short-lived. The Iroquois continued to push them westward until the Wyandots encountered the Sioux who compelled them to leave. In 1701, general peace was declared among the tribes, French and English. The Wyandots settled with the French at Detroit who valued their alliance and leadership against the British and their allied tribes.⁸ By the mid-eighteenth century, another group of Wyandots had also settled on the south side of Lake Erie at Sandusky Bay and further up the Sandusky River.

⁸ Robert Emmett Smith Jr, "The Wyandot Indians, 1843-1876." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1973), 8–15; Ray E. Merwin, "The Wyandot Indians," ed. George W. Martin, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1905-1906* IX (1906): 74–88; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, vol. 174, Civilization of the American Indian Series (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 29–35.

These two settlements would become important in the Underground Railroad work in the nineteenth century.

The Shawnees were constituted as a loose confederacy of five “divisions”. Intertribal warfare with the Iroquois in the seventeenth century dispersed them from the Ohio Valley. Two bands moved south to eastern Tennessee, one went east, and one moved west to Illinois. The group that went east encountered the Delaware nation prior to the arrival of the Quakers in the late seventeenth century. At the confluence of the North and South branches of the Potomac River, near what is now Cumberland, Maryland, by the 1690s, a band of Shawnees established a village, said to be led by King Opessa. The village was deserted before 1738 when it was already shown on maps as “Shawno Ind. Fields deserted.” Through at least the 1720s, Shawnees living at King Opessa's Town and neighboring sites offered refuge to fugitive slaves who had fled from their Virginia and Maryland masters. Frustrated governors of both states sought to negotiate with the Shawnees to return the runaways. Virginia governor Spotswood offered bounties of guns and blankets. Maryland's governor sent delegations to the Shawnees to negotiate the return of fugitive slaves, offering silk stockings and woolen coats.⁹ In October 1722, the Maryland General Assembly discussed the matter of Indians being allowed to harbor runaway slaves, “as the Shuannoos at this Time do and protect them under the pretence of their having set such Slaves free. This Gentlemen we look upon as a Matter of Great Importance.”¹⁰ Repeated attempts failed to return any runaways.

⁹ William B. Marye, “‘Patowmeck Above Ye Inhabitants.’ A Commentary on the Subject of an Old Map, Part Two,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 30, no. 1906 (n.d.): 126–33.

¹⁰ Clayton Colman Hall, *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, October 1720-October 1723* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1914), 431.

Scattered Shawnee bands survived by allying with stronger nations and settling on their lands. This survival strategy was compromised when British officials would buy the marginal land on which the Shawnees had settled from the allied tribes who were trying to save their core areas. By the mid-1700s, about 1500 Shawnees were pushed from the mid-Atlantic and interior south back to Ohio.¹¹ Most Shawnees lived north of the Ohio River in five affiliated but semi-independent divisions. Each division had specific responsibilities—political concerns and tribal leadership, health and medicine, religion and ritual, and war training and war chiefs.¹² Continued pressure during the Revolutionary period from Virginians settling in Kentucky and the new United States coveting the Northwest Territory pushed many of the Shawnees to migrate again.¹³ By the mid-1820s, there were Shawnees west of the Mississippi in Spanish territory, in the South among the Creeks, and also in Ohio in the Maumee Valley and around Chillicothe.¹⁴ The Ohio settlements became hot spots in the Underground Railroad.

Though the Wyandots had allowed the Shawnees to settle in land north of the Ohio River, they still claimed the land. When the U.S. government allotted that land to the Shawnees in their Treaty of 1786 following the Revolutionary War, the Wyandots pressed their claim with Governor St. Clair. The Shawnees and their allies the Cherokee, they maintained, were giving them trouble.

Nothing yet definite had been done by the government in regard to the impositions practiced upon the Wyandots, in order to find room for the

¹¹ Sami Lakomäki, “‘Our Line’: The Shawnees, the United States, and Competing Borders on the Great Lakes ‘Borderlands,’ 1795-1832,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 601–2.

¹² Colin G. Calloway, “‘We Have Always Been the Frontier’: The American Revolution in Shawnee Country,” *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 39–40.

¹³ Lakomäki, “Our Line,” 602.

¹⁴ John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20–22.

Shawnees, who, it now seems, had been restless for many years, and who, it appears, had been very troublesome to both whites and Indians, in consequence, no doubt, of their being harassed and driven from one place to another, until they were entirely destitute of a home; and to make amends for this, a measure is resorted to, to secure them a home or place to live upon at the expense of another Indian nation and not the United States.¹⁵

The Wyandots and Cherokee had become enemies in the early 1700s, as they encountered each other in the Ohio wilderness and warred with each other through the Ohio valley.¹⁶

The Great Lakes tribes, through long years of contact with the French, preferred them to the British. French missionaries and fur traders had integrated into tribal societies, creating what Richard White termed the “middle ground.” When the British took Detroit and surrounding territory in 1763 from the French at the conclusion of the French and Indian War, the native tribes faced the uneasy prospect of living under British sovereignty. England had a reputation of breaking their treaties, in contrast to the more reliable French.¹⁷ Further, the French did not send large number of people to establish settlements and farms. The tribes regarded the French as their friends and protectors. Nevertheless, they accepted overtures from the British and acknowledged the King of England as their “father.” But scarcely twenty years later, the tribes were adjusting to a new white nation when the U.S. defeated the British in the American Revolution. This

¹⁵ Henry Harvey, *History of the Shawnee Indians, From the Year 1681 to 1854, Inclusive* (Cincinnati: Ephraim Morgan and Sons, 1855), 96.

¹⁶ Peter Dooyentate Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts, and Sketches of Other Indian Tribes of North America* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co, 1870), 22–23.

¹⁷ Clarke, 43.

change was particularly troublesome for the tribes as there was little they could do to staunch the flow of American settlers coming over the mountains.

At the conclusion of the Revolution, the United States gained most of the territory east of the Mississippi River from the British. The new nation, with debts to pay and a burgeoning population, set about organizing the territory, passing the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. The fact that the land was already occupied by native peoples made settling the area problematic and forced the nation to develop a policy for managing Indian affairs. Military campaigns proved costly and not particularly effective in displacing the native occupants. Using the treaty powers granted to the president under the new constitution, Washington declared a similar practice would apply to Indians. Secretary of War Henry Knox, urged negotiation rather than war. Knox reasoned that as whites encroach on Indian lands, their game would be diminished and their hunting grounds would become less valuable. They would be willing to sell this land for a small price. Ultimately, they would be reduced to a small number or “civilized” as agriculturalists through the influence of missionaries.¹⁸ Indian agent John Johnston who spent thirty-one years among the Shawnees and Wyandots validated Knox’s approach—“If I were young, ...and once more placed in the management of the Indians, I would take for my assistants in the service none but Quakers, and with such, and just men in the administration of the government, I would want no soldiers to keep the Indians in subjection.” Johnstone looked to the fighting and battles with the Cherokee as the

¹⁸ Reginald Horsman, “American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest, 1783-1812,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (January 1961): 42–43.

consequence of military control.¹⁹ Not only would the Quakers influence the tribe through agriculture, they also held staunchly abolitionist beliefs.

Albert Gallatin articulated U.S. policy in his 1836 *Synopsis of the Indian Tribes*. A congressman from Pennsylvania, Gallatin also served as Secretary of the Treasury. He helped negotiate the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 and was a diplomat who served in both England and France in the 1810s and 1820s. Gallatin also had a strong interest in ethnography and founded the American Ethnological Society. He lauded the Cherokee as the only tribal nation that adopted agriculture over hunting as a means of subsistence, though he attributed this to the acquisition of African slaves. Recognizing that the government could neither purchase slaves for the tribes nor compel them to farm, Gallatin also placed his hopes on the influence of missionaries. Through their devotion, missionaries were the only authorities that had gained the trust of the various tribes. Gallatin advised that in addition to conversion to Christianity, the missionaries should lead the tribes to become “industrious people.” By this he meant that gender roles should conform to European patterns with men tilling the soil. Because, he conceded, it might be too late to change the habits of adults, efforts should be directed toward children who were to be taught English and manual, agricultural, skills. “Let not the Indians entertain the illusory hope, that they can persist in their habits....A nation of hunters cannot exist, as such, when brought in contact with an agricultural and industrious people”²⁰

¹⁹ John Johnston, *Recollections of Sixty Years by John Johnston, Indian Agent for the U.S. Government at Piqua, Ohio, from 1806-1853. Reprinted from Cist's Miscellany, Cincinnati, 1842, Together with Account of the State of the Indian Tribes Inhabiting Ohio*, ed. Charlotte Reeve Conover (John Henry Patterson, 1915), 44–45.

²⁰ Gallatin, *A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America*, 157–59. Gallatin seems to have overlooked the

Missionaries became key players in the American project to “civilize” the Indians. As they worked to save souls, they decimated native religious beliefs and cultures. Agricultural practices replaced traditional subsistence activities. Tribes became more vulnerable to exploitation in the process. Vine Deloria, Jr., former executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, observed “Land acquisition and missionary work always went hand in hand in American history.”²¹

Regardless of the treaties and policies of the government, settlers²² poured into the Ohio country in the 1770s and 1780s. They brought with them their agricultural practices and began re-making the landscape, transforming the earth into a commodity of farmland and grazing pastures. Artisans and craftsmen followed and a diversified economy developed. As Knox predicted, the settlers seized land that they saw as wasted, but that the Indians regarded as vital as a source of game. The conflict of these two economies led to property wars as Indians raided farms, destroying fields, livestock, and homes. The British encouraged the tribes in this activity, supplying them with guns and powder. These tactics were not successful in stemming the flow of settlers. Retaliatory raids by settler militias disrupted Indian villages, fields and livelihoods. By the 1790s, the U.S. mounted a military response.²³

It is not surprising, perhaps, that because of their landless status, the Shawnees led an alliance of tribes to defend the Northwest Territory from the rush of U.S. settlers. The

extensive agricultural improvements that the Wyandots in Ohio had made on their lands; improvements for which they were to be paid upon removal.

²¹ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 102.

²² Peter Dooyentate Clarke, a Wyandotte, in his 1870 history of the tribe refers to these settlers as “squatters” for settling on unceded land.

²³ William H. Bergmann, “Commerce and Arms: The Federal Government, Native Americans, and the Economy of the Old Northwest, 1783-1807,” *Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 2 (June 2006): 488.

vision of the confederation was for shared tribal ownership of the land north of the Ohio River. This dream died, however, when the tribes were routed by the U.S. army at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. All of the participating Wyandot chiefs, except Tarhe, were killed and the Wyandots' Deer clan was decimated. That same year, British support ended when they signed Jay's Treaty with the U.S. The Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1795 by the Wyandots, Shawnees, Delawares, Ottawas, and eight other tribes, ending the war. Tarhe was the recognized leader of the Indians, and his son-in-law Isaac Zane interpreted. Tarhe advocated for peace with the American settlers. Most of the territory in Ohio was ceded to the U.S. in exchange for annual annuity payments in goods and money.²⁴ When the Wyandots traveled to Detroit to accept their annuity payments, they would bring fugitive slaves with them.²⁵ The Shawnees lost their political center at Chillicothe, which fell south of the dividing line.

Despite traditions among the tribes of sharing land with allies, the Treaty of Greenville undermined this custom. Federal policy encouraged Indian nations to treat their homelands as tribal possessions rather than to control them collectively. They felt this would weaken native unity and make it easier for the government to acquire their land. In the face of mounting pressure and competition for land, Indians were divided on the best strategy for preserving their autonomy. Some tribal leaders, anxious to protect their own nations began to claim exclusive tribal ownership of specific territories, though the Treaty of Greenville did not set tribal boundaries. In a written address to the treaty

²⁴ Lakomäki, "Our Line," 603.

²⁵ Genevieve Eicher, interview by Diane Miller, March 20, 2012; Genevieve Eicher, interview by Henry County Historical Society and Charlotte Wangrin, April 2003, <http://henrycountyhistory.org/GEicher.html>.

council, the Wyandot, Shawnee and Delaware chiefs requested the Americans to draw boundaries between the nations: “We wish to inform you of the impropriety of not fixing the bounds of every nation’s rights: for, the manner it now lies in, would bring on disputes forever.” The chiefs wanted to know how far they might extend their claims without encroaching on others.²⁶ Other leaders advocated tribal unity. Shawnee chief Red Pole, who arrived at the council half way through the two-month proceedings, reminded the assembled leaders during treaty negotiations that “The Great Spirit gave us this land in common. He has not given the right to any one nation, to say to another, this land is not yours, it belongs to me.”²⁷

Following the Treaty of Greenville, the Shawnees disbursed again. One group promoted consolidation as a path to survival. They established Wapakoneta, a new town just north of the Greenville treaty line, and began to advocate for establishing Shawnee land boundaries around their new town. In this way, they sought security from displacement. Wapakoneta and the land that the Shawnees and their allies the Delawares sought to claim laid within the territory of the Wyandots and Miami. This boundary was not established for the Shawnees. U.S. officials realized, however, that by tying land to only one nation, land cessions could be accomplished more easily. Clearly bounded territory became a tool for conquest, as treaties did not have to be negotiated with multiple tribes.²⁸

²⁶ “Minutes of a Treaty with the Tribes of Indians Called the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawanese, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pattawatamies, Miamis, Eel River, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Kaskaskias, Begun at Greenville, on the 16th Day of June, and Ended on the 10th Day of August, 1795,” August 10, 1795, 575, American State Papers: Indian Affairs 1:564- 83, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsplink.html>.

²⁷ “Minutes of a Treaty,” 581.

²⁸ Lakomäki, “Our Line,” 611–12.

The landscape and economy of Ohio changed rapidly in the decades following the Treaty of Greenville. Post roads crossed the territory, with almost 6000 miles of roads connecting Pittsburgh to the Mississippi River and Tennessee to Ohio and Indiana by 1815. Unlike the French and British before them, American settlers cut down forests, plowed large tracts for farming, and hunted game. Agriculture blossomed with corn, wheat and rye following the river valleys and roads. Cattle more than supported the population and the surplus was driven to eastern markets. Millions of dollars of trade goods were sent through the port at New Orleans prior to the Louisiana Purchase and accelerated after that. As white settlers were transforming the countryside, the government tried to influence tribes to follow suit.²⁹

Shawnee leaders at Wapakoneta embraced the civilization program, although on their own terms. In 1802 they requested part of their tribal annuity to be delivered in farming tools and livestock. They recognized that technological innovations could help their people adapt to the changing environment and loss of hunting areas. But farming remained the domain of females of the Shawnee tribe following their traditional gender roles, rather than the purview of the men. In 1807, tribal leaders allowed the Quakers to open a missionary and model farm to assist them with new farming strategies and building infrastructure. Quaker missionary Henry Harvey, an Underground Railroad activist, served the Shawnee in both Ohio and Kansas. Using their own funds, the Quakers built a grist and saw mill and purchased agricultural implements and livestock. They also established a school.³⁰

²⁹ Bergmann, "Commerce and Arms," 489–90.

³⁰ Johnston, *Recollection of Sixty Years*, 44, 58.

The success at Wapakoneta drew many Shawnees. By 1809, about a quarter of all Shawnees lived at Wapakoneta or its two satellite towns, Lewistown and Hog Creek.³¹ While the government regarded the adoption of agriculture as a means of assimilation, the leaders at Wapakoneta were motivated by the desire for self-sufficiency and autonomy. Additionally, gathering the Shawnees to a collective homeland resonated with historical and spiritual impulses. In their creation story, the Creator placed them at the center of the universe where they had the responsibility to uphold the cosmic order through rituals.³² Their vision for Wapakoneta allowed them to fulfill this role.

Not all Shawnees accepted this approach. The Black Bob band migrated across the Mississippi River to Cape Girardeau in what is now Missouri. Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa founded a rival town near Greenville in 1805 and invited Shawnees and other Indians. He and his brother Tecumseh led a nativist movement that criticized the accommodationists and sought to create a separate Native society. Scholars such as Richard White and Gregory Dowd focused on 1815 as the point when trans-Appalachian tribes lost their struggle to resist the onslaught of the expanding American nation. Following this, White's "middle ground" eroded when the Indians no longer had the power to force whites into mutual accommodation. Dowd pointed to spiritual based political resistance as native prophets interwove new beliefs and rituals in traditionally sanctioned ways into native religious systems. He framed the native response to Anglo-American expansion as a contest between nativists who sought to revitalize rituals of

³¹ Lakomäki, "Our Line," 609.

³² Lakomäki, 613–14.

power based on Native American cosmology and accommodationists who sought peaceful coexistence and assistance from the Euromericans.

When war broke out again between the Americans and the British, many native tribes saw an opportunity to stem American expansion. Tecumseh with his multi-ethnic followers had continued their resistance to American encroachment. They actively sought support from the British in Canada to fight the Americans and U.S. expansion. In 1808, Tenskwatawa moved his base to Prophetstown along the Tippecanoe River in Indiana. Tecumseh traveled among the tribes, including visits to tribes south of the Ohio, trying to build support for his pan-Indian movement. Following two failed meetings with the governor of Indiana Territory, William Henry Harrison, the U.S. placed troops at Harrison's disposal. Harrison moved the troops toward Prophetstown hoping to provoke an encounter. The Battle of Tippecanoe took place on November 6, 1811. Harrison declared his troops victorious and had them destroy Prophetstown. With this loss, Tecumseh regarded alliance with the British as even more important in his campaign against American expansion. Some suggest this engagement was actually an early battle in the War of 1812.

By the fall of 1812, Tecumseh and about a thousand followers joined forces with the British. By all accounts, the Indian forces supporting the British were important allies. Engaged in the Napoleonic Wars at the time, there were few British regular soldiers to send to the frontier. The Indians were key to British success in several engagements. British Indian agent Matthew Elliott called Roundhead and Walk-in-Water, chiefs of the Wyandots in Michigan, to Fort Amherstburg on the Canadian side of the

Detroit River, along with Tecumseh and other chiefs in the area. Elliott aimed to influence them to fight on the side of the British. Walk-in-Water maintained his neutrality, but Roundhead had already determined to align with the British. Roundhead admonished Elliott, however, against the British abandoning their allies. Those who “took hold of the tomahawk” with the British removed to Amherstburg with their families.³³ The possibility of their involvement contributed to General Hull’s surrender of Detroit. Wyandot chief Roundhead joined forces with Tecumseh and became his second in command.

In the January 1813 Battle of Frenchtown also known as the Battle of the River Raisin, the Indian forces were led by Roundhead. The Indians and Proctor’s troops overwhelmed a detachment of Harrison’s force. The following day, the Indians massacred a number of the wounded American survivors. “Remember the Raisin” became a motivational rallying cry for the Americans for the rest of the war. This defeat led Harrison to winter in Ohio rather than try to re-take Detroit. He built Fort Meigs on the Maumee Rapids near Perrysburg, Ohio.

Proctor and Tecumseh carried the war to Ohio in early 1813. In May and July, they twice set siege to Fort Meigs. While the Indian force had success against reinforcements sent to the fort, they were never able to capture the fort. A naval victory by Captain Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie left Proctor cut off from support and supplies. Fearing an invasion by Harrison, Proctor prepared to withdraw to Lake Ontario. Tecumseh and his Indian allies did not support this plan. For years the tribes had

³³ Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts*, 102–6.

mistrusted the British as inconsistent and not keeping their promises. Now they were retreating and leaving their Indian allies to fight alone. Tecumseh's goal was to hold the Indian homeland in the Ohio Valley, which he judged would not be possible from the Niagara region. Further, the Indians were concerned about leaving their families unprotected. Proctor agreed to one last stand, which happened at Moraviantown on the Thames River in Canada on October 5, 1813. Both Tecumseh and Roundhead were killed. The confederation that Tecumseh had built soon collapsed.

Not all Wyandots supported Tecumseh and the British. Wyandots, Shawnees, and Delawares from Ohio, including Wyandot Chief Tarhe, fought with the Americans at the Battle of the Thames. Governor Hull of the Michigan Territory enjoined the tribes to remain neutral during the war, as it was a white man's fight. In return, he promised them protection from any tribes that may side with the British.³⁴ In July 1814, however, Harrison and Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan Territory met representatives from the various tribes in Greenville to negotiate a treaty of peace and friendship. Having determined that neutrality was a failed policy, the Americans now aimed to secure the allegiance of the tribes against the British. Tarhe reinforced his allegiance to the U.S. by destroying two British silver medallions and giving the pieces to the commissioners stating that "it is a long time since I determined to abandon the British Government and their interest, and to join the United States."³⁵ The July 1814 treaty committed the tribes to give their aid to the U.S. and provide warriors as required by the military. The

³⁴ Clarke, 87–88; Johnston, *Recollection of Sixty Years*, 33.

³⁵ "Journal of the Proceedings of the Commissioners Plenipotentiary, Appointed on Behalf of the United States of America, to Treat with the Northwestern Tribes of Indians," July 1, 1814, 834, American State Papers: Indian Affairs 1:828-836, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwspblink.html>.

Wyandots, Senecas of Sandusky, Delawares and Shawnees “who have preserved their fidelity to the United States, throughout the war, again acknowledge themselves under the protection of the said States.” In exchange for this pledge, the tribes were assured that the U.S. would confirm and establish their tribal boundaries as they were before the war.³⁶

The War of 1812 transformed Ohio and the Northwest Territory by disrupting tribal alliances and spawning an infrastructure to support military operations. Tribal allegiances had been divided, with some supporting the British and some the Americans. Tribes such as the Shawnees and Wyandots were split, with some members supporting the British and some remaining loyal to the U.S. Tecumseh’s pan Indian movement fell apart with his death in the war. To stabilize the situation, the U.S. entered into another treaty, September 8, 1815, with the tribes of the Northwest. It reaffirmed the existing relations of the loyal tribes and extended those terms to the others. It also clarified the relationship between the U.S. and Britain.³⁷ The war impacted the economy of Ohio, with the need to supply military operations and a shift to a market-based economy rather than a subsistence lifestyle. Of more lasting significance, however, were the military roads that were established during the war. These helped open Ohio to further settlement, provided a route for freedom seekers, and increased the pressure on tribal lands. Indiana and Illinois achieved statehood less than five years after the war’s conclusion.

³⁶ “Treaty with the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, Senecas, and Miamies,” 7 Stat. 118 (1814).

³⁷ “Treaty with the Wyandots, Delawares, Senecas, Shawnees, Miamies, Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawatimies,” 7 Stat. 131 (1815).

After the War of 1812, the U.S. negotiated over 200 land cession treaties, about half of which created reservations west of the Mississippi.³⁸ Scarcely was the 1815 treaty completed when the government pursued a land cession treaty with the Wyandots and other Ohio tribes. When President Monroe took office in March 1817, he determined “to make an effort to extinguish the Indian title to all the lands now claimed by them within the limits of the State of Ohio.”³⁹ The September 1817 Treaty resulted in a cession from the Wyandots of 5,250 square miles, by far the largest tract. Smaller tracts were ceded by the Delawares and Pattawatamies, Ottawas, and Chippewas. Reservations and some individual grants, representing less than four per cent of the total were ceded back to the tribe. In exchange, the tribes would receive annual annuities. The resulting price of the land was less than four cents an acre.⁴⁰ The Wyandots reserve centered around Upper Sandusky, but they were sixty miles inland from Sandusky Bay. Giving up the most, the Wyandots were greatly disturbed by the cession. “The attachment of the Wyandots was ardent for their native country. The night they agreed to give it up many of the chiefs shed tears.”⁴¹

Settled into their “Grand Reserve” at Upper Sandusky, the Wyandots constructed a lifestyle based on agriculture. Tarhe died in 1815, but his attitude of peace and

³⁸ Donald Fixico, “A Native Nations Perspective on the War of 1812,” accessed December 16, 2018, <http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/native-nations-perspective/>.

³⁹ George Graham to Lewis Cass, “George Graham, Acting Secretary of War to Governor Lewis Cass,” March 23, 1817, American State Papers: Indian Affairs 2:136.

⁴⁰ “An Abstract View of the Cessions of Land Made to the United States, and the Grants of Land Provided to Be Made, and Moneys Stipulated to Be Paid to the Wyandot, Seneca, Shawanee, Delaware, Pattawatamie, Ottawa, and Chippewa Tribes of Indians, by a Treaty Concluded with the Said Tribes on the 29th of September 1817, at the Foot of the Rapids of the Miami of Lake Erie,” September 29, 1817, American State Papers: Indian Affairs 2: 149-150.

⁴¹ Johnston, *Recollection of Sixty Years*, 47.

acceptance of the reality of their situation persisted. In 1816, free born African American missionary John Stewart arrived among the Wyandots, where he was able to join blacks who were already living with the tribe. He was able to convert a number of Wyandots and help establish a Methodist Episcopal mission. In 1821, the Wyandot Tribal Council petitioned the Methodist Episcopal Church requesting the establishment of a mission school. In 1824, Methodist Reverend James Finley, who had also been appointed Wyandot Indian subagent, reported that they were turning their attention to improving their farms and building log houses with brick or stone chimneys. They were enclosing large fields for raising grain and grass and improving their herds of sheep, cattle and hogs. Recognizing that their hunting grounds were filling up with white settlers, they adopted agriculture as a way of sustaining themselves. In this work, the mission staff provided support and assistance. That same year, Finley received permission from the War Department to use funds to build a stone church.⁴² Within a year, Finley was seeking guidance from the War Department on the possibility of dividing the lands in order to encourage individual industriousness. Communications from the government raised the possibility of relocating the tribe, but couched it as a move that would never be forced and might be in their best interest. In 1825, Finley wrote to the War Department opposing calls for removal and outlining the obligations of the government toward the Wyandots.

Missionaries and agents who lived among the tribes understood the adaptations they were making and their attachments to their homelands. Government officials and

⁴² Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 256–58.

settlers still favored removal. No matter how “civilized” a tribe became, many Americans of the nineteenth century viewed them through a racist lens. Lewis Cass, as territorial governor in Michigan and then Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson demonstrated the racial explanation entwined with manifest destiny. He maintained that land should be taken from Indian hunters and given to American farmers who would make more productive use of it. Removing the tribes west of the Mississippi would give them time and space to become civilized. By the time of removal, the Wyandot “improvements” on their reservation amounted to \$127,094.24, significantly higher than the \$20,000 estimated by the government and a clear sign that they were already becoming agriculturalists.⁴³ Even missionaries such as Finley and well-intentioned agents such as Johnstone eventually supported removal to buy the Indians more time to become acculturated.⁴⁴

Decimated by centuries of warfare and disease, the Wyandots developed a strategy of adopting captives into the tribe, regardless of race. By the 1820s and 1830s, they were a racially mixed tribe. Once adopted, these individuals and their offspring often were accepted as full members of the tribe, with some becoming leaders. The prevalence of white and mixed-race tribal members may have contributed to the adoption of agriculture, Christianity, and education. In addition to adopting white tribal members,

⁴³ *S. Doc. No. 135 and 136*, 29th Cong., 1st Sess. (1846). The valuation of their improvements became a source of contention between the Wyandots and Congress which would not appropriate more than the estimated twenty thousand dollars to pay for the improvements. The Wyandots would not accept a second valuation that reduced the amount by sixty thousand dollars. They pressed their claim in a memorial to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. The Committee found no indication of fraud or reason to believe that the first valuation was inaccurate.

⁴⁴ Donald L. Fixico, *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty (3 Vols)* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 85.

the Wyandots also had African Americans, including freedom seekers living in their midst.

Traditional Wyandot beliefs held that every member of the tribe was entitled to the same privileges as people born into the tribe and each member must necessarily be as free as every other member. William Connelly, describing Head Chief George I. Clark, noted that he belonged to the faction that favored the old church and opposed slavery. Clark and John Armstrong “maintained that slavery was wholly foreign to ancient Wyandot customs and usage.” Slavery, in consequence, was inconsistent with traditional beliefs.⁴⁵ While in Ohio and following removal to Kansas, the Wyandots acted on these beliefs by having African Americans living among them and assisting fugitive slaves.

Inevitably, the tribes lost the struggle to preserve their lands in the east, as the 1830 Indian Removal Act cleared vast territories for white settlement. Within this context, however, John Bowes argues that for tribes such as the Shawnee, Delaware, and Wyandot with long histories of migration, these journeys did not represent an unfamiliar change. The dispersed nature of federal authority during this period allowed for manipulation of the process by local officials, but more importantly for the continuation of native kinship networks. As they adapted to life on the Missouri border from the 1830s to 1850s, the tribes continued their traditional subsistence patterns and were active participants in shaping regional history. The tribes were deeply engaged in questions surrounding westward expansion and slavery, much like other Americans. In this

⁴⁵ William E. Connelly, ed., “The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and the Journals of William Walker, Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory,” *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 111 (1899): 47–48.

context, tribal members negotiated their individual and collective racial, ethnic, religious and political identities as they wrestled with the contested vision of Kansas.⁴⁶ Concepts of civilization espoused by missionaries and officials divided tribes as they were constantly internalized and re-defined through decisions about tribal political authority and identity.⁴⁷

Already by 1842, fissures among the Wyandots over the status of mixed-race tribal members surfaced. Barely had the 1842 Treaty with the Wyandots been concluded when Indian agent John Johnston wrote to Ohio Senator Benjamin Tappan regarding efforts to have it modified. Principal chief Francis Hicks and council member Tauroomee left for Washington, DC a month later on a mission to get Article XI expunged or modified. This article provided that “All persons identified as members of the Wyandott Nation, and their heirs, and who may emigrate west, shall participate equally in the benefits of the annuity, and all other national privileges.” Hicks proposed to grant the chiefs and tribal leaders the authority to exclude persons of mixed blood and their heirs from tribal benefits. No provision of the treaty had undergone more intense and protracted discussion, Johnston reported. Such a change would cause “interminable strife and contention among the members of this community.” The educated and civilized members of the tribe had previously felt the exercise of unjust powers from the

⁴⁶ Luke Cramer Ryan Ryan, “‘The Indians Would Be Too Near Us’: Paths of Disunion in the Making of Kansas, 1848-1870” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2009), 24–25.

⁴⁷ Ryan, 21–22.

chiefs and only agreed to the treaty because this provision defined and guarded their rights.⁴⁸

It was in this context that these societies encountered free and enslaved African Americans. Their main focus was drawn to addressing the advancing white settlers and maintaining tribal integrity. But, within that struggle, their interactions with African Americans were informed both by their own survival strategies and by their cosmological beliefs.

⁴⁸ “John Johnston to Senator Benjamin Tappan,” April 20, 1842, RHMS 69, folder 1, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

CHAPTER 2—DE-STABILIZING SLAVERY IN THE BORDERLANDS: THE
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN OHIO AND KANSAS

In 1803, Ohio became the seventeenth state—the first created from the Northwest Territory and the first created without legalized slavery within its borders. It developed, then, in the context of the expanding American frontier and the increasingly tense controversy over slavery. While slavery was prohibited, the act did provide for the return of fugitive slaves. Just across the Ohio River, a growing enslaved population worked with their white owners to settle the Kentucky frontier. By 1800, nineteen percent of the Kentucky population was black and about a quarter of white households had slaves.¹ The newly created state of Ohio represented a chance for freedom.

With the introduction of the cotton gin in 1794 and opening of new cotton lands with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the demand for enslaved labor in the southern interior states increased as the labor needs in the Upper South declined. Together with the end of the international slave trade in 1808 these forces resulted in a robust internal slave trade. In border states such as Kentucky and Maryland, the burgeoning market for enslaved labor fueled a thriving market, with almost a million slaves sold to the cotton south. The Ohio River became a major thoroughfare in this domestic trade, the percentage of African Americans in Kentucky's population dropped from 25 to 21 over the period of 1830 to 1860. Most enslaved people in Kentucky were personally affected

¹ Marion Lucas, "African Americans on the Kentucky Frontier," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 95, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 130–31.

by this trade. The threat of sale with its disruption of family ties and removal further from potential freedom, became a common catalyst for escape.²

Extrapolating from his work on runaway ads from the Ohio River borderland, J. Blaine Hudson estimated that five hundred fugitives escaped from Kentucky annually from 1810 to 1829. By 1830, the number increased to eleven hundred annually. From 1820 to 1843 when the Wyandot removed from Ohio, an estimated 24,300 freedom seekers crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky. Historian Roy Finkenbine, analyzing the routes into Ohio, estimated that perhaps eight thousand passed through Indian country. One of the routes entered Ohio through the Great Miami River Valley and passed through Shawnee territory, near their villages and reservations at Wapakoneta, Hog Creek and Lewistown. Another route followed an ancient Shawnee trail along the Scioto River and then followed the Olentangy River northward before crossing overland to the Sandusky River Valley and the Wyandot Village at Upper Sandusky.³

As the internal slave trade was motivating escapes from Kentucky, abolitionist sentiment gained momentum in Ohio. For example, the Lane Theological Seminary was established in Cincinnati in 1830 by the Presbyterian Church. Noted reformer, Reverend Lyman Beecher, led the school from 1832 to 1850, presiding over the institution during the Lane Debates in 1834. During these eighteen days of extended discussion over how best to combat slavery Theodore Dwight Weld persuaded many to reject colonization in

² Matthew Salafia, "Searching for Slavery: Fugitive Slaves in the Ohio River Valley Borderland, 1830-1860," *Ohio Valley History* 8, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 44-46.

³ Roy Finkenbine, "The Underground Railroad in 'Indian Country', Northwest Ohio, 1795-1843," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2018), 75-77.

favor of immediate emancipation. Beecher and the board of directors, concerned about the school's relationship in the community, prohibited the students from supporting abolitionism.⁴ Subsequently, teacher Asa Mahan and about 40 students, the "Lane Rebels", left the school and eventually accepted an invitation to join Oberlin College. Founded in 1833 to train teachers and Christian leaders for the western territories, Oberlin already had a reputation for progressive causes and social justice, admitting women since its beginning and African Americans since 1835. It became an active force in the Underground Railroad in Ohio and a number of the Underground Railroad activists in Iowa and Kansas shared a connection to Oberlin.

In April 1835, abolitionist leaders in Ohio such as Asa Mahan, John Rankin, Theodore Dwight Weld, and Charles Finney, many associated with Oberlin College, established the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in Zanesville. The Ohio association based their organization on the model of the American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833. By 1836, the Ohio society had 120 chapters in every part of the state and numbered about 10,000 members. Despite this rapid growth, however, the Ohio group faced opposition from those who did not share their goals of immediate emancipation and civil rights for African Americans. Mob violence was directed against sympathetic newspaper publisher James Birney, Reverend John Rankin, and the society's meetings.

While Ohio entered the union as a free state it was far from an inviting location for African Americans. Ohio enacted its first black codes in 1804, a year after achieving statehood, requiring blacks to prove their free status and register with the county clerk.

⁴ Huntington Lyman, "Lane Seminary Rebels," in *The Oberlin Jubilee*, ed. W.G. Ballantine (Oberlin: E.J. Goodrich, 1883).

Many of the earliest settlers, particularly in the southern tier of counties along the Ohio River, came from the Upper South. Cincinnati had strong anti-African American sentiments, and tensions over a growing black population led to a riot in 1829. In the midst of these challenges, blacks established communities in remote areas throughout the state, and supported their enslaved brethren in their bids for freedom. Even Siebert, whose work has been criticized for under-valuing the contributions of African Americans, noted that small communities of freed blacks became critical centers of Underground Railroad activities: “Such localities were fearless in the defense of their visitors and sometimes induced fugitives to settle among them.”⁵

Free black communities established at key locations near the river were the shock troops of the antislavery cause. These women and men made their home on slavery’s doorstep, endured the innumerable bounties placed on their heads, and at times paid the ultimate price for their activities. Joined by a small but dedicated group of white and Native American activists, they founded a genuinely interracial freedom movement.⁶

Black communities scattered across the Midwest, settling on marginal land, near waterways and natural features that afforded shelter. Often these communities were located in proximity to Quaker and other abolitionist strongholds. Extended families and church communities formed the cornerstone of these communities which offered safe havens for fugitives and sometimes a place to settle.⁷

⁵ Wilbur H. Siebert, “The Underground Railroad in Ohio,” *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 4 (1895): 61.

⁶ Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 10–11.

⁷ LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 90.

When the Northwest Ordinance restricted slavery north of the Ohio River in 1787, the river became one of the most important borders between slavery and freedom. Notwithstanding the provision in the Ordinance for the return of fugitive slaves, people enslaved in Kentucky began making their way to freedom across the river. Ohio became a busy thoroughfare with Lake Erie and Detroit offering quick routes to Canada, a common destination after slavery was abolished there in 1833. Removal of the Ohio tribes was not completed until the Wyandots left for Kansas in 1842. During the 1820s and 1830s, transportation routes were still developing across Ohio. Indian trails, which the military had used during the War of 1812, were often the best-established routes. In particular, the Scioto Trail ran north from the mouth of the Scioto River through the Shawnee territory near Chillicothe and the Wyandot Reservation to Sandusky Bay. On the southern end, this route reached deep into Kentucky. The Bull Skin Trace was another Indian trail that was heavily used by the military and later became an Underground Railroad route. Other transportation corridors such as rivers, canals, and even trains were also utilized as routes to freedom. Siebert identified 23 ports of entry along the Ohio River—thirteen along the 275 mile border with Kentucky and ten in the 150 miles of the river shared with Virginia. He documented and mapped Underground Railroad activity in Ohio showing a web of routes leading generally north and east to Lake Erie where he identified five embarkment points—Toledo, Sandusky, Cleveland, Painesville, and Ashtabula Harbor.⁸

⁸ Siebert, “The Underground Railroad in Ohio,” 59.

Oberlin continued the promise of its founding by Presbyterian ministers by maintaining a steady commitment to abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. While the Presbyterian Church divided into northern and southern branches over the issue of slavery, and both factions operated within Ohio, Oberlin College remained strongly committed to abolitionism. Lane rebel and abolitionist Asa Mahan served as president from 1835 to 1850 when religious revivalist Charles Grandison Finney succeeded him. Its commitment to ending slavery and admission of African American students made Oberlin a welcoming environment for the development of a black community. In 1858, freedom seeker John Price had been living in Oberlin for two years when he was captured by Anderson Jennings, a slave catcher and neighbor of Price's owner John Bacon in Kentucky. Knowing Oberlin's reputation, he quickly took Price nine miles south to Wellington. Residents and students from Oberlin marched south in pursuit. Failing to resolve the situation legally, they rescued Price from the Wadsworth House. Back in Oberlin he was harbored by the college president before his escape to Canada could be secured. The Oberlin-Wellington Rescue resulted in the indictment of 37 conspirators by a federal grand jury. Two of these were found guilty at trial—Simeon Bushnell, a white man, and Charles Langston, an African American man. Ohio officials retaliated by arresting the men involved in Price's detention for kidnapping. Negotiations between the state and federal government led to the release of the slave catchers and remaining abolitionists.

While the Underground Railroad began with the resistance of enslaved people to escape bondage, networks of supporters were often important to their success. In Ohio,

communities of free African Americans were on the front lines in helping their brethren. Extended families and congregations of Quakers, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, and African Methodist Episcopalians helped organize these efforts. In the sometimes deadly and often contested flights to freedom, safety could be found by support from a group of people working in concert. Blacks worked with each other and some trusted white abolitionists. Whites who had left the South over disagreements about slavery such as Presbyterian Reverend John Rankin and Quaker Levi Coffin became engaged in the work of actively assisting freedom seekers. In Ripley, for example, Rankin worked with formerly enslaved John Parker, whose forays into Kentucky to liberate slaves and assist with river crossings earned a price on his head,

Faced with armed slave hunters and with the laws skewed toward returning fugitives to slavery, the ability to summon a crowd of supporters was critical to successfully resisting capture. Communities of like-minded individuals then, such as churches and extended families, became the cornerstone of Underground Railroad activity. In border lands such as along the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers, this pattern was especially noticeable.

The Hanging Rock Iron Region in the southeastern tip of Ohio, provides a good example. This region dominated the state's iron production in the first half of the nineteenth century. Iron and charcoal furnaces dotted the Appalachian landscape. It was a major source of iron for both armies during the Civil War and produced some of the best iron in the nineteenth century United States. Iron "plantations" dominated production, with all of the natural resources located in proximity, employing a couple

hundred workers, and controlled by iron companies. The work was dangerous, opening opportunities for African American laborers. Some iron masters, such as John Campbell and John Peters, were abolitionists. Campbell, a Presbyterian from Ripley, Ohio, and follower of Reverend John Rankin, founded Ironton on the Ohio River.

Underground Railroad activity thrived in Hanging Rock. Abolitionist iron masters used their company towns, ironworks, and transportation routes to move freedom seekers through the landscape. Isolated settlements of free blacks, such as Poke Patch provided help and shelter. Poke Patch, on the edge of Gallia County, was a loose network of farmsteads spread over several miles of rural landscape and the convergence point of Underground Railroad routes from Ironton, Burlington, and Rio Grande. The Stewart family, relatives of Wyandot missionary John Stewart, were early Poke Patch settlers engaged in the Underground Railroad. Collaborators in the region would assist fugitives by taking them to Poke Patch, Olive Furnace, Berlin Crossroads, and other safe locations making their way north.

One active conductor, James Ditcher, nicknamed the Red Fox, is credited with piloting 300 freedom seekers to safety, often under armed pursuit. He frequently used John Campbell's horses for his exploits. In an October 31, 1878 interview in the *Ironton Register*, Ditcher recounted several close calls. In one instance, a couple with three children made it across the Ohio River to Ironton. While the children were hidden in the garret over the saloon where Ditcher was working, the parents were hidden in a nearby house. Slave catchers surrounded the house, but had to delay while a warrant was obtained. By the time the slave catchers were able to search the house, the couple had

been slipped out and sheltered with a “rich lady” in town. At nightfall, the family left town and were met by Ditcher in nearby woods who escorted them to Buckhorn Furnace. Returning to town, Ditcher encountered the slave catchers on the trail. In another similar incident, Ditcher and his charges were only able to make it safely to the Stewart’s in Poke Patch because the slave catchers had over-imbibed whiskey when they had to stop for the night. Again, Ditcher met the slave catcher and owner as he was returning home, leading an extra horse.⁹ Ditcher’s success in assisting freedom seekers through this region clearly depended on the network of collaborators offering temporary shelter as fugitives were moved between safe houses until they could continue their journeys.

As the nation moved westward, the question of slavery became more divisive. The Missouri Compromise ostensibly settled the question by prohibiting slavery north of latitude 36° 30’. Consequently, when the Ohio tribes were settled in the portion of Indian Territory that became Kansas, these lands, like Ohio, had been declared to be free territory. Slavery gradually became introduced into the territory through the auspices of missionaries and Indian agents with Southern associations. The hallmarks of the Underground Railroad that marked the region following the Kansas-Nebraska Act had their origins while it was still known as Indian Territory.

The Underground Railroad in Kansas threatened the ability of slave owners in the region to control their property and contributed to the ultimate success of the Free State cause. Indeed, abolitionists caused such disruption that slaveholders hesitated to bring their property to Kansas or even western Missouri. By the end of the 1850s, slave owners

⁹ Brooks et. al. Bryant, “John Campbell House, Ironton,” accessed September 6, 2019, <https://www.theclio.com/entry/12485>.

in the region were moving their bondsmen away from the territory or selling them to avoid the risk of loss. Underground Railroad activity in the Kansas-Missouri border region was both more deliberate and more violent than found in more established areas. Activists, even Quakers, made trips into Missouri to bring slaves off plantations. Abolitionists adopted an established route, the Lane Trail, to send fugitives on the way to Canada.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 set the stage for the violent confrontation over the expansion of slavery known as Bleeding Kansas, as whites poured into the newly opened Indian Territory. Stephen Douglas championed the legislation. He was anxious to see the territory settled to further the cause of a northern route for a transcontinental railroad. The Kansas Nebraska Act ended the Missouri Compromise and formally opened the Kansas territory to the possibility of slavery. Under the doctrine of popular sovereignty, local positive laws would either establish slavery or prohibit it. Waves of emigrants flowed into Kansas from the East, claiming land and put supporting the free state cause. From Boston came ardent abolitionists of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, who founded Lawrence, the most active Underground Railroad community in the territory. American Missionary Association emigrants from New York founded Osawatimie, another active abolitionist and Underground Railroad stronghold. The moderately anti-slavery American Home Missionary Society sent clergymen who lent a conservative voice to the evangelical assault on bondage in the Kansas territory.¹⁰

¹⁰ Gunja SenGupta, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 1.

Pro-slavery advocates poured across the border from Missouri, if not always to settle, then at least to take part in the electoral process. Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina sponsored Southern emigrants. Alabama appropriated \$25,000 to help its emigrants, though mostly they did not enjoy the same level of support as their northern counterparts.¹¹ Many southerners came to Kansas without slaves or means, looking for the opportunity to make their fortune. Some of these settlers found slave catching and kidnapping to be lucrative pursuits. In 1858, President James Buchanan claimed that Kansas was a slave state in law as much as South Carolina or Georgia, though in practice it was one without slaves.¹² Pre-territorial period military posts and Indian missions formed the nucleus of Kansas slave holding areas.

The largest number of pro-slavery settlers came in the first two years, and brought their slaves intending to found new homes. When the partisan strife broke around them, many removed their slaves to a safe distance lest they lose them to the Underground Railroad; others waited to see what the outcome might be.¹³ In the territorial census of 1855, although Southerners were in the majority, slaves made up only 2.2 per cent of the population (186 of 8525 people). The average size slave-holding was small—2.3, compared to 6.1 in Missouri's Little Dixie or 7.7 in the Upper South.¹⁴ Some estimates show that the slave population more than doubled by 1857 and the average size of slave

¹¹ Perl W. Morgan, *The History of Wyandotte County, Kansas, and Its People* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), 140.

¹² SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 117–18.

¹³ Zu Adams, "Slaves in Kansas" (September 2, 1895), 1–2, Slavery Collection, 2, Kansas State Historical Society.

¹⁴ SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 120–21.

holdings likely increased.¹⁵ Most likely, the bonds people supplemented the labor on family farms and help break the prairie sod.

Settlers of both stripes sought to transplant their clashing visions of society and republicanism to the new territory. Free State proponents held a range of ideas about slavery, some supporting African American equal rights and others focusing their concern over slave competition with free labor.¹⁶ All of these views sprang from optimistic notions of progress engendered by the evangelical and capitalist transformation of Northern society that free staters brought to Kansas on their mission to civilize less advanced people—southern slaveholders, Catholic immigrants, or western frontiersmen. They aimed to bring Yankee-style progress to the Plains by transplanting the “trophy” of free labor—churches, schools, mills, and towns. This blending of Northern humanism and notions of progress with broadly defined free-state goals legitimated anti-slavery politics. The Southern response was likewise rooted in notions of republicanism. To white Southerners, race rather than money determined privilege. As such, all whites had access to social and economic democracy. Slavery and subjugation of blacks made possible self-determination and independence.¹⁷

Northerners and Southerners alike found their world view threatened in Kansas. To the free state supporters, President Franklin Pierce’s endorsement of the “bogus” pro-slavery legislature raised the specter of British tyranny of the Revolutionary period.¹⁸

¹⁵ SenGupta, 127.

¹⁶ SenGupta, 2.

¹⁷ SenGupta, 2–4.

¹⁸ Free state supporters used the term “bogus” to refer to the pro-slavery legislature elected in 1855 with the participation of Missouri residents who came across the border to vote.

Pro-slavery forces and their Missouri neighbors regarded eastern efforts to “abolitionize” the territory as an assault on their independence and lifestyle.¹⁹ Many Free State advocates, however, were not initially abolitionists. They viewed slavery as a means of controlling African Americans, and they did not particularly want blacks in the territory. To Mark Delahay, editor of the moderate *Kansas Territorial Register*, as long as slavery was legal, slaveholders had the right to settle and the government was obliged to protect their property. He therefore supported the Fugitive Slave Law.²⁰ The Free State party in 1855 did not represent the moral abolitionist movement. Proponents fought for freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the freedom to elect local officials, but they were not yet willing to extend freedom to African Americans.²¹ Similar to Ohioans enacting Black Codes in 1804, Free State voters supported an 1855 Black Law that barred “all Negroes, bond or free” from setting foot in the territory. Only voters in Lawrence, Juniatta, and Wabaunsee rejected the provision.²²

The struggle for political ascendancy pushed each side to extreme positions. Proslavery extremists had seized control of the territorial government through fraudulent voting. They wrote one of the most stringent slave codes in the country, demanding, for example, the death penalty for anyone who enticed away or aided a slave. The slave code also placed limits on freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Rather than allow local communities to elect county officers responsible for enforcement, the slave code

¹⁹ SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 3–4.

²⁰ Rita G. Napier, “The Hidden History of Bleeding Kansas: Leavenworth and the Formation of the Free-State Movement,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 27 (Spring-Summer 2004): 52.

²¹ Napier, 61.

²² SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 99.

reserved this responsibility for the legislature.²³ Only by controlling the legislature, passing the necessary laws, and creating a system of enforcement could slaveholders be assured of the stability necessary to bring their human property to the territory.²⁴

In the face of such proslavery abuses, many who came to Kansas with moderate free-state ideals channeled their daily fear of violence into energy for the anti-slavery cause. Some, already with abolitionist leanings, took a more active role in violent confrontations and Underground Railroad actions.²⁵ Fear of southern ‘mob’ rule in Kansas caused some Free Staters to become ardent abolitionists. Northern men and women empowered themselves with the twin tools of ideology and violence.²⁶ Some became radicalized in their political views and abandoned their non-violent beliefs. Violence in the name of liberty became acceptable, even encouraged, by a growing number of anti-slavery activists in Kansas and back East.

By the spring of 1856, violence appeared to be the only remaining option. On May 21, pro-slavery forces destroyed Lawrence, burning the town and throwing the Free State presses into the river. Free Staters, smarting from this ‘Sack of Lawrence’, bristled at Preston Brook’s attack on Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner the following day.²⁷ Northern newspapers issued a rallying cry for a violent response. Ruffians “must be crushed by the same spirit and the same power that broke the rule of the tyrants of ’76.”²⁸

²³ Napier, “Hidden History of Bleeding Kansas,” 57.

²⁴ Napier, 55.

²⁵ Kristen A. Tegtmeier, “The Ladies of Lawrence Are Arming!: The Gendered Nature of Sectional Violence in Early Kansas,” in *Anti-Slavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum, America*, ed. John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 216.

²⁶ Tegtmeier, 228.

²⁷ Tegtmeier, 226.

²⁸ New York Daily Tribune, May 20, 1856, quoted in Tegtmeier, 227.

Some writers connected the North's "virtual slavery" to its "feeble manhood" and called for a more militaristic defense.²⁹

In this atmosphere, anti-slavery advocates reconsidered the non-violent ideals of Garrisonian abolitionists. Northern women, some of them Quaker pacifists, picked up Sharpe's rifles and threatened men at gunpoint. In contrast to traditional gender roles, women had to learn to use firearms to defend against border ruffians when their husbands were absent. Underground Railroad conductor Dr. John Doy wrote that many women stood by their men with rifles in hand. He claimed that "many a marauder fell by the ball from a rifle fired by a woman's hand. The women of Kansas are worth to be classed with those of 1776 ... and that the blood of brave mothers still flowed in the veins of equally brave daughters."³⁰ Northern men, often noted as law-abiding and industrious, justified betraying territorial laws and exchanging gunfire with proslavery men in response to perceived Southern excesses.³¹

Against this backdrop, Kansas settlers struggled over the enslaved status of African Americans in their midst. Slave holders concentrated along the Missouri River, though they brought few enslaved people to Kansas. Most Missouri slaves lived in the "Little Dixie" region of western Missouri where hemp production occupied the slave labor force. Just to the south of Kansas, Indian tribes such as the Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles held slaves. Among the anti-slavery settlers, some came to Kansas from Underground Railroad communities to the east. Others came with abstract convictions

²⁹ Tegtmeier, "The Ladies of Lawrence Are Arming!," 227.

³⁰ John Doy, *The Narrative of John Doy, of Lawrence Kansas...: Printed for the Author* (New York: T. Holman, 1860), 20.

³¹ Tegtmeier, "The Ladies of Lawrence Are Arming!," 216.

about slavery that were tested once they reached the front lines in Kansas.

Congregationalist minister Richard Cordley grew up near Ann Arbor, Michigan. He recalled his indignation when the Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850 while he was a student at Andover Theological Seminary. At the time, he declared his intention to shelter a fugitive if ever confronted with the opportunity. Once in Kansas, Cordley observed “It is easy to be brave a thousand miles away. But now I must face the question at short range....But I felt there was only one thing to do.”³² Cordley told his friend Monteith that he would help shelter Lizzie, a young woman who was seeking her escape to Canada. Lizzie stayed with Reverend Cordley’s family for several months before Monteith made plans for the next part of her journey.

The Lane Trail, a route established for Free State emigrants to Kansas, became the primary Underground Railroad route through Kansas. Pro-slavery forces controlled the Missouri River west of St. Louis and had virtually closed the river route to Free State passengers and freight by 1856. Missourians turned back the *Star of the West* and the *Sultan* in June, forcing Northerners to seek an overland route through free territory.³³ Running west from Chicago, the Lane Trail crossed Iowa, the southeast corner of Nebraska, and south to Topeka, thereby skirting Missouri. Lane marked the route with stone cairns, “Lane Chimneys,” built on elevations such that they could be seen across the plains.³⁴ Dr. Ira Blanchard who operated an Underground Railroad station in Civil

³² Richard Cordley, “‘Lizzie and the Underground Railroad’ in *Pioneer Days in Kansas*,” in *Freedom’s Crucible: The Underground Railroad in Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas, 1854-1865: A Reader*, ed. Richard B. Sheridan (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1998), 69–70.

³³ Samuel A. Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1954), 191–93.

³⁴ Some of these chimneys have been reconstructed by property owners.

Bend, Iowa, proposed to John Brown that the Lane Trail was the most practical route for transporting fugitives in Kansas to freedom in Canada. Brown brought Blanchard to Topeka in 1856 to arrange the network of supporters at the trailhead. In response to the threat of slave catchers, abolitionists in Kansas sheltered fugitives in their homes until arrangements could be made to take a group north with an armed escort. Underground Railroad conductors required money, food, arms, transportation, and clothing to assist escaped bondsmen to safety. As in the borderlands of Ohio where communities of supporters were essential to the success of the Underground Railroad, in Kansas, the networks of collaboration were also crucial. John Armstrong, John Ritchie, Jacob Willits, Daniel Sheridan, and others pledged that they would safely conduct all fugitives arriving in Topeka to Blanchard's stop in Civil Bend, Iowa.³⁵

The Topeka men inaugurated the route in February 1857 when activist John Armstrong helped Ann Clarke, a woman enslaved by Colonel H.T. Titus and George Clarke, government officials who lived near Lecompton, to escape. John Brown forwarded another three slaves to Armstrong in charge of a man named Mills. Mills and Armstrong took the fugitives in a covered wagon north on the Lane Trail. The group passed through Kansas without incident, but border ruffians stopped the wagon outside Nebraska City. Escaping detection as they hid in the false bottom of the wagon, the group pushed on. John Kagi, one of Brown's inner circle, had gone ahead of this first group and met them at Nebraska City where his father and sister lived. Kagi helped Armstrong at the river crossing where they persuaded the ferryman at gunpoint to risk the

³⁵ William Elsey Connelly, "The Lane Trail," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society* vol XIII, no. 1913-1914 (1914): 269-70.

ice laden river. After the ice pushed them half a mile downriver, the group made the far shore and continued without incident to Civil Bend. The first trip thus successfully completed, Brown considered the Underground Railroad through Kansas firmly established.³⁶

This trip demonstrated a tactic further developed by Kansas Underground Railroad conductors. As fugitives found their way to Lawrence or Topeka, abolitionists sheltered them until an armed escort could convey them to Iowa. Groups of a dozen or more bondsmen with several armed protectors comprised such convoys. Dr. John Doy, John Brown, Reverend John Stewart, Charles Leonhardt, and even the Quaker “Iowa boys” who settled in Pardee organized trips of this type. In January 1859, Doy wrote to Massachusetts abolitionist Samuel May, requesting financial assistance and describing the Kansas operation:

We have now seventeen coloured [sic] persons waiting till the means is obtained to send them escorted to Iowa. I have just returned from a journey in which I have laid out a good substantial under ground road appointed conductors at each station about fifteen miles apart we have a well organised [sic] society for the reception & protection of our coloured [sic] brethren till each train is made up then see them to a place of safty [sic]. I would refer you to the following persons as officers of aforesaid society—Mr. John Bolles Treasurer, Rev. C. Nute Secy, collectors Chas Stearns, Dr. John Doy, Lyman Allen. Please do what you can among your friends and oblige one who is a stranger to you but one in heart and design.³⁷

The formation of a society with officers to receive and protect fugitives indicates an established organization. Doy’s statement about conducting “each train” of fugitives

³⁶ Connelly, 270.

³⁷ “John Doy, Lawrence, K.T., to Samuel May, Massachusetts,” January 1859, Ms.B.1.6, vol 7, no 91, Boston Public Library.

to safety implied the group had accomplished repeated forays. The “under ground road” that Doy charted may be an indication that slave catcher knowledge of the Lane Trail made it too dangerous, causing conductors to seek new routes. Alternatively, Doy may have been referring to a feeder route that connected to the Lane Trail north of Topeka.

Doy’s knowledge of the terrain and local conductors made him a logical choice for assisting free blacks from Lawrence in January 1859.³⁸ From the harangues of proslavery leaders, the enslaved population of Missouri knew that Lawrence was a place to trust and therefore it became a destination. Slave hunters also knew Lawrence as a place to find fugitives, or failing that, to kidnap free blacks. Abolitionist James Abbott observed that kidnapping free blacks was more lucrative to slave-catchers because the proceeds from selling them were generally more than the reward for returning a fugitive.³⁹ After several episodes with kidnapers, the African Americans of Lawrence appealed to the white citizens for protection. Together they made a plan for the blacks to emigrate to Iowa where they could live without fear. Dr. Doy agreed to escort a group of thirteen people to Holton.⁴⁰

While African Americans in Lawrence made preparations to avoid kidnapping into slavery, John Brown was busy liberating a group of a dozen enslaved Missourians. George Gill and journalist Richard Hinton provided an account of Brown’s raid into Missouri to liberate a slave family. In December 1858, Jim Daniels, an enslaved man, confided to George Gill that his owner planned to sell Daniels and his family soon.

³⁸ Doy, *Narrative of John Doy*, 23.

³⁹ James B. Abbott, “The Rescue of Dr. John W. Doy,” *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 1886-1888 IV (1890): 312.

⁴⁰ Doy, *Narrative of John Doy*, 23.

Daniels had encountered Gill in Kansas while selling brooms, though the real motivation for his sales trip was to find help for himself, his family and a few friends.⁴¹ When Gill passed the request to John Brown, he seized the opportunity to forcibly liberate slaves. Gill speculates that Brown was “expecting or hoping that God would provide the basis of action. When this came, he hailed it as heaven-sent.”⁴² With a party of about a dozen, Brown went into Missouri on the night of December 20, 1858. A second party of about eight, led by Aaron D. Stevens also conducted a raid that night. Brown liberated Daniels and his family, taking the personal property belonging to the estate to help finance the long journey ahead. Brown reasoned that the property, having been bought with the slave labor, rightly belonged to them. The party led by Stevens succeeded in getting Jane, whom they had sought, but in so doing, killed her owner Mr. Cruise.⁴³

Several safe houses in the Osawatomie area offered shelter to the fugitives once they had safely arrived in Kansas. Augustus Wattles, Richard Mendenhall, and Samuel Adair were among those who housed the group.⁴⁴ The Daniels party spent weeks at some cabins near Garnett, unable to travel easily because Mrs. Daniels was pregnant. Under the care of Dr. (later General) James Blunt, she gave birth to a son named John Brown Daniels. Finally, about January 20, 1859, the group was ready to leave Garnett. Brown was anxious to depart because he had heard rumors of threats to either kill him or hand him over to the Missourians. With his party of twelve fugitives, Brown and his men

⁴¹ Richard J. Hinton, “John Brown and His Men, With Some Account of the Roads They Traveled to Reach Harper’s Ferry,” in *Freedom’s Crucible: The Underground Railroad in Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas, 1854-1865: A Reader*, ed. Richard B. Sheridan (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 79.

⁴² Hinton, 79.

⁴³ Hinton, 80–81.

⁴⁴ Samuel Adair’s wife Florella was John Brown’s half-sister. Samuel was a Congregationalist minister, trained at Oberlin.

proceeded to Lawrence where he arranged finances and provisions before proceeding to Topeka.

Plans originally called for Doy's party of Lawrence refugees to travel with John Brown's group of Missourians. An armed guard of ten men was to accompany both groups, and was deemed sufficient to secure their safety. Circumstances prevented the groups from traveling together, and Brown overruled Doy, taking the entire escort. Brown argued that his group of fugitives, having been taken from Missouri in open defiance, faced a greater risk than Doy's group of free blacks. Determined to proceed, Doy risked the twenty-mile trip from Lawrence to Oskaloosa unprotected.⁴⁵ About twelve miles out from Lawrence, a party of twenty armed and mounted border ruffians ambushed Doy's party, taking them to Weston, Missouri. Missouri officials held Doy and his son Charles at the Platte County jail to await trial for abducting slaves from Missouri. Slave traders sold the thirteen African Americans in the party into slavery, wives and children being separated from their husbands and fathers. Charles Doy gained his freedom, but the Missouri court found Dr. Doy guilty and sentenced him to five years of hard labor in the state penitentiary. While awaiting an appeal to the state Supreme Court, Doy's Kansas allies launched a daring rescue in July 1859. The "Immortal Ten" bluffed their way into the jail at St. Joseph to which the court had transferred Doy. They walked out with him, making their escape across the Missouri River in boats they had hidden on the banks for that purpose.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Doy, *Narrative of John Doy*, 123.

⁴⁶ Richard B. Sheridan, ed., *Freedom's Crucible: The Underground Railroad in Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas, 1854-1865: A Reader* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1998), 27-34. The "Immortal Ten" included Silas S. Soule, J.A. Pike, S.H. Willes, Joseph Gardner, Thomas Simmons, Charles Doy,

While Doy languished in jail, Brown's group had their own adventures. From Topeka, the party picked up the Lane Trail heading north. Just past Holton at Spring Creek, pro-slavery forces stopped Brown's group. A messenger took word back to Topeka where John Ritchie and John Armstrong raised a rescue party. At the resulting "Battle of the Spurs" on January 31, Brown's party took several prisoners who they kept for a day or two before allowing them to walk home. Gill reported that some of the Topeka party remained with the group through Tabor, Iowa, as they believed squads of armed men were following them. Indeed, arriving at Blanchard's in Civil Bend, he learned that the posse had preceded him and searched the place thoroughly. Brown's party arrived at Tabor, Iowa on February 5, 1859, staying until February 11. The Congregationalists there continued to aid Brown's party though they held meetings and passed resolutions denouncing his violent and illegal actions.⁴⁷ Brown and his party with twelve fugitives continued through Detroit to Canada, from where he continued his preparations for the raid at Harpers Ferry.

Border regions between slave and free territories presented opportunities for the enslaved and challenges for their enslavers. James Abbott, who led the Doy rescue party, observed that slaves learned where to find freedom from the slaveholders themselves. The masters came to understand the danger of holding people as property so close to a free state and began to move the slaves farther south. Facing the threat of sale, many slaves in the region took action to free themselves.⁴⁸ In strategic terms, if Kansas became

Jacob Sinex, John E. Stewart, George Hay, and James B. Abbott. They were careful not to carry Sharps rifles, a well known badge of Kansas abolitionists.

⁴⁷ Hinton, "John Brown and His Men," 83–85.

⁴⁸ Abbott, "The Rescue of Dr. John W. Doy," 312.

a free state, slavery in Missouri was seriously threatened. Bordered on three sides by free states (Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois), Missouri would be isolated and runaway slaves would be more likely. A similar phenomenon has been observed in other border regions, such as between Texas and Mexico, where slave communities looked to the Rio Grande as a source of liberation.⁴⁹ The geographical proximity would facilitate supplying propaganda to the enslaved in Missouri and enticing them into Kansas.⁵⁰ Indeed, one zealous abolitionist, inspired by the martyred John Brown, proposed building an airship from which to drop leaflets directing the slaves to make preparations to make their escape in the large airship to follow. When conditions were right, they would let down the basket on the airship and “tell the Boys if they want their liberty to jump on board, and we would be out of reach of powder and ball before they could reach us.”⁵¹

Attempts to protect slave property were not particularly successful. A number of informants spoke to the fear of slave owners. Dr. Stringfellow informed H.L. Stein that for fear of losing them, Kansas slave owners sent their slaves to Missouri, and those that could, sold them.⁵² Samuel Adair in Osawatimie recalled that few slaves lived in the area because the slaveholders were afraid to bring them there.⁵³ Both Thomas Byne and John Speer told the story of James Skeggs taking about 30 slaves to Texas because slavery in Kansas was in danger. Byne reported that Free State thieves had threatened to

⁴⁹ Sean Kelley, “Mexico in His Head: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 709.

⁵⁰ Napier, “Hidden History of Bleeding Kansas,” 53.

⁵¹ “Daniel Wood to George L. Stearns,” May 16, 1860, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁵² “H.L. Stein to Honorable G.W. Martin, Secretary,” May 31, 1903, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁵³ “Samuel L. Adair to Zu Adams,” September 16, 1895, Kansas State Historical Society.

rob Skeggs and liberate his slaves. Heavily armed, Skeggs made good his exodus.⁵⁴ Rob Walker in 1857 wrote that Carey Whitehead of Doniphan County left to prevent Kansas abolitionists from stealing his slaves and that Esquire Yocum, Judge of the Probate Court in Franklin County, removed from the area after losing his slaves and having his life threatened.⁵⁵ Kansas, it appears, was not a safe place to hold slaves.

Both Kansas and Ohio, as borderland regions, experienced active Underground Railroad operations. The proximity to freedom drew enslaved people from neighboring Missouri and Kentucky. Once across the riverine borders, however, freedom seekers still faced daunting journeys. Settlers with both anti-slavery and pro-slavery sentiments populated Ohio and Kansas, particularly along the Ohio and Missouri Rivers. By the time that Kansas was opened to settlement by U.S. citizens, the nationwide debate over slavery had grown acrimonious. Underground Railroad activity in Kansas was marked by more violence than its eastern counterparts. Nevertheless, by the 1850s, dramatic rescues and mob actions, such as the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue, began taking place across the east.

⁵⁴ “Thomas R. Byne to Zu Adams,” September 11, 1895, Kansas State Historical Society; “John Speer’s Reminiscences of Jas. Skaggs, Formerly a Slave Owner near Lecompton” (July 13, 1895), Kansas State Historical Society.

⁵⁵ “Rob J. Walker to Secretary Cass,” July 15, 1857, Kansas State Historical Society.

CHAPTER 3—IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH: OHIO’S TRI-RACIAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, 1785 - 1843

As the Wyandots and Shawnees found themselves pressed by the advancing border of the United States and the spread of European American settlers, they also encountered African Americans, most of whom were enslaved. Unlike the Five Tribes of the Southeast, the tribes in Ohio did not adopt the practice of enslaving Africans. Particularly the Wyandots, but to a lesser extent the Shawnees, had Africans living in their midst as free persons. “In union there is strength” is a translation of the Wyandot name “Quindaro”, meaning “bundle of sticks.” Nancy Quindaro Brown was the granddaughter of Wyandot Chief Adam Brown. She married abolitionist Abelard Guthrie and lent her name to the free state town Abelard helped found on the Missouri River. The Native Americans, African Americans, and whites who cooperated in aiding freedom seekers in pre-removal Ohio, were like a “bundle of sticks,” which together are harder to break than one stick by itself.

Gene Allen Smith observed that the number of slaves who found refuge with Native American tribes during the colonial period must have been substantial given the number of Indian treaties that included clauses for their return.¹ Abolitionist activity among the Wyandots appears to extend back at least to the eighteenth century. Marion McDougall included a 1785 treaty with the Wyandots in her book on Fugitive Slaves, as evidence that the tribe was sheltering fugitives.² This treaty called for “all the prisoners,

¹ Gene Allen Smith, *The Slaves’ Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 27.

² Marion Gleason McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves (1619 -1865)* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1891), 105.

white and black, taken by the said nations...shall be restored.”³ She noted that in seven of eight treaties negotiated with Indian tribes from 1784 to 1786, clauses were introduced for the return of "negroes and other property.”⁴

Accounts of Colonel William Crawford’s 1782 Sandusky expedition identify Sam Wells and Jonathan Pointer as two African Americans who were captured by the Indians as small boys. Sam Wells, a servant of Simon Girty, the notorious frontiersman who witnessed Crawford’s execution, was apparently an adolescent living with the Delawares or the Wyandots at this time. He later affirmed to local white settlers that his job at the time was to hold Simon Girty’s horse.⁵ Wells was also able to point out the location that the women and children hid along Tymochtee creek in anticipation of an Indian defeat during the 1782 Battle of Sandusky.⁶

Jonathan Pointer, an African American who became an important interpreter for the Wyandots, was also captured while enslaved as a child in Point Pleasant, Virginia. Working in the fields one day with his owner, Michael See, a party of Wyandots came upon them. Killing See, they caught Jonathan and took him away.⁷ When the group returned to their village, Pointer was greeted as a spectacle and “The returning party were greeted with a loud laughter when it was discovered that the boy was of the black race.”⁸

³ “Treaty with the Wyandots, Delawares, Chippewas and Ottawas,” 7 Stat. 16 (1785).

⁴ McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves (1619 -1865)*, 13.

⁵ Consul Willshire Butterfield, *Historical Account of the Expedition against Sandusky under Col. William Crawford in 1782*, (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1873), 380.

⁶ Consul Willshire Butterfield, *Historical Account*, 385; Joe B. See, “The History and Genealogy of the See and Related Families 1674-1968” (n.d.), 5, Nebraska History Library. Jonathan Pointer was identified by an informant for Butterfield as giving information on the location of Crawford's immolation, though William Walker places him in Michigan at the time and he may not have been captured until as late as 1791, according to Joe B. See.

⁷ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 78.

⁸ Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts*, 73..

Finding Pointer to be unruly, the Wyandots who took him, determined to kill him. Chief Adam Brown rescued Pointer with three hundred dollars in trade goods, and took him to his home. Still mischievous, Pointer would hide the horses of travelers who stayed with Chief Brown. In the morning, Pointer would obtain some money as a reward for finding the lost horse. When caught at his tricks, Pointer fled to the Wyandots at Upper Sandusky.⁹

In 1790, John May and his assistant Charles Johnston traveled to Kentucky on a surveying mission. They traveled by boat and were intercepted by a group of Indians from various tribes, mostly Shawnees. Some were killed and the others divided among the captors. Separated from the others, Johnson was taken to Sandusky. Along the way, they encountered a Wyandots and a black man who worked together in the fur trade. The black man had escaped slavery in Kentucky and been taken in by the Wyandots. Together they would purchase whiskey, gun powder and supplies in Detroit, generally on credit. Packing these items to the Ohio interior, they would trade them at great profit for furs and hides.¹⁰

Enslaved blacks escaped to the Sandusky Wyandots from Detroit, as well as from Kentucky. As a borderland that transitioned from French to British and then American rule, both Indians and blacks were enslaved in the Detroit region. The Northwest Territory became a zone of imperial and settler conquest with overlapping and rapidly changing allegiances. Enslaved people exploited imperial rivalries to find their freedom. In 1803, Captain Alexander Grant wrote about his wife's tribulations coping with "very

⁹ Clarke, 73.

¹⁰ Joseph Pritts, *Incidents of Border Life* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, 1839), 414.

ungratefull [sic] and turbulent slaves.” Her enslaved woman and a black man were in jail for theft and worse, “information of a great number of vagarents hovering about here to bring off as many negros as they can And as I am told forming a Town on the other side of Sandusky. At present there is forty Black men there.”¹¹ Grant’s account indicates a network of individuals, perhaps African American or Indian, who shared intelligence with enslaved Detroiters, encouraged escapes, and stole items. A second principal Wyandot settlement was located at Detroit. Tribal members regularly traveled between the grand reserve at Sandusky and the Detroit settlement. The reference to vagrants may not imply Wyandots, but the town mentioned is undoubtedly Negrotown on the Wyandot reservation.

Both Sam Wells and Jonathan Pointer settled amongst the Wyandots in the Tymochtee Creek area known as Negrotown. Early visitors to the area remarked on the existence of the settlement. In 1806, Reverend Joseph Badger, accepted a commission from the Western Missionary Society in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania to preach among the Wyandots. When he arrived, he found a group of seven African American families living together in “Black Village,” with many children.¹² Badger engaged Quintus Atkins as an assistant in his missionary work. Siebert identified Atkins as an Underground Railroad operative.¹³ Atkins remained with the Wyandots for less than two years, as he suffered

¹¹ Milo M. Quaife, “Cares of Mrs. Grant; Letter from Alexander Grant to John Askin, May 17, 1803,” in *John Askin Papers*, vol. 2 (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1931), 388–90.

¹² Byron E. Long, “Joseph Badger, the First Missionary to the Western Reserve,” *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 26 (1917): 34.

¹³ William W. Williams, *History of Ashtabula County, Ohio with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Pioneers and Most Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), 113–14. Atkins' daughter Sarah was married to Edward Wade who participated in the Underground Railroad with him in Cleveland. Another daughter, Martha, married Reverend John Todd; both were active in the Underground

repeated illness. In August 1807, he traveled from the mission to Ashtabula County with “Robert Giles, a black man whom they found at Cleveland.”¹⁴ Judge Hugh Welch, who arrived in Ohio about 1815, attended a Wyandot war dance with Isaac Brant. Welch observed “During the early settlements slaves ran away from Kentucky, and went among the Indians, and when I came here most of the inhabitants of that place were black.”¹⁵

Moravian Brethern Andrew Luckenbach recounts in his diary of an 1808 journey that

When we had crossed a site where an old Wiendat town had stood about 20 years ago, we arrived in Negro Town, which consists of about 6 to 7 Negro families, who have been living among the Indians for a long time, and accepted their customs. We dismounted here, and went into a house, where a white man by the name of Right lives, who makes silver work for the Indians, such as shirt buckles, finger rings, bracelets, and the like. A negress set before us some corn bread and coffee, as the people drink it, who also spoke English, and also excused herself, that she could only serve us with the little left from breakfast, which according to Indian custom, although we had already breakfasted, we did not refuse.....the Wiendat town one half mile further up the stream, where Chief Crain lives....¹⁶

The silversmith George Wright was married to a woman known as Black Betty with whom he had two children. He later left his family and re-settled in Green Camp Township in Marion County.¹⁷ Black Betty was the daughter of a Delaware Indian and

Railroad in Tabor, Iowa. Reverend Todd was the first cousin of Abelard Guthrie, an abolitionist and member of the Wyandot tribe.

¹⁴ C.C. Baldwin, “Wyandot Missions in 1806-1807--Diary of Quintus F. Atkins,” *Western Reserve Historical Society Publication 2*, no. 50 (January 1, 1888): 112.

¹⁵ C.C. Baldwin, “Indian Narrative of Judge Hugh Welch, of Green Springs, Seneca and Sandusky Counties, Ohio,” *Western Reserve Historical Society Publication 2*, no. 50 (January 1, 1888): 108.

¹⁶ Andrew Luckenbach, “Diary of an Exploratory Journey of the Brethren Luckenbach and Haven, in Company of the Indian Brother, Andreas, along the St. Mary’s River, the South Tributary of the Miami, Which Flows into Lake Erie,” trans. English (1808), Box 157, folder 11, item 2, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

¹⁷ Leggett, Conaway & Co., *The History of Marion County, Ohio, Containing a History of the County; Its Townships, Towns, Churches, Schools, Etc; General and Local Statistics; Military Record; Portraits of*

an African woman who was captured by the French in Guinea. About the time of the American Revolution, the Delaware Indian sold Elizabeth and her mother to Wyandot Chief Rontondee. She is likely the same “Black Betty” identified as a cook receiving payment for her labor from several prominent Detroiters in the 1790s.¹⁸ In 1800, Black Betty and her mother were adopted by the Wyandots and soon after Elizabeth was married to George Wright.¹⁹ George and Black Betty apparently had three children together, Sarah (also known as Sallie) (b 1806), George Washington (b. March 1812) and Nancy.²⁰ The three children appear as co-owners of about 90 acres purchased in 1822 as shown in deeds recorded in the Crawford County, Ohio court records. Nancy is listed as married to John Williams in 1832 when they sold this property.

By the time of the Wyandot removal from Ohio in 1843, “Negrotown” was well established. The Surveyor General’s 1844 Wyandot cession indicated landholders and their improvements. In Section 33 of Tymochtee township, the “Negrotown Improvement” of James Washington and John Johnston was described as about 45 acres, including “log house, stable, spring and two orchards. A pretty valuable improvement.”²¹ The pair were also listed as owning other parcels, both individually and together. Other African American landholders shown on the surveyor’s map included Sam Wells, Nancy Wright, George Wright, and Jonathan Pointer. Joseph McDonald appeared in the survey

Early Settlers and Prominent Men; History of the Northwest Territory; History of Ohio (Chicago: Leggett, Conaway, & Co, 1883), 779.

¹⁸ F. Clever Bald, *Detroit’s First American Decade, 1796-1805* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1948), 41.

¹⁹ Connelly, “Provisional Government,” 1899, 308–9.

²⁰ Wright family genealogy lists three children for George and Elizabeth—Sarah, George, and Nancy, though indicates nothing is known about Nancy.

²¹ Lonnie Honsberger, *A Book of Diagrams and Index of Indian Landholders on the Wyandot Reservation, Wyandot County, Ohio at Time of Cession* (Upper Sandusky, 1989), 36.

as a landowner in this section. Records for the Union Church Cemetery noted him as black. He was listed as married to Elizabeth Rice who was first married to George Washington Wright by whom she had a child George Z. Wright. Elizabeth Rice Wright McDonald was described as a Wyandot Indian. Her children, both by George W. Wright and Joseph McDonald, were listed as black. The McDonald family, including Elizabeth Rice and her children remained in Ohio after the Wyandots left in 1843 and were buried primarily in the Union Church Cemetery and the Old Mission Cemetery. Jonathan Pointer also remained in Ohio and was recorded as purchasing 42 acres near Negrotown in 1846.

When John Stewart, an African American exhorter came to the Wyandots in 1816, there were already several African Americans living amongst them. Stewart was free born in Powhatan County Virginia to parents who claimed some Indian heritage, though of an uncertain tribe. They were strong Baptists, and his brother William was even a Baptist preacher. Left behind when his parents went to Tennessee, Stewart determined subsequently to follow them but ended up in Marietta, Ohio. Here he led an intemperate and unhappy life. While his Baptist upbringing had left him prejudiced against other denominations, he felt drawn by the singing of a Methodist prayer meeting. Stewart became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and soon felt a calling to preach. Striking out to the northwest, he met some the Moravian Delawares at Goshen who encouraged him onward toward their relatives at Pipetown on the Sandusky River. Stewart did not feel the situation was right until he arrived at the home of William Walker, US Indian sub-agent and Wyandot interpreter, at Upper Sandusky. Walker

suspected Stewart was a fugitive slave, and questioned him closely. Convinced by his story and the sincerity of his religious conversion, Walker directed Stewart to the home of Jonathan Pointer, who could function as an interpreter.²²

While African Americans were accepted living among the Wyandots, their status within the tribe seems to have been marginalized. Pointer advised Stewart that it would be useless for him, as a black man, to assemble the Wyandots to preach to them, as many learned white men had attempted to convert them and could not accomplish it.²³ Pointer, being disinclined to religious ways, nevertheless interpreted Stewart's preaching which began to make inroads with the tribe. Stewart's hymn singing especially endeared him to his audience. Some white traders having heard him preach, determined to drive him from the tribe by advising the Indians that he was a runaway slave who had only come to them for protection and was not a licensed preacher. Their motivation may have stemmed from Stewart's preaching against alcohol, but they were able to use his possible status of fugitive to sow discontent. While some tribe members believed the traders and became dissatisfied, the chiefs would not act on their suggestion. Stewart turned to William Walker in his concern for his work and future with the tribe, only to be assured that Walker would defend and protect him.²⁴

By the time that Stewart took leave of the tribe around February 1817 to return to Marietta, he had won over some of the tribe. Unable to convince him to abandon his

²² Joseph Mitchell, *The Missionary Pioneer, or A Brief Memoir of the Life, Labours, and Death of John Stewart, (Man of Colour) Founder, Under God of the Mission Among the Wyandotts at Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (New York: J.C. Totten, 1827), 9–19; Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 78.

²³ Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 20; Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 79.

²⁴ Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 24–25.

plans to return to Marietta and then to follow his family to Tennessee, they raised funds to hasten his return to the tribe.²⁵ Though Stewart was a free man, the ever present threat of slavery was still a concern. White men informed the tribe that Stewart's master had come from Virginia and hauled him back to slavery in irons. This rumor created uneasiness among his friends, which was not relieved until Walker received a letter and accompanying sermon from Stewart in mid-June.

When Stewart returned to the Wyandots in the summer of 1817, he still had a struggle to win converts. Two of his most persistent critics were chiefs Mononcue and Two Logs. Again Stewart's race was used as an issue. Two Logs asserted that it was demeaning to the Wyandots "to have it said, *that they had a Negro for their preacher*, as that race of people was always considered inferior to Indians." Blacks were created by the Evil Spirit, rather than the Great Spirit, he proclaimed.²⁶

Stewart again took his leave from the tribe in August 1817 as they prepared to travel to negotiations for the Treaty of Fort Meigs. Returning to Marietta, he remained there until sometime in the winter. Nothing is recorded of his activities until late in 1818, when white missionaries proposed receiving Stewart into their church and employing him, after hearing him preach and seeing how he was esteemed by the tribe. Doctrinal differences kept Stewart from agreeing to their proposal.²⁷ When challenged, he acknowledged that he had no regular authority. This led to another crisis for Stewart as

²⁵ Joseph Mitchell, *The Missionary Pioneer*, 46. Stewart's father died in White County, Tennessee on April 21, 1817, while he was away from the tribe.

²⁶ Mitchell, 68.

²⁷ Interestingly, Stewart was married to Polly Carter on December 25, 1818 by a Baptist minister. Polly is described as not being particularly religious so the choice of a Baptist, rather than a Methodist, may have been due to the strong Baptist associations of Stewart's family.

white traders again tried to discredit him. Ultimately, this led to the Methodist Episcopal Quarterly Conference licensing Stewart in March 1819 to preach the Gospel.

Additionally, the progress of Stewart's labors led the Conference to assign other circuit riding preachers to assist him once a month.²⁸

Stewart's success as a Christian preacher came at the expense of traditionalists who were loath to abandon their Native religion. Two Logs and Mononcue spoke against Stewart. Some tribal members were hesitant to embrace the white man's religion and give up drinking and their traditional ceremonies. Yet, the Wyandots always treated Stewart with friendship. He was entertained among them and never abused or persecuted. This was attributed to the "maxim among Indians, never to treat a stranger who comes among them with disrespect or indignity."²⁹ Mononcue, though baptized in the Roman Catholicism of his parents, held to the Wyandot traditions, observing that his mother would do the very things that the priest told her not to do. Mononcue "followed her example more than her advice."³⁰ When he heard Stewart preach, as interpreted by Pointer, it caused him to wonder, though he "did not yield, nor forsake the old traditional customs of the nation." Hearing the same doctrine preached by Reverend Finley, though, Mononcue became convinced and converted to Christianity. As a leader in the nation, his example was important to the success of the mission. Two Logs

²⁸ Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 72–76.

²⁹ Mitchell, 38–39.

³⁰ "A Sketch of the Life on Nanuncu, An. Indian Chief of the Wyandot Nation, and a Convert to Christianity: Furnished by Himself," *Western Intelligencer, Religious, Literary and Political*, November 7, 1827.

apparently converted after nearly dying from a great physical affliction, upon deciding that the traditional religion and practices did not sustain him in his hour of need.³¹

On August 7, 1819, the Ohio Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church established the first official mission to the Indians, based largely on Stewart's success with the Wyandots. In November 1819, the first regular quarterly meeting was held with the Wyandots, and among the 60 attendees were Mononcue, Between-the-Logs, Hicks and Scuteach, all chiefs who spoke in support of the mission and Christianity. Mononcue who was known as a strong speaker, exhorted in Wyandot for forty minutes with great zeal before addressing the white men that were present. Between-the-Logs, an early convert spoke of Stewart's consistent message and the urging of the tribal women to adopt him because he had been sent by God. Wanting to hear more from Stewart, they attended a meeting at the council-house that lasted all night. "By this time we were convinced that God had sent him unto us; and then we adopted him, and gave him a mother and children."³² Stewart had become an integral part of the tribe. In 1820, Mononcue answered Reverend James B. Finley about their choice of preachers that "we want our good brother Stewart to stay always amongst us, and our brother Jonathan too, and to help us along as they have done."³³

In 1821, due to the progress made by Stewart, Finley was appointed as a missionary to the Wyandots to establish a school for them and neighboring tribes.

³¹ Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 93.

³² Rev. James B Finley, *Life among the Indians, or, Personal Reminiscences and Historical Incidents Illustrative of Indian Life and Character*, ed. Reverend D.W. Clark (Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings, 1857), 263–72.

³³ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 107.

Though Stewart's health was failing at this point, Finley reported that Stewart assisted as he could. Still, whites in the area worked to convince the tribe to turn Stewart away as their preacher, using his race as an issue. The whites noted that they would not have an African American preach to them. They thought he was good enough for the Indians though it was degrading to the nation to have a black preacher. Finley succeeded in convincing them to keep Stewart by threatening that he would leave as well. The Methodist Church continued to support Stewart despite the assignment of an ordained missionary. Finley noted that Bishop M'Kendree collected one hundred dollars which he remitted to Finley for the purpose of buying land for Stewart. In 1821, Stewart was furnished with "a good farm" on which he and his wife Polly could live.³⁴ A land patent was registered under Stewart's name in 1822, for 53 acres in Section 33 of Tymochtee township, the hub of Negrotown.

One of the missionaries appointed to the Wyandots was Reverend Charles Elliott. In October, 1822, he visited the reservation for the first time. At his first Sabbath there, he preached to a group that included "about thirty whites, some coloured persons, and more than both of Indians." Present were Mononcue, Between-the-Logs, Jonathan Pointer, and John Stewart. Unaccustomed to such a mixed race gathering, Elliot noted "My mind was strangely affected in addressing, for the first time, a congregation of red, black, and white men."³⁵

³⁴ Finley, 143–44; Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 93. Stewart evidently had consumption, or tuberculosis. Finley gives Stewart's marriage date as 1820, though Mitchell placed it in 1818. Marriage records reveal the date as December 25, 1818.

³⁵ Reverend Charles Elliott, *Indian Missionary Reminiscences, Principally of the Wyandot Nation, in Which Is Exhibited the Efficacy of the Gospel in Elevating Ignorant and Savage Men* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837), 56.

Despite the support he received from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Stewart separated from it in the summer of 1823. At that time he was visited by some African American “Allenites” who had separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Stewart attended their conference with them, and decided to join. The African Methodist Episcopal Church held to the same doctrines, and Stewart felt he could do more for his own people than for the whites.³⁶ The African Methodist Episcopal Church played an important role in the Underground Railroad with most of its ministers involved with transporting fugitives and its churches as safe havens.³⁷ Stewart’s service among the Wyandots evidently was such that Finley continued to treat him as a member of the church. By the fall of 1823, Stewart’s chronic illness overtook him. Mononcue, Pointer, and Finley that December had plans to journey to the Wyandot settlement in Canada. Pointer and Mononcue stopped at Stewart’s home to visit and pray, knowing that they would see him no more; Finley had already taken his farewell with Stewart. Stewart died on December 17, 1823.³⁸ His wife and brothers inherited the property and sold it for two hundred dollars, which they kept for their use.³⁹

While there is no direct evidence that Stewart was involved with the Underground Railroad, his family were major Underground Railroad operators in a mixed-race community known as Poke Patch or the Stewart Settlement in southeastern Ohio. Siebert informant Gabe Johnson of Ironton, Ohio was active in the Underground Railroad along the Ohio River. He claimed that “it is very probable there were no more active workers

³⁶ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 215.

³⁷ LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 13–14.

³⁸ Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer*, 92–93; Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 215.

³⁹ Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission*, 144; Elliott, *Indian Missionary Reminiscences*, 35.

in the cause than the Stewart family who lived...in a settlement know by local designation as 'Poke Patch' on Dirty Face Creek.” Preacher Stewart’s nephew John J. Stewart and his wife Eliza were known as the “most conspicuous and ardent workers in what was known as the Underground Railroad of antebellum days.” He and his brothers, James W., Isaac, Jacob, and Thomas, were actively involved as station masters and conductors. The family had come to Ohio sometime between 1813 and 1818, along with their parents, James B. Stewart and Fanny Dungey. John J. Stewart had been in Ohio since sometime around 1810. John and James B.’s brother Reverend William Stewart, preached in a black settlement at Burlington and Macedonia, on the Ohio River, where between 1840 and 1860, he brought a large number of fugitives through the woods to Poke Patch. Another sibling, Elizabeth moved to Poke Patch from Tennessee with her husband Peter Coker in the early 1840s. Their five sons were very active in the Underground Railroad as well. Tolliver Cocker, being single and fearless, “was the most valuable aider and abetter the runaway slave had. All of the Coker family contributed materially towards building up a strong Underground Railroad.”⁴⁰

Numerous members of at least two generations of the Stewart family were extensively involved in the Underground Railroad. In her examination of free black communities and the Underground Railroad, Cheryl LaRoche suggests that Poke Patch may have been founded for the purpose of harboring freedom seekers as they moved northward. More than two hundred made their way to the settlement.⁴¹ LaRoche also

⁴⁰ “Gabe N. Johnson of Ironton, Ohio to Wilbur Siebert,” November 1894, Wilbur Siebert Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

⁴¹ LaRoche, *Free Black Communities*, 73.

astutely emphasizes family, church, and community as the pillars of the Underground Railroad movement. Underground Railroad networks were often based on family connections. Given the risks involved, particularly for African Americans, working through a network to trusted relatives was a sound strategy. As LaRoche observes, “Children inherited their parents’ activism, brothers and sisters worked together; whole families cooperated in rescue efforts.”⁴² The Stewart family epitomizes this pattern.

While much of their Underground Railroad activity happened after his death, it is highly likely that Preacher John Stewart would have shared their zeal. Stewart felt compelled, according to a vision, to proceed to the northwest from Marietta and preach to the Indians. He visited two other communities before finding the place where he felt his vision was leading him. The part of Ohio in which Stewart traveled was Native American territory and still largely unknown. Conceivably, in addition to his religious mission, he may have also been scouting for connections and friends to assist in establishing routes through the area. In the Siebert map of Underground Railroad routes in Ohio, there is a route directly from Poke Patch to Upper Sandusky. Most of this route corresponds to the Scioto trail used by Native American tribes and the military in the War of 1812. Further, several members of the Stewart family relocated from Poke Patch to Cass County, Michigan, another hot bed of Underground Railroad activity. The Wyandot Reservation and Negrotown would have conveniently been between the two locations. After Stewart came to the Wyandots in 1816, he made two trips back to Marietta in 1817

⁴² LaRoche, 127.

through 1818, and traveled to visit his family in Tennessee. He also traveled to quarterly meetings of the Ohio Methodist Episcopal conference.

Travel in Ohio during the early decades of the nineteenth century was difficult. Much of the state remained undeveloped, and was divided into Indian reservations. The Treaty of Greenville with the Wyandot and other tribes in 1795, stipulated that: “And the said Indian tribes will allow to the people of the United States a free passage by land and by water, as one and the other shall be found convenient, through their country....”⁴³ In 1817, the U.S. government reserved the right to make roads and establish taverns and ferries should they be found necessary to accommodate travelers.⁴⁴ Indian trails, military roads, and waterways would have been the best routes to use during this time period. Siebert informant O.W. Priddy observed that prior to 1838 or 1840, settlements were scarce in the western part of the state and there could not have been a systematic Underground Railroad route. Indian trails and the canal paralleling the Miami, Auglaize and Maumee Rivers would have provided an excellent route.⁴⁵ John Stewart’s description of traveling in pursuit of his vision to preach among the Indians attests to the wilderness he traversed.

Colonel D.W.H. Howard who participated in the Underground Railroad as a boy helping his father Edward, gave an account of this early period in an 1894 letter to Wilbur Siebert. He describes a route that was active in the period around 1815-1840.

⁴³ Treaty with the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pottawatimies, Miamies, Eel-Rivers, Weas, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Kaskaskias, . 7 Stat. 49 (1795).

⁴⁴ Treaty with the Wyandots, Senecas, Delawares, Shawnees, Pottawatimies, Ottawas, and Chippewas, . 7 Stat. 160 (1817).

⁴⁵ “O.W. Priddy to Wilbur Siebert,” December 12, 1932, Wilbur Siebert Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

Crossing the Ohio River in Hamilton County, then following the rivers if possible, to the Upper Auglaize, passing near the Shawnee village of Wapakoneta, then to an Ottawa village on the Blanchard and on to the Grand Rapids of the Maumee. At the Ottawa village of Chief Kin-je-i-no “where all were friendly and the poor slave treated kindly, thence by a plain trail north to [Fort] Malden, Canada.” Howard’s family moved to the Maumee Valley when he was a child, in June 1821. They settled in Grand Rapids and lived in a cabin on the opposite side of the river from the Ottawa village of Chief Kin-je-i-no. There were no other white children, so his associates were Indian children and he attended an Indian mission school for three or four years—his only formal education. His family was actively involved with the Underground Railroad, with his mother preparing food for the hungry travelers and his father escorting them toward freedom. Howard relates an incident in which he was involved, as he often accompanied his father. They had a group of freedom seekers hidden in the swampy forest near their cabin until they could move them onward. An Indian friend informed them that the group was being watched and would likely be ambushed along the way. A slave catcher from Kentucky lived a few miles below the Rapids, along the trail, and they always had to be extra careful not to be surprised. Howard’s father took a circuitous route and posted a boy to guard the trail behind them. If necessary, the guard was to shoot any horses that came along behind. Soon, they heard the sound of the horses and the crack of the rifle through the forest. The slave catchers, afraid to advance, retreated over the trail, and the freedom seekers continued their journey unmolested.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “D.W.H. Howard to Wilbur Siebert,” August 22, 1894, Wilbur Siebert Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

The difficulty of travel in this period was echoed by Josiah Henson, the enslaved man on whom Harriet Beecher Stowe based Uncle Tom. Henson published several versions of his autobiography; the first in 1849. In it, he describes escaping slavery in 1830, by traveling north through Ohio with his wife and children. Thinking that they could find food from people along the way, Henson did not bring a supply. They found the Scioto trail, but did not realize it cut through wilderness. Henson's wife fainted from hunger but revived from the little morsel of food he had remaining. Their second day in the wilderness, the family came upon some Native Americans who seemed as startled to see them as Henson was at their appearance. Henson understood their fear as due to confusing him with the devil, whom they may have heard of as black. Refusing to turn back as his wife desired, he followed them to their village, probably a Seneca or Cayuga.⁴⁷ As they drew near, Henson observed other Indians watching them from behind trees. Presently they came upon the chief, who was standing calmly in front of his abode and "soon discovered that we were human beings, and spoke to his young men, who were scattered about, and made them come in, and give up their foolish fears."⁴⁸ The chief, who seemed to understand the situation, set his people about providing bountiful food and a comfortable place to sleep. When they resumed their journey the next day, Henson's family discovered they were about twenty-five miles from Sandusky on Lake

⁴⁷ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, vol. 174, Civilization of the American Indian Series (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 134. Using the estimate that they were about twenty-five miles from Sandusky, an 1840 map of Indian Villages indicates a Cayuga/Seneca village at that distance along the Sandusky River.

⁴⁸ Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849), 52–54, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henson49/henson49.html>.

Erie. Some of the young men were sent to escort them to the trail leading to the lake and parted from them “with as much kindness as possible.”⁴⁹

As late as 1830, tribes in northern Ohio would have been familiar with Blacks. The Senecas were neighbors and had become allies with the Wyandots, and some of their tribal members inter-married. Tribal leaders would have interacted with their counterparts from other tribes and that may explain why the chief seemed less startled by the visitors. In any case, the village would have been about thirty miles from Negrotown, which was well established by 1830. Whatever the cause of their reaction, it is notable that the villagers provided food and shelter to the freedom seeking family. Moreover, by providing them directions, they facilitated the Henson family’s journey.

Oral tradition from Genevieve Eicher supports the involvement of Ohio’s Native Americans in assisting freedom seeking blacks. Sweetgrass Genevieve Eicher was a descendant of Wyandot chief Tarhe as well as Shawnee and Cherokee ancestors. Several of her lineages included Underground Railroad activists. Born in 1924, she was adopted at age five by Alice and Augustus Motter. Augustus was the grandson of Lewis Eckhart who ran an active Underground Railroad station in Fulton County (on the Michigan border). Augustus’ mother was born in 1838, and helped in her parents’ Underground Railroad activities. Alice was born in 1874 to Charles Tubbs who was born in 1810 and was an Indian interpreter and very involved with the Underground Railroad in northwestern Ohio. “So Charles was born in 1810, Alice born in 1874 and me born in 1924, in three generations cover a lot of years of gathering and passing on information

⁴⁹ Henson, 55.

about a lot of local history and happenings in northwestern Ohio.”⁵⁰ Genevieve related a story that one day she returned home from the school where she worked and her mother told her about some visitors that she had. Descendants of freedom seekers who had been helped by her father Charles Tubbs, had come to the house with a journal that their ancestors kept of their journey to freedom. The descendants were re-tracing the route. Alice had always wondered she said, about the end of the story, and now she knew. In tracing her natural family, Eicher found that they were also active in the Huron County Underground Railroad and inter-married with the Robinson family of Henry County who were also involved and from whom she is also descended.

As a young child amidst much older relatives, Eicher had access to a wealth of information about historical events. Her adopted mother Alice Motter was a school teacher who assigned Genevieve summer projects to keep her literacy skills sharp. Summer was a time for visiting relatives and in the days before World War II, they would sit on the front porch after dark and tell the old stories. Genevieve’s assignment when she was 13 or 14, was to interview her elders to learn this skill and then record their stories to keep up with her education and to capture the stories for future use. One of her best sources was Alice Motter’s half-brother, James Robinson. “Uncle Jim” was a Wyandot elder and precise story teller who would visit her family for a month or so every year. Alice and James had the same mother, Charlotte Newell Robinson Tubbs. James particularly loved to tell stories, and Genevieve was happy to hear them. Uncle Jim would admonish her to write things down just as he told them and not to add anything to

⁵⁰ “Genevieve Eicher to Naomi Twining,” May 12, 2004, copy of original private correspondence.

his story. He made sure to get out the family photo albums and point out the people he was talking about.⁵¹

The Newell, Robinson, and Tubbs families were all involved with the Underground Railroad. Uncle Jim told the story of being a young child and coming home from school to find unfamiliar black people upstairs in the spare bedroom. He would never know who might be there. When he was a little older, he confided in his mother that he was a little bit afraid of them because they did not look right. Charlotte told him that underneath they did and that skin color was not important. He never forgot the lesson and thereafter looked at people differently.⁵²

Charlotte's second husband, Charles Tubbs⁵³, came to northwest Ohio before 1837, from Mexico, New York, a very active Underground Railroad area. He was a Presbyterian and in 1836 married Lucy Ann Stow from Massachusetts whose father was a Presbyterian minister and land speculator. Prior to settling in Ohio, he and Charles Tubbs spent two seasons surveying along the Maumee River and the Black Swamp region looking for locations to establish farms and Underground Railroad stations. Tubbs brought his new wife and settled in Ridgeville. The "Ridge" is a geological formation of elevated land that allows easier passage through the Black Swamp and was used as an Indian Trail that went as far north as Adrian, Michigan, another active Underground Railroad hub. In this area, the tribes were mainly Miami, Ottawa, Shawnee, a few Seneca and some Wyandots. Tubbs had lived near a main Indian trail in New York and had an

⁵¹ Eicher, interview, March 20, 2012; "Genevieve Eicher to Naomi Twining."

⁵² Eicher, interview, March 20, 2012.

⁵³ Alice Motter's father.

affinity for Native American languages, speaking twenty-seven different ones. He was able to converse with the tribes in Ohio. Tubbs was a farmer who used his wagon to bring produce to market in the Defiance, Wauseon, and Delta areas, and also to secret freedom seekers. He planted a row of maple trees along the Indian trail near his home in Ohio and also put in a shallow surface well and pump. In these ways he hoped to provide shelter from sun and rain and water to quench the thirst of travelers, whether they were red, white, or black.⁵⁴ He observed that after the tribes left Ohio they appeared to have more trouble getting freedom seekers north. The Indians would travel regularly to Detroit to visit relatives or receive annuity payments. They were known to bring freedom seekers with them. When Ohio became settled with whites, they tended to stay in place and so the routes changed over time.⁵⁵

Genevieve's great grand-mother through her biological father, Emmaline Elizabeth Robinson was an Underground Railroad conductor. Emmaline's father William Pierce Robinson was a white captive of the Delawares who was traded to the Wyandots and adopted by Tarhe. Emmaline spoke both Wyandot and English which gave her an advantage in her Underground Railroad work which she conducted in the Swanton-Monclova area on the border of Fulton and Lucas counties. She was able to converse fluently with the Indians who brought the fugitives but also speak to the freedom seekers themselves. Her father-in-law, James Foreman was also adopted by

⁵⁴ Ohio Underground Railroad Association, *Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad* (Columbus, Ohio: Friends of Freedom Press, 2004), 93.

⁵⁵Eicher, interview, March 20, 2012; Eicher, interview, April 2003; "Town of Mexico, Oswego County, NY Website," *Biography of Dean Tubbs of Mexico, NY* (blog), accessed June 1, 2014, <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nyoswego/biographies/sumner-tubbs-vault.html#tubbs>.

Tarhe. James was active in the Underground Railroad in Huron County. Genevieve explains that while “both families ‘went white’ later, they retained many of their Indian ways and traditions, and handed much of their knowledge down to subsequent generations.”⁵⁶ These family members did not remove to Kansas in 1843, but stayed in Ohio or moved to Canada. Their Underground Railroad activities, therefore, continued in Ohio past 1843. Uncle Jim, for example, was born in 1860, and would have been a young child in the ending years of the Underground Railroad era.

Another oral tradition comes from the Gunn family, whose descendant Charlie was a great friend of Genevieve’s and passed along their stories. Charles Gunn settled at Damascus on the Maumee River in 1814, setting up an Indian trading post. Edward McCarthy Gunn was born in 1821 and grew up among the Indians at the trading post. A mixed race fur buyer worked for Charles and would travel the region buying pelts. Often, he would return to the trading post with freedom seekers he found along the trail. Edward reported seeing Blacks coming out of the Indian tents early in the morning. The tribes around Damascus were Ottawa and Pottawatomie. They would journey to Fort Malden, Ontario to receive their pay for war service from the British government. When they made this annual trip, they would take the freedom seekers with them and drop them off in Canada.⁵⁷

Genevieve’s family lore elaborates on the relationship between Native Americans and African Americans. From colonial times, when Africans were brought to the continent and Native Americans were enslaved, they understood that they had a common

⁵⁶ Genevieve Eicher, interview by Diane Miller, March 20, 2012 and related family history materials.

⁵⁷ Eicher, interview, April 2003; Eicher, interview, March 20, 2012.

bond of oppression. Africans felt a measure of security if they were with Native Americans and this feeling was passed down through folklore of both groups. As Native Americans traveled the countryside, they moved in single file; frequently the trails were not wide enough to walk abreast. Enslaved blacks could fall in at the back of the line and if they could keep up with the pace and follow the practices of the group, they would be taken care of or given shelter until they could move on. Often when word reached a plantation that Indians were in the area, enslaved Blacks would make their preparations and slip out at night to join them.⁵⁸

One significant Indian trail that played a role in the Underground Railroad was known as the Bullskin Trace. A prehistoric route forged by large game animals and Native Americans, it extended from Great Salt Licks in Kentucky north into Michigan, thereby connecting the Ohio River to the Great Lakes. In the historic period, it passed through the center of the Shawnee lands and Old Town, formerly Chillicothe, where several thousand Shawnees lived. It continued through Urbana, Bellfontaine, Big Spring, before branching at Perrysburg, with the east branch continuing to Detroit and the west branch crossing the Maumee to Fort Miami.⁵⁹ This route was used as a military road by General Anthony Wayne in 1793 to attack the tribes in northern Ohio. In 1807 and 1808, the Ohio Legislature enacted provisions making the Xenia State Road following the route of the Bullskin Trace. During the War of 1812, the road was used to

⁵⁸ Eicher, interview, April 2003; Eicher, interview, March 20, 2012.

⁵⁹ Norma Lewis and Richard Scamyhorn, "Bullskin Trace" (nd: U.S. Army Engineer Division, Ohio River, n.d.), map illustration, plate 8, II-30.

supply Admiral Perry's fleet on Lake Erie with supplies boated down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh.⁶⁰

The Bullskin Trace and Scioto Trail were two avenues used in border skirmishing between the Shawnees and Kentuckians in the 1780s and 1790s. Jonathan Alder, a white child who was captured in Virginia by the Shawnees at the age of nine in 1782, described his experiences in Shawnee raids into Kentucky. Alder was adopted by a Mingo warrior and his Shawnee wife. He spent thirteen years with the Shawnees, "getting to be an Indian in the true sense of the word."⁶¹ The Indians felt the pressure of white encroachment on their land and attacks by white armies timed to coincide with destroying food harvested in preparation for the coming winter. Retaliatory raids by both sides became common. Stealing horses was a favorite goal of the Shawnees, though Alder described one failed raid where a plan was devised to steal slaves instead. Alder's raiding party separated and the other group, unable to find available horses came upon a new settlement where a house was under construction. Waiting until two enslaved men were separated from their white owners, the Shawnees caught one but he fought them off and escaped. The raiding party returned home empty-handed. Alder observed that "a slave amongst the Indians or taken prisoner by them was a great prize....Many Indians considered slaves more valuable than horses, not because they were more useful, but because of the honor of having a slave."⁶²

⁶⁰ Lewis and Scamyhorn, II-18-19.

⁶¹ Henry Clay Alder, *A History of Jonathan Alder, His Captivity and Life with the Indians*, ed. Larry L. Nelson (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2002), 80.

⁶² Alder, 91.

British astronomer Francis Baily described an encounter with an African American captive in his journal of traveling through frontier America in 1796-1797. Traveling along the Little Miami River toward Waynesville, Baily's party observed a man dart into the woods to hide. As they tracked the man, they were startled by an African American who suddenly appeared from the bushes to hastily inquire whether there were any Indians in the area. He explained that he had been a prisoner since the last American war. While they treated him as one of their own children, giving him a wife and mother, still he was determined to escape. He had been enslaved in Kentucky, but he was prepared to give up his liberty to return to the friends and relations from whom he had been separated. With pity and compassion, they gave him something for the journey and directed him to the closest town, Columbia.⁶³

Another Shawnee captive was an African American known as Caesar, who escaped to Chillicothe in 1774 and was adopted by the Shawnee. Caesar married a mixed race Shawnee woman with whom he had two children, known as "Sally's black son" and "Sally's white son" because of their different complexions.⁶⁴ Caesar acquired some land along a creek that now bears his name. The creek ran through a deep ravine and was adjacent to the Bullskin Trace. Near Caesar's Creek, two communities with significant Quaker populations, Harveysburg and Waynesville developed in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Alongside the Quaker enclaves at Harveysburg and Waynesville, African American communities also developed. All of these communities were active in

⁶³ Francis Baily, *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 & 1797 by the Late Francis Baily ; with a Memoir of the Author* (London: Baily Bros, 1856), 205–6.

⁶⁴ Finkenbine, "Underground Railroad in 'Indian Country,'" 76.

the Underground Railroad.⁶⁵ This fits the pattern of Quaker and black settlements involved in the Underground Railroad that Cheryl LaRoche described in *The Geography of Resistance*. Blacks settled in Harveysburg itself where they worked with their white neighbors in the anti-slavery cause. On Caesar's Creek itself, mills developed which provided jobs for free blacks living in the area. Originally called New Baltimore, the settlement was renamed Canbytown in 1835. By 1831, there were enough African American children living in the vicinity of Caesar's Creek to warrant a black school to be established by Quaker Elizabeth Burgess Harvey in Harveysburg. Elizabeth and her husband Jesse Harvey, in addition to educating African Americans and operating a stop on the Underground Railroad, made frequent trips to Wapakoneta, a Shawnee village.⁶⁶ In 1847 they moved to Kansas to work at the Quaker mission to the Shawnees.

The Quakers in southwestern Ohio brought education to the Native Americans and African Americans. An 1823 report to the Indiana Yearly Meeting to which the Miami Quarterly Meeting was attached, provided status of both the Committee on Indian Concerns and the Committee on the subject of the people of color. The topic of both reports focused on the status of schools established to teach the children to work in agricultural and domestic tasks. Additionally, the Committee on the subject of the people of color had also been used in several instances of preventing free blacks from being reduced to a state of slavery.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ohio Underground Railroad Association, *Freedom Seekers*, 144; Karen S. Campbell, "Harveysburg, Ohio on Caesar's Creek Lake—A Little Village with a Big History," accessed June 2, 2014, <http://letthejourneysbegin.wordpress.com/2012/03/23/harveysburg-ohio-on-caesars-creek-lake-a-little-village-with-a-big-history/>.

⁶⁶ Ohio History Central, "Elizabeth B. Harvey," n.d., https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Elizabeth_B._Harvey.

⁶⁷ "Extracts of Indiana Yearly Meeting Held at Whitewater from the 6th of the 10th Mo to the 9th of the Same Inclusive 1823" (1823), Ohio Historical Society.

Like the Wyandots, the Shawnees had Africans living among them. Like the Wyandots and other tribes, there is evidence that they adopted captive slaves into the tribe, though their subsequent status is unclear. From Alder's account however, it appears that slaves may have been sought as a status symbol to be sold to prominent tribal members. And while the African American captive encountered by Baily seemed to have a life of liberty among the Shawnees, his desperation to return home to his family indicates that he was not there by choice. Whatever their status regarding freedom, African Americans did not enjoy the prominence among the Shawnees that John Stewart or Jonathan Pointer did among the Wyandots. The Quakers and free blacks living in the area of Caesar's Creek were highly involved with the Underground Railroad. As the Harveys traveled along the Bullskin Trace from Haveysburg to Wapakoneta, they easily could have escorted freedom seekers. The Shawnees must have been well aware of this activity.

CHAPTER 4—“WE HAD OUR BORDER RUFFIAN WAR BEFORE YOU
HAD YOURS”: THE WYANDOT AND SHAWNEE IN KANSAS, INDIAN
TERRITORY, 1828-1854

Moving west to new lands, the Ohio tribes set about re-establishing their societies. In Kansas, Indian Territory, removal again placed them on a borderland with slavery. Their experience, acumen, and knowledge conditioned them to navigate this liminal geographic space. At the same time, they coped with transitions between their traditional cultural practices and adapting to pressures from white society to become “civilized.” In this context, and at least a decade before the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Wyandots and Shawnees confronted slavery and its related issues.

Missionaries amongst the tribes and the split in Protestant denominations over the question of slavery brought the issue to the fore. Both the Wyandots and Shawnees became polarized over the question. The split within the Methodist Episcopal Church divided the Wyandots. Tribal leaders such as William Walker acquired slaves. Arriving in Kansas a decade or so earlier than the Wyandots, the Shawnees faced a similar experience. The Methodist Episcopal missionary to the Shawnees, Thomas Johnson, purchased slaves to work at the mission. Tribal leaders such as Joseph Parks owned slaves. The competing sentiments of the missions to the Shawnees—the abolitionist Quakers and the slave holding Methodist Episcopal South—exacerbated differences within the tribe on the issue.

Annie Abel notes that the relative location of the northern and southern tribes in the west appears to have been determined with “careful regard to the restrictions of the Missouri Compromise and the interdicted line of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes.”¹ Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, who championed creating an Indian territory in the west, noted that non-slave holding states, while concerned about limiting the potential for new free states north of the line, did not seem opposed “to tribes removing west upon the same parallels of latitude which they respectively occupied on the east of the Mississippi.” Both southern and northern interests sought to maintain the status quo: “the non-slaveholding States opposing every measure which they suppose would introduce Southern Indians on to their side of the line compromised, and the southern States as warmly opposing the filling up of the country on the south side of the line, with Indians from the north.”² Settlement in Kansas put this tacit agreement to the test.

The contested question of slavery in the territories, James Oakes argued in *Freedom National*, hinged on whether freedom was national and slavery local, or vice versa. “Most important of all antislavery activists argued, the revolutionary generation had suffused the nation’s founding documents with the bias toward freedom intrinsic to the ‘law of nations.’”³ The framers of the Constitution had refrained from referring to slaves as property, and so therefore as persons, they retained their rights to freedom under natural law. So, while the Constitution supported slavery as a state institution, it required

¹ Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist: An Omitted Chapter in the Diplomatic History of the Southern Confederacy* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 1915), 21.

² Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes; Their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and Their Future Prospects* (Washington: William Morrison, 1840), 324.

³ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 7.

“positive laws” to overrule natural laws and to provide for the ownership of humans as property. Proponents of slavery, conversely, defined slavery as national and freedom as local. In their view, the federal government had an obligation to protect the property rights of slave holders.

Abolitionists through the 1840s and 1850s refined their argument that the federal government had a positive obligation to restrict slavery in any area under the jurisdiction of the Constitution. This included territories, the District of Columbia, and navigable waterways. In a letter to his Massachusetts constituents published in the *National Era*, Horace Mann addressed the admission of California as a state and other issues arising from the treaty with Mexico. He warned that if slavery was permitted in the territories, “the power of the Government will be invoked to exterminate these Indians, as it was before to exterminate the Cherokee and Seminoles—not to drive them beyond the Mississippi, but beyond the Styx.”⁴ Permanent removal of the Indian nations would open room for the extension of slavery-based agriculture.

While the political debate raged on, actions by the military and federal agencies implemented policies that reflected the influence of the “slavery national” proponents. Indian agents assigned by the Bureau of Indian affairs, and military officers assigned to the territories brought slaves with them, supported those who did, and took action against anti-slavery officials. The Wyandots and Shawnees resisted these incursions of slavery in their midst.

⁴ Horace Mann, “New Dangers to Freedom and New Duties for Its Defenders,” *National Era*, May 20, 1850, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

The problem of slaveholding among missionaries was identified by anti-slavery proponents early in the development of the movement. Most of the discussion centered on the Five Tribes which had become slaveholders before their removal west. However, the same dynamics also applied to non-slave holding tribes. The Proceedings of the 1851 Christian Anti-Slavery Convention included a discussion of an 1848 Report on the *Existence and Influence of Slavery in the Mission Churches of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* based on an investigation of slaveholding at the Choctaw and Cherokee Mission Churches. Anti-slavery contributors to the mission churches became aware that their funds were sustaining Mission Churches where slavery was practiced. The Secretary of the Board issued directives to remove this source of reproach as soon as possible. Abolitionist members “Relying upon what they supposed sufficient authority, they looked to see the evil ended in the shortest possible period.” Several years later, concluding that slavery would not be extricated from the Mission Churches and noting that slavery was advancing in the Indian nations, they vowed to sever their connections with slaveholding missions in favor of Free Missionary Societies. Their ultimate fear was that “A portion of the territory upon which these nations are located, must sooner or later come into the Union as a new State, and, without doubt, as a slave State.”⁵

Whether slavery would be allowed in new territories edged the nation toward Civil War. Attempts at compromise in the nineteenth century were fraught with heated

⁵ J.B. Walker, “Report on the Existence and Influence of Slavery in Mission Churches of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” *National Era*, August 14, 1851, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

debates. Large swaths of territory added from Texas, Mexico and Oregon in the 1840s set up the crisis at the same time that the Wyandots were settling in their new Kansas Territory lands. Debates centered around the question of whether the national government could legislate regarding slavery. Perhaps out of weariness over the issue, a doctrine of non-intervention gained traction—“let things remain as they are; let slavery stay where it is; exclude it where it is not; refrain from disturbing the public quiet by agitations; adjust all differences that arise, not by application of principles, but by compromise.”⁶ The concept was vague enough to mean different things to each side. Anti-slavery advocates understood that the decision would be made by citizens as the territory became a state. Pro-slavery proponents held the territory should be open to slavery as freely as any other type of property.⁷ In the debates that concluded with the Compromise of 1850, northern advocates for territorial compromise justified their stance because slavery was prohibited in these territories by Mexican laws which had not been repealed, thus they would be free. Southern supporters consoled themselves with the notion that the Mexican law forbidding slavery was abrogated at the moment of U.S. acquisition.⁸ They could settle the region, bringing their enslaved property with them. Timing of the decision made all of the difference. The Compromise might have kicked the ball down the road, but most understood that the character of the territory would determine the character of the state.

⁶ Salmon P. Chase, “Speech of Hon.S.P. Chase of Ohio, in the Senate, February 3, 1854,” *Washington Sentinel*, February 12, 1854, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

⁷ Milo Milton Quaife, “The Doctrine of Non-Intervention with Slavery in the Territories” (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1910), 49, <https://archive.org/details/doctrinenoninte01quaigoog>.

⁸ Chase, “Speech.”

Slavery was not excluded from Indian Territory and the southern tribes continued slaveholding after their removal west. The Ohio emigrant tribes—Wyandots, Shawnees, and Delawares—removed north of the interdicted line, brought their own cosmological belief systems regarding slavery. Their tribal lands lay in “free” territory as designated by the Missouri Compromise, though slavery made inroads there before popular sovereignty was introduced with the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Missionaries from various denominations such as the Quakers, Methodists, Baptists, and Moravians vied for influence with the tribes. Abel notes that the rivalries and sectional divisions within the churches of that era played out most strongly within Indian country. The federal government, with its civilization fund demonstrated “very pointedly its sectional predilections.”⁹

Stephen Douglas based the Kansas-Nebraska Act on the concept of non-intervention or popular sovereignty. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise and opening of the Nebraska-Kansas Territory to slavery in 1854 set up Bleeding Kansas. Both sides rushed to imprint the newly organized territory with their vision of society—based on free labor or slavery—with the future state as the prize. They were ten years too late.

The Ohio Emigrant Tribes that settled in Kansas had been resisting slavery in the territory since their relocation there. Reverend George W. Roberts was appointed by the Methodist Episcopal Church to Kansas in 1851. His account in the *Tipton Advertiser* explodes the myth that the Emigrant Aid Societies were responsible for the violence in

⁹ Abel, *American Indian as Slaveholder*, 35,37.

Kansas. Roberts described how pro-slavery Indian agents had been sent to the Territory for “a long course of years,” bringing their enslaved laborers with them. These pro-slavery agents contributed to tensions that would erupt among the Wyandots when the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery.

In 1845, when the M. E. Church divided on the subject of slavery, as soon as it was discovered that the Indians connected with the Methodist missions would not go with the Southern organization, immediately all the church property was secured to a pro-slavery minority, and the Indians told that they must *go* into the church South, or have no Methodist missionaries. A large portion, with a majority of the native preachers refused.

The resulting controversy exploded in violence amongst the Wyandots. Roberts quoted Major Moseley, Indian agent at Wyandotte as saying “We intend to have this country for slavery, peacefully if we can, but if not peacefully we will have it any way,” as Moseley exhibited his pistol. As early as 1853, Roberts observed “If there is an attempt to make Kansas a Free State, blood will be shed. ‘Kansas and Slavery,’ has been the Atchison party’s motto for ten years. And now they present that the bloodshed is caused by the Emigrant Aid Society! The spirit of the pro-slavery men of the border is what it always has been.”¹⁰ The Wyandots and Shawnees pushed back against the influence of the missionaries and the agents. And while it split the tribes and tribal leaders acquired some enslaved people, slavery did not take firm root among the tribes in Kansas. Had it done so, the outcome of Bleeding Kansas might have been different.

¹⁰ “Kansas Troubles--Real Origin and Spirit of Them,” *Tipton Advertiser*, August 30, 1856, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>; Reverend J.J. Lutz, “The Methodist Missions among the Indian Tribes of Kansas,” ed. George W. Martin, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1905-1906* IX (1906): 230. The article erroneously names Reverend George W. Roberts as Reverend Robbins.

When the Wyandots migrated in 1843, some of the African descended people chose to remain in Ohio, while some moved to Kansas with the tribe. Jonathan Pointer, Joseph McDonald, with his family, and Sam Wells continued to live in Ohio. Ann Austin, known as “Black Ann”, moved to Michigan, presumably to the Wyandot settlement, before settling in Wood County, Ohio with a group of about thirty other Wyandots.¹¹ While the tribe may have been able to shelter African Americans within their reservation, the journey to Kansas took them along the Ohio River and through the slave state of Missouri. Jonathan Pointer refused to go with the tribe for fear that they might “give him back to some (as he called them) of his ‘young masters in Virginia.’”¹² Sam Wells, also captured as an enslaved child, remained behind, becoming impoverished and under the care of Eden Township Trustee, Reuben Lowmaster.¹³ John Johnston and James Washington, two of the residents of Negrotown do appear on the muster rolls of Wyandots who departed Upper Sandusky in July 1843. Of the 665 individuals accounted for on the rolls, however, no slaves are identified. George Wright brought his African American children west in 1846. He submitted a claim for the resulting expenses to the Wyandot chiefs who refused to pay. In 1851, John Armstrong petitioned the

¹¹ “An Indian Centenarian,” *Wood County Sentinel*, January 11, 1906. Ann Austin died in Wood County in 1906. Her obituary noted “She was different from the usual run of Indians in that she had curly hair instead of the straight black which is characteristic of her race.”

¹² “Obituary,” *Wyandot Pioneer*, March 19, 1857. Pointer's one request at his death was to be buried by the side of Methodist preacher John Stewart.

¹³ Leggett, Conaway & Co., *The History of Wyandot County, Ohio, Containing a History of the County; Its Townships, Towns, Churches, Schools, Etc; General and Local Statistics; Military Record; Portraits of Early Settlers and Prominent Men; History of the Northwest Territory; History of Ohio; Miscellaneous Matters, Etc, Etc* (Chicago: Leggett, Conaway, & Co, 1884), 825.

Commissioner of Indian affairs on Wright's behalf, claiming that the refusal to pay was because the children were part Black.¹⁴

Though their numbers were small, in 1847, shortly after their removal west, both the Wyandots and Shawnees included people of African descent in their midst.¹⁵ While the census data do not indicate their status with respect to slavery, nine African Americans were living among the 575 Indians on the Wyandot purchase and twelve were living among the 886 individuals on the Shawnee reserve. The Delawares included no individuals of African descent.

Lucy Bigelow Armstrong, daughter of a white missionary who married Wyandot attorney John M. Armstrong, spoke of the early days of the Wyandots in Kansas at an old settlers' reunion in 1879. "We had our border ruffian war before you had yours," she observed. In the winter of 1843-1844, she recalled, the Wyandot council enacted a law forbidding the introduction of slaves into their territory. Lucy estimated more than three-fourths of the Wyandots were abolitionists, with only the descendants of Virginians who had been taken as prisoners expressing pro-slavery opinions."¹⁶ Writing in his journal on March 31 1846, tribal leader William Walker noted that the "negro question" came up

¹⁴ "John M. Armstrong to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Lea," March 6, 1851, RG75, M234, Roll 952, National Archives and Records Administration.

¹⁵ Larry Hancks, "The Emigrant Tribes: Wyandot, Delaware & Shawnee, A Chronology," 1998, http://www.wyandot.org/1800_1850.pdf; Henry Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States; Collected and Prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs per Act of Congress of March 3rd, 1847*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Company, 1851). Hancks compiled statistics from Schoolcraft.

¹⁶ Charles Gleed, ed., *The Kansas Memorial: A Report of the Old Settlers' Meeting Held at Bismarck Grove, Kansas, September 15th and 16th, 1879* (Kansas City, MO: Press of Ramsey, Millett, and Hudson, 1880), 88.

and that the “C[hief] denied that any law prohibiting our negroes from emigrating to this country was passed”¹⁷

As the Wyandots struggled to establish themselves in the west, the Methodist Episcopal Church remained one of their most important institutions. Reverend James Wheeler who had been with the Wyandots for four years in Ohio, accompanied the tribe to Kansas in 1843. Though the tribe had been part of the Ohio conference since 1819, on their move to Kansas, they were attached to the Indian Mission conference. The congregation numbered 200 members and had two local preachers, five exhorters, and nine class leaders. While Wheeler returned to Ohio to bring his family west, the tribe continued with regular services and meetings. After services in February 1844, Wyandot preacher Esquire Grayeyes proposed that the people build a church, though he did not yet have a home of his own. He stated that he wanted “a home for my soul first.”¹⁸ The new building was completed by the time of Wheeler’s return in May 1844,

Nationally, the Methodist Episcopal Church had become embroiled in controversy over the question of slavery. Repeated agitation on the subject by northern members and frequent action on the topic led southern conferences to believe that affiliation with the General conference was inconsistent with their success in slaveholding states. Consequently, in May 1845, delegates from the southern conferences held a meeting in Louisville, Kentucky where they dissolved their connection to the General conference,

¹⁷ William Elsey Connelly, ed., *The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and the Journals of William Walker Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1899), 174.

¹⁸ Lucy B. Armstrong, “The Settlement of Wyandot”, ed. Edward Bumgardner (n.d.), RHMS P233, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

effectively seceding to form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The conference representing the Indian Missions was among this group.¹⁹ For the Wyandots, a tribe with abolitionist sentiment and a strong connection to the Methodist Episcopal Church, this change of affiliation had a dramatic impact.

The movement of the bishops to split over the subject of slavery caused alarm among the Methodist Wyandots. Several Wyandot leaders, such as John Armstrong and George I. Clark argued that slavery went against ancient Wyandot customs regarding adoption and tribal membership.²⁰ John Armstrong sought advice from Reverend Charles Elliott, one of their former missionaries and a Methodist Episcopal official, in an August 1845 letter. Their lot having been cast with the pro-slavery Indian Mission conference, Armstrong noted that there was not a Presiding Elder who would consent to organize a ministry under the “old church”. There was only one true northern man in the conference--Brother James Wheeler, who had been transferred to it when he removed to Kansas with the tribe. Wheeler could not be induced to go against the feelings of his congregation, and further, he preferred to return to the north than to be associated with the southern church. Noting that the true cause of secession “is studiously kept from them,” Armstrong continued “If it were fully made known to them that slavery is the true issue and cause of separation the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots and Kickapoos would almost unanimously prefer to remain members of the old church.”

¹⁹ Reverend Charles Elliott, *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845, Eventuating in the Organization of the New Church, Entitled the “Methodist Episcopal Church, South”* (Cincinnati: Swormdstedt & Poe, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1855), 658.

²⁰ Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*, 182.

Armstrong urged the Methodist Episcopal Church to address the Wyandot concerns. As a lawyer, Armstrong noted that the beneficiary rights of the soil on which missionary property was located resided with the Indians, rather than with the church as it was in the United States, and should go with the majority of the congregants. Further, Armstrong asserted, that even considering the southern secession, the Wyandots should remain in the northern church since slavery was disallowed north of the latitude of 36°30' and west of the Mississippi under the Missouri Compromise. Armstrong ended with a plaintive plea:

The Wyandots cannot join the Southern church. They cannot serve God in a pro slavery church and the other nations in this part of the Territory will soon see and feel as we do, and we would like to have them do so now. What can we do? What will our brethren in the North do for us. Will we be sustained.²¹

Efforts to remain in the northern Methodist Episcopal church failed. By May 1846, Wheeler had left the Wyandots and returned to Ohio with great reluctance and a sorrowful heart.²² The Methodist Episcopal Church, South appointed Reverend E.T. Peery, to succeed Wheeler by the southern church and arrived on May 9. Peery was a Methodist missionary among the tribes in Kansas, and had been a delegate from the Indian conference to the 1845 Louisville convention at which the southern church was organized.²³ While Peery represented himself as opposing slavery, he went with most of

²¹ "J.M. Armstrong to Reverend Charles Elliott," August 11, 1845, RHMS 69, folder 1, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

²² Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 178. See Walker's journal entries for May 4-5, 1846.

²³ Lucy Armstrong, *Historical Record of the Washington Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church* (Kansas City, Kansas: R.B. Armstrong Printer, 1893), 3-7; Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 181; Reverend J.J. Lutz, "The Methodist Missions among the Indian Tribes of Kansas," ed. George W. Martin, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1905-1906* IX (1906): 179.

the missionaries into the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.²⁴ Peery encouraged the Wyandots to build a new brick church, overruling concerns that the southern church would claim the property, since he was keeping church records under the name of the Methodist Episcopal church.²⁵ In 1847, a committee of Wyandots Francis Hicks, Matthew Walker, John Armstrong, Silas Armstrong, and George I. Clarke contracted for construction of the brick church for eight hundred, eighty-two dollars.²⁶

Most of the cost of this building was borne by the tribe. Consequently, in January 1847, they petitioned Reverend George Lane for the funds recently received from the federal government for the improvements at the Upper Sandusky mission. They noted that they would not have made the request had it not been for the split in the church and their assignment to the southern division: “We do not feel free to call upon the south for help as we have all to a man taken a decided stand against them and only wait an opportunity to join the north.”²⁷ In April 1848, they again petitioned the Ohio conference for relief. A committee headed by Reverend James Finley, their former missionary, “earnestly” recommended providing five hundred dollars from the mission farm proceeds for the purpose, providing that the Methodists in the tribe were recognized as belonging to the Methodist Episcopal church.²⁸ Accordingly, the entire body of official members, except one, sent a communication to the Ohio conference on July 29, 1848, stating that they had determined not to go with the southern secession, considering it their natural

²⁴ Lutz, “Methodist Missions,” 215.

²⁵ Lutz, 215.

²⁶ “Articles of Agreement,” 1847, RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

²⁷ “J.M. Armstrong to Reverend George Lane,” January 16, 1847, RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

²⁸ Elliott, *Great Secession*, 646.

right to belong to the church of their choice. They petitioned, therefore, for a missionary to take charge of the church in the Wyandot nation.

By this time, the issue of slavery had begun to divide the tribe. William Walker, a leader in the tribal council seemed conflicted over slavery, but ultimately became a strong proponent. On January 1, 1847, Walker purchased a 32 year old female slave named Dorcas. He wrote in his journal “If I have erred in this act, may God in his infinite mercy forgive me, though I feel no condemnation for the act.” Adopting the language of Christian benevolence, Walker professes his desire to live up to his characterization by the auctioneer as a “good and kind master.”²⁹ A year later, in January 1848, he included a ditty in his diary on the occasion of the escape of a slave owned by tribal leader Francis A. Hicks:

Niggur Sambo run away

Didn't come back till Saturday.³⁰

Evidently slave escapes were not uncommon during this period. A month later Walker records in his journal that a person named Quinby called at the tribal council meeting, looking for a fugitive who had absconded from his master in Platte City.³¹

In late August 1848, William Walker and Silas Armstrong consulted about the church schism in an effort to forestall the posting of an abolitionist missionary. They called for a national convention to be held on September 1, 1848 to discuss the question and for which division of the church the Nation would declare. At this meeting, led by

²⁹ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 194.

³⁰ Connelly, 228.

³¹ Connelly, 231.

James Washington, John Hicks, Sr., and William Walker, an animated discussion in favor of the south was carried out by Silas Armstrong, William Walker, Matthew Walker, John D. Brown, Francis Hicks, David Young and others. John Armstrong, George I. Clark, and Esquire Grayeyes spoke for the northern position. Following the debate, the Nation adopted a pre-amble and resolution declaring for the South.³² Note, however, that John Hicks, Sr., Francis Hicks, and James Washington were among the 18 names listed on the July 29 petition to Rev. Finley declaring their choice for the northern, rather than the southern church.³³ William Walker and Charles Garrett wrote an appeal to the Ohio conference on September 5.³⁴ The Methodist Episcopal church, however, rejected this interference as a political measure outside the purview of the tribe as a whole. The Ohio conference assigned Reverend James Gurley as the new missionary to the Wyandots.³⁵ Undoubtedly frustrated by the actions of their leaders, in October 1848, 19 tribal members signed a petition to the U.S. Congress informing them that slavery had been introduced into the territory in contradiction to the Missouri Compromise which forbade involuntary servitude in the territory north of 36°30'. Though avowing that they were "not abolitionists", they concluded that they "believe that territory already free ought to remain free."³⁶ The petitioners may have distanced themselves from the label of "abolitionist" since at the time, abolitionists were marginalized and regarded as fanatics.

³² Connelly, 260–61.

³³ Elliott, *Great Secession*, 679.

³⁴ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 261.

³⁵ Elliott, *Great Secession*, 680.

³⁶ "Wyandot Tribal Members to U.S. Congress," October 27, 1848, Wyandot Collection, Lucy Armstrong papers, Kansas State Historical Society.

Reverend James Gurley, from the Ohio conference arrived in Kansas on December 1, 1848, to “preach abolitionism to the Wyandot.”³⁷ J.T. Peery had arrived to succeed his brother as missionary for the Methodist Episcopal church south, the previous day, November 30, 1848. Clashes between the two groups turned violent following the arrival of competing ministers. In a December 19th letter to “Dear Editor” signed “Dacotah,” the situation among the Wyandots since the arrival of Gurley was described as a state of “serious apprehension and alarm.” The new brick church, it was feared, would require guarding against incendiaries at night as the first quarterly meeting for the conference resulted in several broken church windows, despite the vigilance of specially appointed police. Dacotah numbered the members of the southern church at 75 to 80, and the northern church at 45 to 50.³⁸ Lucy Armstrong estimated the membership in reverse, with 65 joining the Church south though some returned, and the northern church numbering about 130 in March 1849 following a revival at the beginning of the year.³⁹ With the untenable situation of two competing missionaries from the same denomination, the Wyandot council passed a resolution on December 31, 1848, calling for the church members to settle on one organization.⁴⁰

The new year opened with the controversy erupting in the expulsion of Reverend Gurley and the removal of Dr. Richard Hewitt, sub-agent for the Wyandots. When Gurley would preach at the brick church, the building was stoned and the service

³⁷ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 271.

³⁸ “Dacotah to ‘Dear Editor,’” December 19, 1848, RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

³⁹ Armstrong, “The Settlement of Wyandot”. William Connelly, Rev. J.J. Lutz, and William Cutler all subscribed to Lucy Armstrong's estimates.

⁴⁰ “Resolution Concerning Northern and Southern Methodists of Wyandot Nation,” December 21, 1848, RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

interrupted, so that the members determined to vacate the church for a time for fear it would be irreparably damaged.⁴¹ On January 30, William Walker presented to the tribal council the results of a meeting of the non-professing members of the tribe who decided that both missionaries should be expelled. With his report, Walker issued a warning to the northern faction.⁴² In the last week of February 1849, Hewitt had Gurley arrested and ordered him to leave the nation, though there were no reasons cited.⁴³ While Gurley was expelled from the Nation, the missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Reverend J.T. Peery was not requested to leave.⁴⁴

Reaction to this measure was swift and strong. A Wyandot member of the Methodist Episcopal church described the events in an article in the *Missouri Republican*:

When the southern preachers found that we would not go with them, they threatened us with mobs, and maltreated us in various ways. We were threatened with civil authorities, and when, after a hard struggle, we obtained a missionary of our choice, he was arrested in the dead hour of night, dragged before a Government agent, tried, and condemned to leave that very night, This was done at the instigation of the southern preachers. The majority of the membership were driven out of their own church and compelled to worship in private houses and groves, and without a pastor.⁴⁵

Upon investigating the matter, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal church sent a missive to Secretary of the Interior Thomas Ewing, asking that the abuse of power be corrected, as they could find no reason why their missionaries should be excluded from the Indian Territory while other churches were tolerated and protected.

⁴¹ Armstrong, *Historical Record*, 9; Armstrong, "The Settlement of Wyandot," 6.

⁴² Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 278.

⁴³ Lutz, "Methodist Missions," 220.

⁴⁴ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 278.

⁴⁵ Elliott, *Great Secession*, 693.

At the same time, a “committee representing the sentiments of (74) about two-thirds of legal voters of the nation” sent a petition to the chiefs of the Wyandot nation protesting the “tyrannical high handed manner” with which Gurley had been expelled. They requested the chiefs to forward their communication to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, petitioning for the return of Gurley and the resumption of the mission from the Methodist Episcopal church.⁴⁶ Hewitt was removed and the Methodist Episcopal church reinstated in the Indian Territory.⁴⁷

Anti-slavery tribal members felt persecuted at the hands of government officials during this period. By expelling the northern missionary, the agent was trying to compel tribal members to support the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Lucy Armstrong testified that the agent had threatened her husband John McIntyre’s job as tribal interpreter if he did not join with the southern church. This he would not do, stating “The office of the President of the United States would not tempt me to go contrary to the dictates of my conscience.”⁴⁸ Three months later, the agent sent a notice of termination, back-dated by three months, thereby depriving Armstrong of his salary. The position was filled with a pro-slavery man.⁴⁹

Thomas Mosely succeeded Hewitt as Indian sub-agent for the Wyandots. More than half of his first annual report was devoted to the church division. Though admitting southern sympathies, Mosely maintained that he acted on behalf of the entire nation. His

⁴⁶ “To the Chiefs of the Wyandott Nation” (n.d.), RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁴⁷ Lutz, “Methodist Missions,” 220–21.

⁴⁸ Paul Armstrong Youngman, “Heritage of the Wyandots and ‘The Armstrong Story’” (n.d.), John M. Armstrong Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

⁴⁹ “Affadavit of Lucy B. Armstrong, Washington Co., District of Columbia,” May 9, 1866, RHMS 69, folder 5, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

approach was to let both factions proceed while urging them to resolve their differences. Mosely identified the biggest concern about the situation was the agitation that it excited in the neighboring Missourians. Wyandot insistence on having a “*northern preacher*” was attributed to their intent “to carry on their religious fanaticism with regard to slavery.” Mosely suggested the controversy might be amicably settled as long as the “northern preacher” made clear that he was there “to teach them morals and religion, and that only.”⁵⁰

Despite Gurley’s affection for the Wyandots and continued communication by letter, he never returned to Kansas.⁵¹ In August 1849, Esquire Greyeyes and J.M. Armstrong were sent to the Missouri Conference at St. Louis to ask for a missionary. Reverend T.B. Markham was appointed to succeed Gurley. The members of the Methodist Episcopal church held services in a grove and built a log church near the Quindaro cemetery that was completed before winter.⁵² A series of ministers and presiding elders followed Markham. By 1853, twelve of the members who had joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had returned to the old church, including Wyandot Chief Matthew Mudeater and Hannah Walker, wife of William Walker.⁵³

The split caused enormous upheaval in the tribe, splitting elite Wyandot leaders from many of their members. Walker’s journal and tribal correspondence indicate that the resulting struggle for control led to church burnings, thefts, physical violence and

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress, 1849-1850* (Washington: Gideon & Co., 1850), 148.

⁵¹ “James Gurley to J.M. Armstrong,” April 3, 1849, RHMS 69, folder 2, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁵² Armstrong, *Historical Record*, 9.

⁵³ Armstrong, 13.

contentious tribal politics that lasted for years. The fault lines revealed by this controversy over abolitionism and slavery polarized the tribe. During this strife, Lucy Armstrong recounted at the 1879 old settlers' meeting, that at an all-night discussion over the stand they should make on the slavery question, George I. Clark proclaimed "Let us hold on in our opposition to the slave power; and in fifty years we will be proud of it."⁵⁴

While the Wyandots were firmly Methodist Episcopal, three Christian denominations maintained missions among the Shawnees in Kansas—Quakers, Baptists, and Methodists. The missionaries sent to work among the Shawnees carried their own views about slavery—from Methodist Thomas Johnson who owned slaves at the Indian Mission School to Quaker Henry Harvey who was an Underground Railroad operative. The missions competed with each other for influence with the tribe and to gain the most converts. While this sort of struggle amongst missionaries was not unknown, among the Shawnees it was especially intense.⁵⁵

The Shawnees who settled in Kansas represented different bands who had previously lived in Missouri and Ohio and had little affinity for each other. These groups had been ministered to by different denominations. In 1825, the first treaty to remove Shawnees to Kansas Territory was signed with the Black Bob band of the Cape Girardeau (Missouri) Shawnees. Among the groups that emigrated from this area was the Fish band that settled in Kansas in 1830. The first group of Ohio Shawnees to arrive in Kansas left in September 1826, arriving almost two years later in May 1828. This group were led by

⁵⁴ Gleed, *Kansas Memorial*, 88.

⁵⁵ Kevin J. Abing, "A Holy Battleground: Methodist, Baptist and Quaker Missionaries Among the Shawnee Indians, 1830-1844," *Kansas History* 21 (Summer 1998): 120.

William Perry, Cornstalk, and Tecumseh's brother, Tenskwatawa. The arduous journey west economically debilitated the various Shawnee bands, leaving them in need of support from agents and missionaries who supplied oxen, plows, and mills. This desperate need left the Shawnees vulnerable to the designs of missionaries and agents intent on advancing their assimilation.⁵⁶

Both Methodist Episcopalians and Baptists regarded the Shawnees as ripe for proselytization. With several bands now reunited, the tribe failed to agree on which missionary proposal should be accepted. In July 1830, Fish requested agent George Vashon to petition the Missouri district of the Methodist Episcopal church for a missionary. Meanwhile, Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, an advocate for Indian removal, visited with the Shawnees in August 1830, while fulfilling his government commission to survey the lands assigned to the Delawares in Kansas. Subagent Major John Campbell encouraged McCoy to establish a school among the Delawares and called together the tribal council to hear McCoy's proposal. While the audience, including Tecumseh's brother Tenskwatawa (the Prophet), responded favorably, their answer was deferred until McCoy passed through on his return. McCoy held a private interview with Fish, who he found to be more enthusiastic in his desire for a mission and school. Assuring Fish that a mission would be provided upon his return, McCoy made formal application to subagent Campbell before setting off on his surveying duties.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Stephen A. Warren, "The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees: Conflicting Cultures in Indian Territory, 1833–1834.," *Kansas History* 17 (Autumn 1994): 149–50.

⁵⁷ Lela Barnes, ed., "Journal of Isaac McCoy for the Exploring Expedition of 1830," *Kansas State Historical Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (November 1936): 343–44; McCoy, *Baptist Indian Missions*, 404–5.

Before McCoy returned in November, Methodist preachers Thomas Johnson and Alexander McCallister arrived among the tribe. The Methodists established their mission school with Fish's party. Chiefs Cornstalk and William Perry agreed to accept McCoy's proposal, though he believed it was more from courtesy than a desire for education. Fish was the leader most enthusiastic about Christianity and education, and McCoy had hoped to leverage his influence with the rest of the tribe. In December 1830, Thomas Johnson and his wife began building the mission on a bluff along the Kansas River. The Baptist mission began in July 1831 under the leadership of McCoy's son-in-law, Johnston Lykins.⁵⁸

Further complicating the situation, the Society of Friends sent a delegation to the Shawnees in 1833. The Quakers had worked among the Shawnees in Ohio as early as 1807, and promised to follow them to Indian Territory to renew their mission. The Indiana, Ohio and Baltimore Yearly Meetings supported the venture financially and the Shawnees welcomed their old friends to establish a school, which was established in 1837.⁵⁹ While the Friends never gained more converts than the Baptists or the Methodists, they were yet another competing influence with the tribe. Quaker missionary Henry Harvey served with the Shawnees in both Ohio and Kansas, before leaving the tribe to settle further west in Kansas. An ardent abolitionist, Harvey's farm in Wabaunsee County is a recognized Underground Railroad station.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Abing, "A Holy Battleground," 123.

⁵⁹ Abing, 126.

⁶⁰https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/ntf_member/ntf_member_details.htm?SPFID=4069521&SPFTerritory=Kansas&SPFType=NULL&SPFKeywords=NULL,

Harvey's years among the Shawnees led him to publish a history of the tribe in 1855. As Kansas Territory stood on the brink of popular sovereignty in 1854, Harvey reflected on the condition of the missions and their enslaved members. He listed four missions ministering to the Shawnees—Methodist Church south, Northern Methodist Church, Baptist Church, and Society of Friends. Each maintained manual labor schools with a total of about 140 students. Slaves were held at the southern Methodist mission, then under the leadership of Thomas Johnson. Harvey noted:

Some of the Shawnees have already got slaves, but are mostly those white men who have married into the nation; but as some of their teachers have them, who can wonder if more of these confiding people go and do likewise.

Harvey predicted difficulty among the Shawnees on the topic of slavery as many of them did not believe in the system and the subject “is agitating every section of the country.”⁶¹

When the Methodist Episcopal church split in 1845, Thomas Johnson naturally aligned himself with the southern division under which the Indian missions fell. Johnson employed enslaved labor at the mission school, and added to his enslaved property during the 1850s. Some Shawnees with anti-slavery sentiments began to keep their children from Johnson's Manual Labor School. In 1849, as Gurley was being expelled from the Wyandot nation, eighty-five Shawnees petitioned the Methodist Episcopal Church north for a preacher. Reverend Thomas Markham, who was also assigned to the Wyandots was the quick response. Indian agent Luke Lea notified Markham that the Shawnee Council wanted him to leave as his preaching would be divisive. This action touched off

⁶¹ Harvey, *History of Shawnee Indians*, 278–79.

complaints against the Indian agent and an internal power struggle.⁶² To escape the strife, a portion of anti-slavery Shawnees left Kansas in the mid-1840s to join a Shawnee band on the Canadian River in Oklahoma Territory.⁶³

Quaker and ardent abolitionist Richard Mendenhall began teaching at the Friends Shawnee Indian Mission in 1847. Dismayed at what he found in Kansas, he wrote a letter to a colleague which was published in the *National Era* on December 23, 1847, outlining the existence of slavery in the territory, in violation of the Missouri Compromise.⁶⁴ Mendenhall desired to make the situation known, and looked to “the friends of Justice in the East to attend to it.” He observed that “*one of the chiefs among the Shawnees* owns a number of slaves, and he is the only Indian in this part of the Territory, so far as I am informed, that either owns slaves, or has them in his *employ*.” (emphasis original) This reference is likely to Joseph Parks, though Mendenhall would have been more distressed to realize that by this time Wyandot William Walker and other Indians had become slaveholders. Mendenhall acknowledged that slavery was not widespread, but he expressed outrage that slavery was introduced by government officials and missionaries. Particularly at the mission operated by the Methodist Church south, Mendenhall counted half a dozen or more enslaved workers. His abolitionist views likely influenced his conclusion that some of the young Indian students “have that aversion to labor which is so common among white people in a slaveholding community.” He found

⁶² Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*, 174–75.

⁶³ Grant Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 170; Kevin J. Abing, “Before Bleeding Kansas: Christian Missionaries, Slavery, and the Shawnee Indians in Pre-Territorial Kansas, 1844-1854,” *Kansas History* 24 (Spring 2001): 60.

⁶⁴ “Richard Mendenhall to Dr. Bailey, October 30, 1847,” *National Era*, December 23, 1847.

this particularly lamentable as the youth would need to learn “the habits of industry” to thrive in the future.

While slaveholding had taken root in the territory, Mendenhall reported that many of the Indians were decidedly opposed to slavery. He speculated though, that some would own them if they could. As in white communities, Mendenhall noted that some Indians would capture freedom-seekers when they found them while others would quietly let them pass. The incentive for returning runaways, he surmised, was for the reward money, or possibly to avoid the fate of the Seminoles for harboring fugitives. Chief Joseph Parks achieved the rank of Captain while fighting with a company of Shawnee soldiers fighting with the U.S. Army during the Seminole Wars.

As Harvey and Mendenhall observed, slave holding among the Shawnees seemed to be the purview of preachers, teachers, and tribal leaders. Most infamously, the Methodist missionary, Reverend Thomas Johnson owned several enslaved girls, adding to their number while in Kansas. Johnson’s pro-slavery preaching so pleased Wyandot William Walker that he declared him the best Indian preacher he ever heard. Johnson founded the Indian Manual Labor School which took in students from several tribes. A number of tribal leaders held slaves, including Joseph Parks and Paschal Fish.

Parks was a mixed race Shawnee interpreter and chief born in 1794 to a Shawnee mother and British Loyalist father in Detroit. He received a land grant at the Hog Creek settlement in Ohio, in 1817. Parks was well connected with the Shawnees, government officials, Governor Lewis Cass, and, due to his marriage to a Wyandot woman, the Michigan Wyandots. In 1833 he escorted the Hog Creek Shawnees from Ohio to Kansas.

Parks' connection to Lewis Cass, who became Secretary of War for Andrew Jackson, cemented his relationship with the administration and assured continued employment as an interpreter. During the Seminole Wars, Parks led a unit of Shawnees and Delawares to assist the federal government in Florida. While the Shawnee bands battled with each other in the effort to forge a nation in Kansas, Parks was able to leverage his influence with the federal government to become principal chief in 1854.⁶⁵ Along the way, he also increased his wealth and property.

In the mid-1830s, Parks purchased Stephen, an enslaved boy, from Henry Rogers, for about three hundred dollars. From 1843 to 1846, Stephen worked as the assistant blacksmith at the Fort Leavenworth agency, with his salary going to Parks. With a reputation as a good blacksmith, Stephen was able to earn money which added to Parks' wealth.⁶⁶ In July 1848, Stephen, now 20 years old and valued at a thousand dollars, escaped from Parks.⁶⁷ The loss of his enslaved property represented a pattern of depredations against the Shawnees to Parks, who blamed a black man visiting the nation who "persuaded their negroes to run away."⁶⁸ Parks' response to this loss demonstrates Stephen's monetary and symbolic value. Stephen made his way to Woodstock, Illinois, northwest of Chicago, where Parks and Sidney W. Smith were able to capture him with the assistance of Sheriff Thomas M. White. A mob of citizens from the town forcibly rescued Stephen and assisted his escape to Canada. Before leaving Woodstock, Stephen,

⁶⁵ Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*, 156–58, 164–66.

⁶⁶ Bowes, 114.

⁶⁷ "Deposition of Joseph Barnett," January 24, 1850, Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁶⁸ "Minutes of Conference Held with Shawnee from April 24 to May 10, 1854," in *Ratified Treaty No. 268, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of the Treaty of May 10, 1854, with the Shawnee Indians*, n.d., 15, <http://digioll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=header&id=History.IT1854no268&isize=M>.

at the instigation of the crowd, had a writ of *Capias ad respondendum* issued against Parks and Smith, presumably for kidnapping. Parks and Smith were arrested with bail set at a thousand dollars each for their appearances at court in September. Parks would spend thirty-five dollars defending himself in this action.⁶⁹ Parks never recovered Stephen, who succeeded in his escape from enslavement. In 1859, at the time of his death, Parks owned five adult slaves and several children.⁷⁰

Failing to re-coup his loss from the State of Illinois, Parks petitioned the federal government for indemnity. Among the issues raised by Parks and the Shawnees while in Washington, DC, in January 1850 on tribal business, was “depredations on the property of the tribe by the Whites.”⁷¹ Supporting his claims, Parks submitted two depositions attesting to his ownership of Stephen and the blacksmith’s value.⁷² Additionally, Parks submitted a memorial to both houses of Congress, seeking compensation for the loss of Stephen at the hands of citizens of the United States and for his expenses in attempting to re-capture him. The matter was referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs on March 27, 1850 and discharged and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary on April 8.⁷³ Four years later, Parks still had not received compensation. In negotiating the 1854 treaty to sell part of their land, Parks raised the matter of injuries to Indians by whites with the

⁶⁹ “Deposition of Derick C. Bush,” September 10, 1848, Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society; “Deposition of Thomas White,” September 12, 1848, Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁷⁰ Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*, 115.

⁷¹ “Orlando Brown, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Letter of Introduction for Shawnee Delegation,” January 24, 1850, Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁷² “Deposition of Charles Findlay,” January 11, 1850, Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society; “Deposition of Joseph Barnett.”

⁷³ “Memorial of Joseph Parks, 31st Congress, 1st Session,” n.d., Shawnee Collection, Kansas State Historical Society.

Indian Commissioner to be attended to before considering the terms of a treaty. The Commissioner maintained that the “slave matter” was inappropriate for the treaty and that the Senate would strike it. Parks informed him that he had, in fact, submitted a claim to the Senate committee, but had been advised to withdraw it and address the issue through the treaty.⁷⁴ Terms of the treaty provided twenty-seven thousand dollars to satisfy claims for injuries in violation of guaranties made for the tribe’s protection by the United States, such claims to be adjudicated by the tribal council.⁷⁵

Prior to establishment of popular sovereignty by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the tribes were contending with the subject of slavery in their midst. Slave catchers entering Indian Territory to enforce the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act threatened tribal sovereignty. As they struggled to make a life in this new land, different strategies forward competed. Both the Wyandots and the Shawnees turned to the federal government and Congress with legal arguments to uphold their positions regarding slavery. Some tribal leaders, looking to co-exist with white society adopted slavery and supported individual allotments. William Walker and Joseph Parks exemplify this approach. Traditionalists, holding to tribal customs and beliefs, disavowed slavery. Among the Wyandots, this sentiment took a strongly abolitionist tone, as demonstrated by John and Lucy Armstrong. Missionaries to the tribes carried their viewpoints regarding slavery, with Rev. Thomas Johnson even utilizing slaves at the Shawnee Methodist Indian Manual Labor School. The split within the Methodist Episcopal Church and assignment of the Indian missions to the southern church became a flashpoint dividing the tribes and

⁷⁴ “Minutes,” 17.

⁷⁵ “Treaty with the Shawnees,” 10 Stat. 1053 (1854).

leading to violence and church burning among the Wyandots. As the region became more attractive to white settlers and emigrants, efforts to organize the territory brought the slavery question to the forefront. The Wyandots and the Shawnees had both already been embroiled in the controversy. With the escalation of tension over the subject, the Wyandots would become even more engaged in the struggle.

CHAPTER 5—BLEEDING KANSAS: THE WYANDOT AND SHAWNEE
ENTER THE FRAY, 1854-1867

As early as 1849, thousands of people passed through tribal lands on their way to the gold fields in California. Having been removed once already and witnessed the pressures of encroaching white civilization, the tribes understood that their new reservations would soon become desired by white settlers. New lands acquired from Mexico in 1848 and relentless westward expansion ignited interest in a continent spanning railroad. With the growing pressure, white settlement would inevitably come to their territory, as it had in Ohio.

The initial version of the 1850 Wyandot treaty, prior to Senate ratification, stated that the tribe desired to become citizens of the United States, believing this would improve their situation and provide for future prosperity. “They have arrived at this conviction in view of the fact that a new territory will at no distant period, be organized by the government of the United States, which will embrace within its limits their present lands and possessions and thus they will again be surrounded by citizens of the United States.”¹ The treaty stipulated that lands held in common would be divided and held in severalty and the Wyandots would give up their tribal status. This change would allow individual tribal members to sell land and receive funds from settlement and development of the area by whites. These provisions were struck from the treaty, as ratified by the Senate. They later returned, however, in the 1855 Wyandot treaty.

¹ “Treaty with the Wyandots,” 9 Stat. 987 (1850).

Determined to protect their interests, the tribes, led by the Wyandots, moved to organize Nebraska Territory, which included Kansas. Abelard Guthrie was elected a delegate to represent the tribal interests in the thirty-second Congress and lobby for introduction of legislation to organize the territory in 1852.² The national political struggle over selecting the route for a trans-continental railroad and whether slavery would be allowed in new territories complicated this effort. Pro-slavery politicians in Missouri, such as Senator Atchison, were determined that the territory not be organized unless the Missouri Compromise be repealed, allowing slavery in the territory to its west. Guthrie wrote to Walker that a proposed bill “says nothing about slavery but leaves the untouched the Missouri Compromise. The Territory is pretty confidently believed to be free.”³ The question of whether slavery would be sanctioned in Kansas was a concern for Walker who by that time was a slave owner. Writing to a potential Kansas settler from Maryland, Walker observed

slavery has existed in what is now called ‘Kansas Territory,’ and still exists, both among Indians and whites regardless of the exploded MoCom. Some of the slaves are held by the former by virtue of their own laws and usages, and some by regular bills of sale from citizens of Mo. How will this description of Indian ‘property’ be protected....To my mind this is not so clear.⁴

While a subsequent bill to organize the territory passed the House and was introduced by Stephen Douglas in the Senate, it narrowly failed in the expiring hours of

² “Polling Book, Delegate Election, Wyandott Nation, Nebraska Territory,” October 12, 1852, Kansas State Historical Society, https://territorialkansasonline.ku.edu/index.php?SCREEN=show_document&document_id=100441&SCREEN_FROM=keyword&selected_keyword=Guthrie,%20Abelard&startsearchat=0.

³ “Abelard Guthrie to William Walker,” December 9, 1852, in *Provisional Government*, by Connelly, 78.

⁴ “William Walker to O.H. Browne,” November 13, 1853, in *Provisional Government*, by Connelly, 57.

the session on March 3, 1853. Guthrie's efforts had fallen short, but the subject of organizing the Nebraska Territory was brought to national attention.

Undaunted, the Wyandots convened a Territorial Convention for the purpose of organizing a Provisional Government for Nebraska Territory at their annual Green Corn festival and national elections in August 1853. The other emigrant tribes and whites residing in the Territory were invited. William Walker was chosen as Provisional Governor. Selection of the delegate from the Provisional Government to the U.S. Congress was the first order of business, with Reverend Thomas Johnson, slave-owning missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church south to the Shawnees running against Wyandot abolitionist Abelard Guthrie. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Manypenny visited the Territory to advocate on behalf of Johnson who was also supported by the church, military, Indian agents and traders. Walker noted in his journal on October 11, 1853, that "The priesthood of the M.E. Church made unusual exertions to obtain a majority for their *holy brother*. Amidst the exertions of their obsequious tools, it was apparent that it was an uphill piece of business in Wyandot."⁵ With only his friends and tribal members to support him, Guthrie lost the election and Johnson was certified as the delegate to the 33rd Congress.

The efforts to organize the territory and the pressure for breaking the stalemate over a route for the railroad forced the new congress to take action. In May 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act outlined the terms for organizing the territory and began unraveling decades of compromise over slavery. Effectively repealing the Missouri Compromise,

⁵ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 388.

the act called for “popular sovereignty” to decide the status of slavery in the territory. While Kansas is often regarded as a blank slate when this issue arose in 1854, by that point, the question already had been contested for a decade.

In December 1854, The New York *Daily Tribune* published an item about slavery in Kansas, submitted by abolitionist John Wattles to the *Syracuse Chronicle*. Wattles described his observations from a visit in 1852 to the Methodist mission to the Shawnees under the charge of Rev. Thomas Johnson. The beauty of the countryside was marred by the fact that Chief Parks employed slave labor on his farm and that most of the work at the mission farm and household was performed by slaves. Wattles took comfort when he learned that many of the tribe did not support the chief and missionary in their use of enslaved labor. He identified a “division headed by the chief’s brother, and sustained by a large portion of the tribe, and by the surrounding tribes or fragments of nations, who took the name of the *Freedom party*.”⁶ The Quaker mission to the tribe was more favorably received by the members, being based on anti-slavery principles. Tribal members expressed that the idea of slavery was contrary to their beliefs and they did not support a religion that made it acceptable. Wattles observed that the large buildings of the Methodist mission were almost empty, so dissatisfied was the tribe with the operation.⁷

Assignment of pro-slavery missionaries and Indian agents to the tribes had resulted in church burnings and divisions among the Wyandots. Several Wyandot

⁶ John Wattles, “Slavery in Kansas,” *New York Tribune*, December 16, 1854, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1854-12-16/ed-1/seq-6/>.

⁷ Wattles.

leaders, including William Walker and his family, Francis A. Hicks and the Garrett family owned slaves. Other Wyandot leaders such as John and Lucy Armstrong, Abelard Guthrie, and George I. Clark were abolitionists. The controversy inspired 19 Wyandot members to send a petition to Congress complaining about the presence of slavery in the territory despite the Missouri Compromise. Tragically, John Armstrong died of illness at his family's home in Ohio in March 1852. This tribal lawyer and leader, who advocated so fiercely for his tribe, was perhaps its most vocal and capable abolitionist. His widow, Lucy, continued his work. But, as a female in the mid-nineteenth century, not nearly with as much authority.

At the same time as they were advocating for legislation to organize the territory, the Wyandots were also working on a new treaty with the federal government. In January 1854, Walker described in his journal, a Treaty Committee of Wyandot leaders who met in sessions to consider "projects" for the treaty. By April, the Committee had adopted the "project of the Treaty."⁸ Tribal leaders recognized that maintaining control over their lands and affairs required them to obtain status as U.S. citizens.

A letter to the editor of the *Kansas Herald*, railed against Indian commissioner Manypenny and the Indian agents who conspired to keep the tribes in ignorance and degraded. The Wyandots, Delawares, and Shawnees, as more enlightened tribes (for having lived near white settlements), had seen through this and began to think for themselves. The letter writer "Alpha" continued "The Wyandots have taken the lead, and sent their delegates to Washington to effect this at the present session, feeling fully

⁸ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 395, 400.

competent to manage their own affairs as other American citizens, and the Shawnees and Delawares, or many of the more enlightened are talking of following in their wake.”⁹

The 1855 treaty concluded by the Wyandots included the provisions initially struck from the 1850 treaty, foremost among these:

Article 1. The Wyandott Indians having become sufficiently advanced in civilization, and being desirous of becoming citizens, it is hereby agreed and stipulated that their organization, and their relations with the United States, as an Indian tribe, shall be dissolved and terminated...the said Wyandott Indians, and each and every one of them, except as hereinafter provided, shall be deemed, and are hereby declared, to be, citizens of the United States, to all intents and purposes; and shall be entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities of such citizens”¹⁰

As citizens, they could establish fee simple title to their land as individuals, whites would be able to settle on land not allotted, and most importantly, they would be able to vote in territorial elections. The new treaty was concluded January 31, ratified February 20, and proclaimed on March 1, 1855.

The Shawnees were also engaged in treaty negotiations in advance of the white settlement. Tribal lands were to be allotted to individuals following a similar pattern of the Wyandots where the land would be divided in severalty. Allotments were to be located where families had already made improvements and family allotments should be made contiguous to each other. While each Wyandot would be allotted 640 acres, the Shawnees would receive 200. The most significant difference, however, came in the disposition of the school fund.

⁹ Alpha, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Kansas Herald*, March 2, 1855, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/489711611/?terms=kansas%2Bherald>.

¹⁰ “Treaty with the Wyandots,” 10 Stat. 1159 (1855).

The Shawnees had four missions, three of which were anti-slavery and one, led by Rev. Johnson which utilized enslaved labor. The question of slavery had been a source of conflict among them for some time. Despite the fact that only one council member was pro-slavery, the treaty allocated all of the school fund to the Methodist mission operated by Johnson, drastically curtailing the others. Children attending the other schools would essentially be forced to go to the school operated by the pro-slavery Methodist Episcopal Church south. Further, the Treaty provided for Johnson to acquire in fee-simple, a large tract of land two miles from Westport for a small sum. Additionally, Johnson was to be paid ten thousand dollars to operate a school for ten years.¹¹ By 1860, the Shawnee chiefs petitioned the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to return the control of the school fund to the tribe so that they could contract for educational services themselves, allowing their children to live at home and be educated along with white children. Among their complaints were the suffering of their children with severe illness, even dying without notification of the parents. The children were so neglected at school that when they returned home they were covered with body lice.¹²

By all accounts the mission school had started to fail during this period. Johnson's pre-occupation with territorial politics likely contributed to this as he became a leader in the pro-slavery movement and Border Ruffians. The school lands served as a staging area for pro-slavery forces, undoubtedly disrupting studies.¹³ Johnson's primary

¹¹ Editor, Herald of Freedom, "The Shawnee Treaty," *The Herald of Freedom*, February 10, 1855, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82006863/1855-02-10/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹² Paschal Fish, William Rodgers, and et al., "To the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," in *Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School*, 1860, 317–18, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/212520/page/334>.

¹³ Kevin J. Abing, "A Fall from Grace: Thomas Johnson and the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School, 1839-1862" (dissertation, Marquette University, 1995), xii.

focus shifted to enriching himself and solidifying political power. In 1855 he purchased Harriet, an enslaved fourteen-year-old girl and in 1856, he purchased Martha who was fifteen.¹⁴ Throughout this period, as the tribe was becoming more disillusioned with Johnson, the Indian agent was supporting the misleading reports that he filed about the success of the school and good health of its pupils.

As the territory was established following the Nebraska-Kansas Act, President Franklin Pierce appointed Andrew Reeder, a Democrat who supported popular sovereignty as the new governor on July 7, 1854. Reeder who arrived in the territory in October, set up offices at the Shawnee Indian Mission upon the invitation of Johnson. One of his first acts, as called for in the legislation, was to order a Kansas Territorial census. Completed February 28, 1855, the census recorded a non-Indian population of 8521 with 2904 eligible voters.¹⁵ There were 151 free blacks and 192 slaves in the territory. He then called for elections of a 13 member Territorial Council and a 26 member House of Representatives.¹⁶

Reeder convened the first territorial legislature, July 2, 1855, in Pawnee, near Fort Riley, to avoid influence from Missouri. Though he had pro-slavery sentiments, Reeder came to support the free state cause due to the excesses of the pro-slavery forces. The legislature, packed with Missourians who had crossed the border, succeeded in purging all free state representatives. Additionally, they voted to establish the capital at the

¹⁴ Martha B. Caldwell, "Annals of the Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School" (1939), 266a, 295a, Kansas State Historical Society.

¹⁵ Governor A.H. Reeder, "By Authority, Official Message of His Excellency Gov. A.H. Reeder, to the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Kansas," July 3, 1855, 6, Kansas State Historical Society, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/3790/page/1>.

¹⁶ Hancks, "Chronology," 230–31.

Shawnee Mission. Reeder's veto was overridden, and the "Bogus Legislature" adjourned to the Shawnee Mission.¹⁷ Thomas Johnson was elected President of the Council, or upper chamber, of the legislature. His son Alex Johnson and missionary John T. Peery were members of the house of representatives. In the catalog of members, Alex Johnson is noted as remarking "Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must"¹⁸ in reference to the pro-slavery mission of the body. Locked in conflict with the governor about whether they were lawfully assembled at the Shawnee Mission, the legislature took steps to have Governor Reeder removed and their standing affirmed. Though removed from office due to his speculation in tribal lands, rather than as a result of his actions as governor, the effect of Reeder's dismissal was to remove any obstacles to the pro-slavery agenda of the legislature.

Ensnared at Shawnee Mission, led by Johnson, rid of its free state members, the legislature was now free to enact a code of laws. For the most part, they followed the laws of Missouri, although there were no provisions for freedom suits. In matters pertaining to slavery, they found the Missouri laws too lenient. Providing assistance to "procure the freedom" of a slave was classified as grand larceny, punishable by death as it "assumes more the character of treason against the laws," beyond the mere theft of property.¹⁹ Death was also proscribed for inciting rebellion among the slaves, or printing, writing, or circulating material that might incite revolt. Critical to future control of the

¹⁷ William Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), Part 15, <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/terrhist/terrhist-p1.html#TOC>.

¹⁸ "Members and Officers, First Legislative Assembly of Kansas Territory," July 2, 1855, Kansas State Historical Society, https://territorialkansasonline.ku.edu/index.php?SCREEN=show_document&SCREEN_FROM=pol_govt&document_id=100108&FROM_PAGE=&topic_id=20.

¹⁹ Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*, Part 17.

territory, however, were laws requiring every elected official to take an oath to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law. Further, no anti-slavery citizen could sit on a jury for any case related to slavery or enslaved persons. Candidates for future legislative elections were required to swear to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law. More striking, anyone previously convicted of violating fugitive slave laws, either in criminal or civil court, was prohibited from voting or holding office.²⁰

While the “Bogus Legislature” was conducting its business in the summer of 1855, the free state movement was organizing. They gathered in Lawrence in August and Big Springs in September. Abelard Guthrie was a delegate to the Big Springs convention.²¹ By October, 1855, free state proponents proclaimed a constitutional convention in Topeka to establish a state government in response to “squatter sovereignty” and the “debasing character of slavery” that had taken hold in the territory. Abelard Guthrie was also a delegate to this convention. Qualifications for voters to select representatives to the convention included “All white male inhabitants, citizens of the United States or who have declared their intentions before the proper authority to become such.” The Wyandots who were in the process of becoming citizens were among the latter group. Among the polling places identified was the council house in Wyandot City, the Baptist Mission Building, and the store of Shawnee slave owner Paschal Fish. When the Topeka Constitution was put to a vote by citizens of the territory in December 1855, the election judges for the Wyandots were all abolitionists—Abelard Guthrie, G.I. Clark,

²⁰ Cutler, Part 17.

²¹ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 113.

and Ebenezer Zane. Those qualified to vote included “every white male person, and every civilized male Indian who has adopted the habits of the white man.”²²

As the political struggle over territorial governance proceeded, the Wyandots were locked in their own internal conflict implementing the terms of the 1855 treaty. The Wyandots were given the right of claiming U.S. citizenship in exchange for ceding their reservation. Land was to be returned to individual tribal members in severalty. Four parcels were retained in common: the Huron cemetery, two acres each for the two Methodist churches, and four acres adjoining the Wyandot ferry. Any land not distributed would be open for white settlement. In exchange for relinquishing their tribal annuity claims, the Wyandots received a lump sum payment which was to be divided among all tribal members. The process of dividing the common tribal resources and deciding whether to declare citizenship with the U.S. or with the tribe, were the seeds of lasting divisions.²³

A group of three Commissioners was appointed, with two being selected by the tribe, to survey and divide the land into sections. They were also charged to divide the people. The Commissioners were tasked with creating tribal rolls that included all members of the Wyandot tribe. The rolls were divided into several categories. First, the Commissioners listed all those who they determined “after due inquiry and consideration, shall be satisfied are sufficiently intelligent, competent and prudent to control and manage

²² “Constitution of the State of Kansas, Elective Franchise--Article II,” *Herald of Freedom*, December 1, 1855, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82006863/1855-12-01/ed-1/seq-1/>.

²³ *Wyandot Nation of Kansas AKA Wyandotte Tribe of Indians v. United States*, 2016–1654 Justia (Fed. Cir. 2017 2017). In 2015, the Wyandot Nation of Kansas filed a complaint in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. One of the disputes in the legal cases that followed was whether the Historic Wyandot Nation dissolved and whether the Wyandotte Nation reconstituted following the Treaty of 1867 included both the Kansas and Oklahoma bands

their affairs and interests.” The second class of tribal members were those who were “not competent and proper persons to be entrusted with their shares of the money, payable under this agreement.” Lastly, “orphans, idiots or insane” individuals were to be identified.²⁴ The Commissioners were to present the lists to the tribal council which would then designate representatives for the second class and guardians for the third class of citizen. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs would monitor the administration of these charges annually and would prepare a list of Wyandots who could apply to be temporarily exempted from citizenship and receive continued protection and assistance. In February 1859, the rolls and plat of allotments were finally completed. The Commissioners had identified 474 in the Competent class, eligible for citizenship, 40 as Incompetent, and 41 minors.²⁵

Those considered competent were given land patents in fee simple. Those deemed incompetent received patents that did not allow the land to be sold or alienated for five years, and even then requiring the consent of the President of the United States. The commissioner of Indian affairs could also withhold patents from the incompetents indefinitely. These provisions were understood by tribal members as a way for the leaders and elites to get possession of all of the property belonging to the tribe. Wyandot Chief Tauroomee was opposed to the treaty, feeling that many members of the tribe were not prepared for citizenship, but the majority voted in favor of the Treaty, and Tauroomee reluctantly signed it.²⁶ A provision of the treaty allowed those deemed “competent” to

²⁴ Treaty with the Wyandots, 1855, Article 3.

²⁵ Hancks, “Chronology,” 459.

²⁶ Merwin, “The Wyandot Indians,” 87.

choose temporary exemption from citizenship if they wanted to retain their tribal status. Tauroomee and sixty-nine others chose to defer citizenship. They became the nucleus of a group that sought sanctuary among the Senecas in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) and retained their Indian status. This detached group was administered by the Wyandot Tribal Council in Kansas for a time.²⁷

As the free state convention met in Topeka in October 1855, the Wyandot Tribal Council began sorting through the treaty tribal rolls. Some individuals were found to forfeit all rights and were disbarred from payments or allotments. Included on this list were Lewis Clark, for being a Seneca, and his wife, Sarah “Sallie” Wright, an African American. Others were disbarred for either being members of different tribes or for being absent from the nation. Among these were Peter D. Clark (absent in Canada) Jared Dawson and his family and Hiram Northrup. Catherine Armstrong Dawson (sister of Silas and John Armstrong) protested the disbarment of her and her children to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Manypenny. Hiram Northrup also protested to Manypenny. George I. Clark and Matthew Mudeater wrote to Manypenny to protest the Council actions and support Northrup and Clark’s half-brother Peter D. Clark. Northrup, Clark and Dawson were subsequently all restored to the rolls. The Council also restored some individuals to the roll, including David Wright and Lucy Armstrong who was declared competent.²⁸ George Wright, David’s father, perhaps feeling threatened by the

²⁷ Charles Garrard, *Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014), 521. The group known as Senecas were former relatives and allies known as the Ontario Neutrals.

²⁸ Wyandotte Nation, “Wyandot Indian Council Records” (1855-71), 12–13, Kansas State Historical Society, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/219798>; Hancks, “Chronology,” 237–40.

increase in pro-slavery agitation, removed from Kansas to Indian Territory and is omitted from the Tribal rolls. David, son of Black Betty, was placed on the orphan list.²⁹

The violence that erupted in Kansas during this period did not spare the tribes. On April 8, 1856, drunken mobs burned down both the log Methodist Episcopal Church and the brick Methodist Episcopal Church South in Wyandot. Lucy Armstrong believed they were inspired to the action by the pro-slavery clerks in the Surveyor General's office. Later that month, the Tribal Council assembled the people of the Nation. Their purpose was to lecture the tribe's young men for committing depredations on their neighbors and against public property.³⁰

As white settlers poured into Kansas, pro-slavery Missourians took control of the eastern lands along the Missouri River. Coming from further distances, free state settlers located in the Kansas River valley. Border Ruffians controlled the Missouri River and land routes west from St. Louis, requiring free state advocates to travel overland through Iowa and Nebraska. In March 1856, the steamer ARABIA, sailed from St. Louis with a passenger from Massachusetts who had secreted a hundred Sharp's rifles and two cannon aboard, disguised in boxes labeled "carpenters' tools," and destined for service in Kansas.

A letter describing the ruse was dropped and discovered. The author was

surrounded by about seventy passengers: some of them are "Border Ruffians."...The Devils do not suspect they are "entertaining *Angels unawares*" and talk and swear freely against the Emigrant Aid Society. My goods are so disguised that they will not be likely to excite any suspicion.

²⁹ Hancks, "Chronology," 247.

³⁰ Wyandotte Nation, "Wyandot Indian Council Records," 43.

When docked in Lexington, Missouri, a committee of passengers stirred up the townsmen to search the vessel and seize the weapons.³¹ They determined that all subsequent vessels should similarly be searched. Later that year, the ARABIA sank after hitting a snag in the Missouri River. While the possibility of transporting weapons on the Missouri River ended with the search of the ARABIA, shipping household goods by river was still the easiest and fastest method for settlers arriving in a new territory. The free state proponents determined that securing a “free port” along the river would be crucial to attracting settlers—“the Free-State men found themselves hemmed in by their foes, found that even in the Territory they could only reach the nearest national highway, the Missouri River, by going to ports under control of the enemy.”³² At the same time that the Wyandot land at the mouth of the Kansas River along the Missouri River was being surveyed for allotments, free state leaders were looking for a location to develop a town.

Charles Robinson, leader of Lawrence, the New England Emigrant Aid Company’s first colony in Kansas, collaborated with Abelard Guthrie to secure the site about six miles above the mouth of the Kansas River. While the motivation to develop a free state port was real, the proprietors were also motivated by the prospect of becoming wealthy in the anticipated land boom. They named the townsite Quindaro³³ for Guthrie’s Wyandot wife who helped secure the land which was assembled from parts of 13 Wyandot allotments. This multi-racial enclave was not only a port for free state proponents, it became an important crossing place for fugitive slaves. It was directly

³¹ “Arms for Kansas Stopped!,” *Glasgow Weekly Times*, March 13, 1856; “Sharp’s Rifles Taken,” *Squatter Sovereign*, March 18, 1856; “Robbery,” *The Herald of Freedom*, March 15, 1856.

³² “Quindaro,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, May 13, 1857, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379711840>.

³³ The Quindaro townsite was declared a “National Commemorative Site” in 2019.

across the Missouri River from Parkville, Platte County, Missouri. The Quindaro company operated a Parkville-Quindaro Ferry which was used by enslaved people escaping Platte County. Regrettably, Quindaro became a prime example of the sort of land tenure, town-site speculation, and de-tribalization that Craig Miner and William Unrau lament. Four officers of the town were named: Joel Walker (Wyandot) as president, Abelard Guthrie as vice president, Charles Robinson as treasurer, and S. N. Simpson (Lawrence, Kansas land agent) as secretary. Lots were then sold, often to absentee speculators. This was identified at the time as problematic for the town's success, as the desirable property would be thus taken and prospective residents would be kept out. But the most serious threat was from Simpson "whose presence in the town at all cannot be other than an injury to it."³⁴ Some of these transactions were fraudulent, as a letter to New England investor Hiram Hill warned, "the property that S.N. Simpson has sold to individuals was not his he never paid a cent for...he had Deeded town property which did not belong to him & has taken the companys money & sent it off"³⁵ Guthrie suffered in these transactions and seemed to loathe the business dealings. "I have never suffered more anguish of mind that I have suffered within the last month on account of pecuniary embarrassments....After all the old Indian life, with all its poverty and hardship is the happiest."³⁶ Robinson was also guilty of unscrupulous behavior, leaving Guthrie to pay his debts at the expense of satisfying his own creditors.³⁷

³⁴ "A.Tuttle to Abelard Guthrie," July 1, 1857, Kansas State Historical Society, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/998>.

³⁵ "Albert C. Morton to Hiram Hill," July 31, 1857, Kansas State Historical Society, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/3180>.

³⁶ Abelard Guthrie, "Abelard Guthrie Diaries" (1848-65), April 23, 1856, Kansas State Historical Society.

³⁷ Guthrie, April 12, 1858.

By August 1857, Quindaro's reputation as a harbor for fugitive slaves was established. The Quindaro *Chindowan*, the town's newspaper began publishing on May 13, 1857, edited by James Walden, an anti-slavery editor from Ohio. Walden was a strong free state advocate, but did not identify as an abolitionist.³⁸ He reported that residents of Parkville, Missouri openly denounced Quindaro, thereby informing the enslaved community of a welcoming destination. A fugitive coming through the town had admitted "this to have been his impression from his own words."³⁹ The *Chindowan* insisted that the only enticements for the enslaved to come to Quindaro came from these declarations, not from the town itself. In the same issue, the *Chindowan* recounts a story of Mr. Taylor from Westport who came to Quindaro in search of a runaway slave. The account attributed to Taylor claimed that the residents refused to aid in recovering the fugitive who they acknowledged to be there until he threatened to bring a crowd from Westport. Frightened at the prospect of the hostile invasion, the Quindarans gave him information and assistance. Walden's version claimed that Taylor came to town looking for an "alleged fugitive" and was met with cooperation as a citizen took him through town to the homes of the African American residents. No traces could be found of his lost "property" except that he had crossed the Kaw River at Wyandott. Given the interracial operation of the Underground Railroad in Quindaro, the absence of the fugitive in African American homes did not mean that the community had not provided assistance. The citizen who conducted Taylor through the town could easily have

³⁸ Jeff R. Bremer, "'A Species of Town-Building Madness': Quindaro and Kansas Territory, 1856-1862," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, Autumn 2003, 165.

³⁹ "Latest from the Seige," *Quindaro Chindowan*, August 8, 1857, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379712668>.

avoided the actual location of the runaway. They may also have known better than to share this information with the editor if he did not support Underground Railroad activity. Walden maintained that the people of Quindaro opposed the extension of slavery, but he denied enticing away slaves or knowingly harboring fugitives. In the complex environment in Kansas, not all free state proponents favored equal rights for African Americans.

Walden seemed to taunt the Missourians, though, by denying that any *threats* had been made. But, “Had he indulged in that line of conversation, he may rest assured he would have been met in a very different spirit from the one he describes.”⁴⁰ While not all free state advocates may have supported Underground Railroad activity, they could likely be counted on to forcibly resist Border Ruffians who might come looking for a fight. This river town, isolated along the border with Missouri, functioned much as the African American communities in Ohio that Griffler dubbed the “front line of freedom.”

Westport and the abolitionist newspapers appear to be sparring in the rhetoric of their news coverage. The Westport *Star of Empire* labeled Quindaro an “abolitionist hole” to which the *Chindowan* took great exception, accusing the Missourians of sabotaging their town’s reputation in order to control trade on the Missouri River.⁴¹ The Emporia *Kansas News* quotes the *Star of Empire* from an “agitation article a column long, advocating a general hanging ‘without judge or jury,’ of certain parties.” The *Star of Empire* identified the Underground Railroad route from Westport to run “via Kansas

⁴⁰ “A Modern Munchausen,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, August 8, 1857, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379712668/>.

⁴¹ “Quindaro, That Abolition Hole!,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, August 8, 1857, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379712668/>.

City to Wyandotte, thence to Lawrence, Emporia and Topeka, by way of Quindaro. The thieves are amongst us every day, inciting slaves to laziness, rebellion and running-away.” For its part, the *Kansas News* speculated that the editor’s knowledge of the route came from his own thieving excursions in the summer of 1856 and that his reference to hanging was a candid admission of what he deserved himself.⁴² The *Kansas News* did not deny the accuracy of the route, however.

Abolitionist Samuel Tappan confirmed the existence of this route. He described organized Underground Railroad activity in correspondence to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, one of John Brown’s “Secret Six” supporters. Tappan wrote seeking financial support, but noted that the railroad was running and several people had used it to “visit friends.” He directed Higginson or other potential supporters to contact “Walter Oakley at Topeka, James Blood and myself at Lawrence or Sam C. Smith at Quindaro.”⁴³

Abolitionism and Underground Railroad activity among Wyandots involved in Quindaro should be viewed within a broader network of activists. Pro-slavery forces considered it “the youngest sister of a despised trio of Free-state towns” with Lawrence and Topeka.⁴⁴ Freedom seekers who crossed the Missouri River at Quindaro proceeded to free state strongholds controlled by New England emigrants. Multiple connections tied Quindaro, Lawrence and Topeka together. Robinson, a New England Emigrant Aid Society leader from Lawrence, was an officer of the Quindaro town company. Lawrence

⁴² “Border Ruffian Literature,” *The Kansas News*, November 21, 1857, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85030219/1857-11-21/ed-1/seq-2/>.

⁴³ “Samuel Tappan to Thomas Wentworth Higginson,” January 24, 1858, Kansas State Historical Society.

⁴⁴ “Quindaro--Its History,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, June 19, 1858, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379716158>.

Underground Railroad operative Joel Grover and Sam Smith maintained a warehouse in Parkville, just a ferry ride across the Missouri River from Quindaro. They advertised their outfitting and transport business in the Quindaro *Chindowan*. Guthrie participated in the political conventions of the Topeka movement. Networks and connections of this type were important to the Underground Railroad when the need to summon assistance quickly could determine the success of an escape. Particularly on the Kansas/Missouri border, Underground Railroad activity was dangerous. As early as February 1857, the Topeka men were utilizing the Lane Trail for the Underground Railroad; by 1859, they were guiding freedom seekers along the Lane Trail with armed escorts.⁴⁵

Underground Railroad networks tended to operate through familial or church connections. The Wyandots involved at Quindaro had these connections. Nancy Quindaro Brown Guthrie was the daughter of Wyandot chief Adam Brown and a Shawnee mother. Her cousin was Wyandot abolitionist George I. Clark. George Clark was influential in the tribe, being elected as Head Chief and often serving on the tribal council and in treaty delegations. Clark was allied with Wyandot abolitionist John Armstrong and uniformly supported Abelard Guthrie.⁴⁶ Abelard Guthrie was first cousins with Reverend John Todd, a very active Underground Railroad operative whose home and community in Tabor, Iowa were important stops on the Lane Trail. Guthrie's mother Elizabeth Ainsworth and Todd's mother Sally Ainsworth were sisters. The Wyandots were predominantly members of the Methodist Episcopal denomination, the northern

⁴⁵ The Lane Trail was routed by James Lane through Nebraska and Iowa and was used by free state emigrants to avoid travel through Missouri.

⁴⁶ Connelly, *Provisional Government*, 1899, 47–48.

branch of which was active in the Underground Railroad. Within the first year, a brick building was constructed in Quindaro for the church. As early as January 1858, a Congregational church was organized in Quindaro, the first in the territory. Two new ministers were ordained and the new stone building dedicated. The ministers were Rev. S. D. Storrs for Quindaro and Rev. Cordley, an Underground Railroad operative in Lawrence.⁴⁷

The Quindaro Library Association held its fifth lecture at the Congregational Church on February 4, 1858 featuring Charles Leonhardt. Leonhardt was a Danite, a secret group that employed tactics similar to John Brown. The group originally formed in Lawrence in 1855, but smaller groups broke off in southeastern Kansas where they took to the field in 1858, becoming known as Jayhawkers. When peace finally arrived in February 1859, remnants of the Danites, then known as Jayhawkers, utilized their connections by becoming more active in the Underground Railroad.⁴⁸ Charles Leonhardt, a Prussian who came to Kansas in 1854 became involved with this group and felt an obligation to record its history. His manuscripts at the Kansas State Historical Society detail Underground Railroad operations of the Danites, among other activities. In a manuscript entitled “The Last Train”, Leonhardt recounts a journey similar to John Brown’s last trip from Kansas along the Lane Trail. Leonhardt, Reverend John Stewart, and a group of nine others including several former Danites, escorted a group of 12

⁴⁷ “Congregational Church of Quindaro,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, January 30, 1858, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379714643>.

⁴⁸ Todd Mildfelt, *The Secret Danites: Kansas’ First Jayhawkers* (Richmond, Kansas: Todd Mildfelt Publishing, 2003), 12.

fugitives in June 1860 from Lawrence to the Quaker communities at Springdale and West Branch, Iowa.⁴⁹

In addition to the library association, a Quindaro Literary Association was established. The activists in Quindaro formed a vibrant intellectual community. Clarina Nichols, assistant editor of the *Chindowan* and her children became officers of the literary society. While *Chindowan* editor Walden did not support the Underground Railroad, assistant editor Clarina Nichols was more progressive. Nichols came to Kansas with one of the first emigrant aid groups from Vermont where she was a teacher and journalist. She regarded the newly forming society in Kansas as a ripe territory to advocate for her causes—women’s suffrage and equal rights, abolitionism, and temperance. Perhaps because she was more progressive than editor Walden, she left the *Chindowan* after a few months. The Quindaro Literary Association became a gathering point for progressive reformers, particularly abolitionists.⁵⁰

The Quindaro Literary Association met regularly at a location that they called “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”. Their choice of name references Harriet Beecher Stowe’s serial novel of the same name. But, it may also be in solidarity with Reverend Sam Green, an Underground Railroad conductor in Dorchester County, Maryland, who was convicted and sentence to ten years for possessing a copy of the incendiary publication. A notice of the verdict was carried in the *Chindowan* in June 1857.⁵¹ In May 1858, the group

⁴⁹ Charles Leonhardt, “The Last Train” (n.d.), Kansas State Historical Society.

⁵⁰ Marilyn S. Blackwell and Kristen T. Oertel, *Frontier Feminist: Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 178.

⁵¹ “News Item, Found Guilty,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, June 13, 1857, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379712085>.

claimed a flourishing membership of 60 members.⁵² Their meeting notices sometimes announced topics for discussion. One such topic was “Should legislative enactments which contravene the principles of justice be recognized as laws.” This is the central question of Underground Railroad activists who felt that a higher moral law called them to violate the Fugitive Slave Act. The Association functioned as a Lyceum where members could have discussions about intellectual topics.

“Uncle Tom’s Cabin” had a more practical association than the meeting place of the Literary Association. It was dedicated to “emancipation without proclamation, and as such one of the most convenient stations on the Underground Railroad.”⁵³ Nichols recalled her experiences with the Underground Railroad years later. She boasted that of the many fugitives who passed through Quindaro, only one was taken back to Missouri. That case resulted in a lack of caution by the freedom seeker in approaching someone for help. Identifying who to trust was one of the most important skills of a fugitive. This would be particularly true in a community where some residents might not support aiding runaways.

Nevertheless, Nichols noted that “Uncle Tom’s boys could tell of some exciting escapes from Quindaro to the interior.” In 1858, she carried to her hometown in Vermont a pair of manacles filed by the men from the ankle of a freedom seeker who escaped from Parkville. The fugitive, having learned that he had been sold South, tried to escape and was put in irons. The night before he was to be transported, he managed to get one foot

⁵² “Quindaro Literary Association,” *Quindaro Chindowan*, May 8, 1858, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/379715755>.

⁵³ “Mrs. C.I.H. Nichol’s Letter,” *Wyandotte Gazette*, December 29, 1882, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/95979684/>.

free and with help from another slave got loose. Fearing a missing boat in the vicinity would give them away, they traveled ten miles up the river where they confiscated a boat. Just above the Quindaro landing they concealed themselves in the brush near Uncle Tom's Cabin. They were taken to Lawrence on a freight wagon, hidden in two large dry-good boxes. The wagon driver was recognized at the Bartles hotel on the Lawrence road by someone who knew him as an Underground Railroad conductor in Indiana, and asked what he was hauling. The driver was able to deflect the inquiry and deliver his passengers safely to Lawrence.⁵⁴

Nichols had her own Underground Railroad adventure in October 1861, when she hid Caroline in her cistern. This case demonstrates the importance of having community support to draw from in emergencies. One evening Nichols received a hurried message from her neighbor Fielding Johnson, that "You must hide Caroline. Fourteen slave hunters are camped on the Park—her master among them." Conveniently, Nichols' cistern was emptied and cleaned in preparation for sealing. She was able to lower Caroline with some blankets, a pillow and chair, and then cover the cistern with a wash basin. Nichols improvised a sick room with her son as the patient to give cover since she could not leave Caroline alone. Caroline had been traumatized by the sale of her young daughter to Texas, beatings which had broken her arm, and fear of the slave catchers. Nichols kept vigil, watching for the slave catchers and whispering encouragement to Caroline. By seven in the morning, the slave catchers rode out of town further into

⁵⁴ "Mrs. C.I.H. Nichol's Letter."

Kansas. That evening, Caroline and another woman that the slave catchers were hunting found a safe conveyance to friends in Leavenworth.⁵⁵

From its auspicious beginnings in 1857, Quindaro sprang to life. Construction of the first building was begun on January 1 and by August, the *Chindowan* reported a population of 600 people and more than 100 buildings. In January 1858, the population had reached 800. As fast as it boomed, however, Quindaro went bust. The Panic of 1857 that rocked the nation's financial circles affected the cash available to speculators.⁵⁶ Reflecting on its decline, Nichols identified a number of factors. Town planners underestimated the impact of the rugged townsite on building and infrastructure. Roads from Quindaro to the interior were difficult to travel, hurting commerce in that direction. Hostile relations with Missouri inhibited commercial relations on the other side. As the free state factions took hold in Kansas, Quindaro's status as the free state port became less important.

The early restoration of safe conduct to eastern emigration and freights through Missouri landings more acceptable to the settlements, removed the commercial necessity which first originated and then fostered the location as a Kansas river port for the immigration and trade of Free state settlers.⁵⁷

For all of these challenges, Nichols believed it could have survived but for the contested legal issues surrounding the title to the land. Quindaro was booming while the Wyandot allotments were still being determined. By 1860, the population was down to 609. Most of the inhabitants came from the Midwest, Northeast or Mid-Atlantic states

⁵⁵ "Mrs. C.I.H. Nichol's Letter."

⁵⁶ Bremer, "Species of Town-Building Madness," 163.

⁵⁷ "Old Quindaro. A Second Letter from Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols, Rich with Scraps of History and Anecdote," *Wyandotte Gazette*, June 16, 1882, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/95979083>.

while some were foreign born. But, its multi-racial origins could still be found in the population. Quindaro Township had a larger percentage of African Americans than the surrounding county, at more than fifty percent. It represented only a quarter of the county's Indian population. Combined, African American and Indian citizens comprised almost ten percent of Quindaro's population.⁵⁸

Through its boom and bust period, Quindaro remained a location of refuge for freedom seekers crossing from Missouri. In spring 1862, an enslaved man named George Washington escaped through Parkville. Born in Virginia in 1840, he had been given as a wedding present to Margaret Jones by her father and brought to Missouri. In Platte County, they farmed hemp and corn. Hearing rumors about Lincoln emancipating the slaves, Washington decided to free himself early by crossing the Missouri River to Quindaro. There he was sheltered from slave hunters until he could safely make his way to Leavenworth. James Lane was recruiting African Americans, whether enslaved or free, for the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and Washington joined the unit.⁵⁹ This storied regiment distinguished itself in fighting in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas.

The disruption of the Civil War inspired many enslaved people to take their chance on freedom. Large numbers of freedom seekers from Missouri poured into Kansas, which had entered the Union as a free state. In addition to Quindaro, Wyandotte

⁵⁸ Bremer, "Species of Town-Building Madness," 169.

⁵⁹ James S. Johnson, III, "The Life and Times of George Washington: Slave, Soldier, Farmer," in *Freedom's Crucible: The Underground Railroad in Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas, 1854-1865: A Reader*, ed. Richard B. Sheridan (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1998), 117–18.

was another crossing point. Fugitives came across the Missouri River on the ferry and landed at the foot of Minnesota Avenue in Wyandotte.⁶⁰ Mrs. Byron Judd recalled

It was a sight to make one weep, those poor, frightened, half-starved negroes, coming over on the ferry and the people of the village down at the levee to receive them....But those negro refugees—men and women, and little children clinging to them, and carrying all of their earthly possessions in little bags or bundles, sometimes in red bandana handkerchiefs! I recall how they were housed and fed and made comfortable by the good people, and then how they sang and crooned their old songs, forgetful of their misery and their wretchedness of a few hours before.⁶¹

Benjamin Mudge, a pioneer scientist who later taught at the Kansas State Agricultural College, described his encounter with slave hunters while sheltering a group of eight contraband in 1862. Informed by “a half-breed Indian” that their master was coming after them, Mudge armed himself with a gun borrowed from Reverend Storrs of the Congregational Church. Mudge refused to give up the freedom seekers, and sent his sons to get reinforcements from Reverend Storrs.⁶²

The Civil War sealed the decline of Quindaro. Many of the remaining men left to join the Union Army. Wyandot volunteers served in several different regiments, including the Fifth Cavalry, Twelfth Cavalry, and Kansas Colored Regiments. The Second Kansas Cavalry was stationed at Quindaro and stripped the vacant buildings for firewood.⁶³ Nichols observed that to save a remnant of their property, homeowners were compelled to remove anything that could be put to use elsewhere. “And so the

⁶⁰ Wyandotte was another town on Wyandot lands and is the location of the present day Kansas City, Kansas.

⁶¹ Morgan, *History of Wyandotte County*, 232.

⁶² Melville Mudge, “Benjamin Franklin Mudge: A Letter from Quindaro,” *Kansas History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 218–22.

⁶³ Bremer, “Species of Town-Building Madness,” 170.

surrounding country absorbed in its improvements, the depopulated city,” Nichols lamented. She mused that she “will never cease to regret my Quindaro home, with its mingled memories and defeated possibilities.”⁶⁴

Returning from the war, Wyandot families found their Quindaro homes in ruins. What was still standing were occupied by recently freed slaves who had moved into them during the Civil War. An African American community developed where Quindaro once stood. A Freedman’s University was founded after the Civil War that became Western University, a foundation for the African American community of Kansas City. The promise of the 1855 Treaty for allowing the Wyandots to mediate the onslaught of white settlement was in the end a false hope. The tribe only received part of the first installment of the promised annuity that was to be paid over three years. Some of the annuity was paid in stocks from Tennessee and Missouri that had depreciated, instead of in United States stocks as stipulated in the 1855 Treaty. In 1861, the tribe sent a delegation to Washington to collect the amount due.⁶⁵ Taxes that were supposed to be deferred under the terms of the 1855 Treaty were illegally levied and some of the land was put up for sheriff’s auction.⁶⁶

The Wyandots and Shawnees, along with other Kansas tribes displaced by the opening of Kansas to white settlement and the Civil War, renegotiated their treaty with the federal government. In 1862, the Shawnee Mission Indian School closed. Johnson

⁶⁴ “Old Quindaro. A Second Letter from Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols, Rich with Scraps of History and Anecdote.”

⁶⁵ Wyandotte Nation, “Wyandot Indian Council Records,” 217.

⁶⁶ “Treaty between the United States of America and the Senecas, Mixed Senecas and Shawnees, Quapaws, Confederated Peorias, Kaskaskias, Weas, and Piankeshaws, Miamies, Ottawas of Blanchard’s Fork and Roche de Boeuf, and Certain Wyandottes,” 15 Stat. 513 (1867), Article 14.

engaged in a protracted struggle to maintain control of the land that he had acquired through the previous treaty. Ever the political pragmatist, when the Civil War started, Johnson proclaimed his loyalty to the Union. On the night of January 2, 1865, armed assailants killed him at his home and fired on his family for an hour and a half. The attackers were believed to be a party of Bushwhackers, pro-slavery men. Johnson's son Alexander, who ran the mission school from 1858 until it closed, resumed the legal fight to retain ownership of the land sold to his father in the previous treaty.

Even before the Civil War, in September 1858, some of the Wyandots through the tribal Council and Chief Tauomee negotiated to purchase some of Seneca land in Indian Territory so that they could relocate.⁶⁷ The 1867 Treaty was based on the premise that it was desirable for certain tribes residing in Kansas should be removed to lands in the Indian Country south of Kansas. With regard to the Wyandots, it found that a portion of the tribe, though they had taken land in severalty had already sold their allotments and remained poor. Some members elected not to become citizens but were left without a clear organization. The Tribal Council continued to meet while the terms of the 1855 Treaty were implemented, however, its authority was to end and the tribe dissolved. Some who became citizens were deemed not to be fitted for citizenship. Further, the tribe had valid claims against the government which could provide resources to reestablish tribal existence. The 1867 Treaty provided for the Wyandots to settle on the Seneca land in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) and called for a new register of the tribe enumerating each member and whether they chose to remain Indians as part of the tribe.

⁶⁷ Wyandotte Nation, "Wyandot Indian Council Records," 90.

Anyone who had previously chosen to become a citizen, or their family was not allowed to become part of the tribe without the tribe's consent or unless they were likely to become a public burden.⁶⁸

The fault lines that developed during the territorial period around the assignment of missionaries from the Methodist Episcopal Church South manifested during the messy process of implementing the 1855 Treaty and the subsequent 1867 Treaty. Enumerating tribal members on the incompetent and minor lists, assigning guardians, deciding whether to become citizens or retain tribal membership, and selecting allotments disrupted tribal relations. Several abolitionist leaders died before the Civil War, including John Armstrong and George I. Clark. Lucy Armstrong presented a memorial to the Wyandot council asking them to protest to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that widows should be allowed to make decisions as head of their households and control the allotments for their minor children.⁶⁹ After "mature deliberation" of the subject, the council concluded that competent widows should be entitled to have control of their minor children. Determining that any delay by the Commissioners "in contravention of the instructions of the department as having a tendency to long and continuous delay calculated to injure all parties," the council authorized a special meeting with the Commissioners.⁷⁰

Lucy had spent years struggling with her brother in law Silas Armstrong over the selection of the allotments for her family. Silas, John Armstrong's half brother did not share his abolitionist sentiments. Silas, for years a member of the tribal council, was

⁶⁸ Treaty between the United States of America and the Senecas, ... and certain Wyandottes, Article 13.

⁶⁹ Wyandotte Nation, "Wyandot Indian Council Records," 89.

⁷⁰ Wyandotte Nation, 108.

guardian for about 50 Incompetents. As such, he had great influence in determining allotments and controlled annuity payments. Joel Walker, William Walker's brother was guardian for about 40 individuals.⁷¹ In November 1858, the Council issued a notice to Silas Armstrong to appear before them and provide a "definite answer as to whether he intends paying over the Council the moneys now in his hands belonging to the Nation."⁷² In December he returned five hundred dollars remaining from the amount appropriated for surveying the allotments of the Wyandot lands. This evidently was not the entire amount owed, as several months later they issued a requisition for the balance of unexpended funds. He would not return the money because he no longer had it.⁷³ Not only did Silas have guardianship over a number of individuals, he also controlled the survey of allotments which determined how lands would be distributed. Nevertheless, he was repeatedly chosen as a guardian and to administer probate for deceased Wyandots. Silas himself had died in December 1865, before the 1867 register was made, but he had previously chosen to become a citizen. Lucy Armstrong was a widow at the adoption of the 1855 Treaty, and had to be restored to the rolls. In 1867, she wanted her and her family to remain on the tribal rolls.

The 1867 Treaty allowed all incompetents described in the 1855 treaty and others who chose to become members of the Wyandot tribe to be placed on a reservation. This reservation was located on land ceded back to the federal government by the Seneca tribe in Oklahoma. Over 200 Wyandots removed to this reservation while many who had been

⁷¹ Wyandotte Nation, 32.

⁷² Wyandotte Nation, 109.

⁷³ Wyandotte Nation, 112, 116.

declared citizens in 1855 remained. Later some joined their tribe on the reservation. By 1904, three churches served the tribe. Of the Christianized tribal members, there were equal numbers of Methodists and Quakers.⁷⁴ Today there are separate groups in Kansas and Oklahoma with claims as the descendant tribe the Wyandot Nation.

⁷⁴ Merwin, "The Wyandot Indians," 88.

CONCLUSION

The national narrative often overlooks subaltern groups, such as African Americans and Indians. Interactions between these groups that do not involve whites suffer from a “double blind.” African Americans and Indians share a complex history. Colonization of Europeans in America and expansion of the United States, affected both groups through enslavement and loss of territory. Sometimes, this made allies of the two, and in other cases they became adversaries. Whites understood from colonial times that their control over the continent depended on the extent to which they could alienate these groups from each other. Colonial records and treaties reveal that native societies harboring self-liberated Africans was a concern from the earliest European settlement.

Some tribes may have sheltered freedom seekers, but eventually adopted slavery as they evolved an agricultural economy. Other native societies incorporated African Americans and white captives into their ranks to replace family members who had died. Some tribes protected black settlements within their territory, and included them as part of their society. These tribes took part in the Underground Railroad, assisting those fleeing bondage.

Scholars have examined the slave holding practices of the southern tribes, but have paid almost no attention to the relationship of northern tribes to slavery. Both the Wyandots and Shawnees had blacks living among them in Ohio. When the Wyandots removed from the east, some of these people moved with them. Others remained in Ohio, not willing to risk the journey through slave territory to reach Kansas.

Indian agents and missionaries implemented federal policy for native societies in the nineteenth century. The goal was to “civilize” the Indians by forcing them to adopt agriculture and land ownership in severalty. By replacing the native concept of tribal territories and hunting as a subsistence strategy to supplement horticulture, “excess land” became available for white settlement and slavery. Some tribes adopted chattel slavery as they became “civilized.” In Ohio, the Wyandots had a Methodist Episcopal mission, started by John Stewart, a free black man whose family were Underground Railroad activists. Quaker missionary Henry Harvey, a known Underground Railroad activist ministered to the Shawnees at Wapokoneta and moved with them to Kansas. The abolitionist and Underground Railroad inclinations of these ministers were consistent with the sentiments of the societies to which they ministered.

When the Shawnees and Wyandots removed to Kansas, they were ostensibly moving to free territory. Yet, their removal established conditions for pro-slavery incursions into these nations. The Missouri Compromise had restricted slavery north of the 36°30' latitude. But, by the 1840s, as the country expanded with large new territories, the political debate over whether slavery or freedom was the inherent quality of new lands came into focus. Could Congress restrict slavery in the territories? Could Indian nations prohibit slavery? Must citizens of a territory or domestic dependent nation pass positive laws if they intend establish slavery? Indian agents and missionaries assigned to the Wyandots and Shawnees brought pro-slavery sentiments and pushed to influence the tribes toward slavery.

The Methodist Episcopal church, which ministered to the Wyandots, split over slavery. The Indian missions became part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Pro-slavery Reverend E.T. Peery replaced abolitionist James Wheeler. Thomas Johnson, who began ministering to Shawnees in 1830, introduced slavery to Indian territory. He became involved with pro-slavery politics during the Bleeding Kansas period.

The corrupting influence of the pro-slavery missionaries and Indian agents impacted tribal leaders. The tribes did not have sufficient space to maintain their traditional subsistence practices, and became agricultural. Some tribal leaders of both the Shawnees and Wyandots, most of whom were mixed blood, acquired slaves as they attempted to assimilate into white society and enhance their status. Most tribal members, however, adhered to traditional beliefs and remained anti-slavery. This set the stage for sometimes bitter conflicts within the tribes. These struggles over slavery within the tribes became part of the larger abolitionist and pro-slavery debate within the country. In 1852, some anti-slavery traditional Shawnees left Kansas to join a Shawnee band in Oklahoma.¹ Among the Wyandots, partisan strife led to church burnings and violence. A group of the traditional Wyandots who had not claimed citizenship moved to Oklahoma after the Civil War.

As the Wyandots and Shawnees adjusted to their circumstances in Kansas Territory, they acted on their assessments of the best strategy to protect their interests. The Wyandots determined that organizing the territory on their terms gave them the best chance for controlling their future. Individual tribal members decided whether to claim

¹ Abing, "Before Bleeding Kansas," 60.

U.S. citizenship or remain members of their tribes based on their personal values and economic situations. In this context, they encountered slavery; Wyandot and Shawnee tribal leaders adopted the practice while most members resisted.

Lucy Bigelow Armstrong observed in 1879 that the Wyandots had their Border Ruffian war before the white settlers had theirs. The question of slavery, brought into the Kansas Territory by missionaries and Indian agents fractured the tribes in a manner that foreshadowed the heady days of Bleeding Kansas. This issue tore the tribes apart, but they pushed back against the official forces that steered them toward slavery. Scholars mark the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act as activating the conflict over slavery west of Missouri. But, Indian tribes fought about slavery in Kansas Territory about for a decade before Congress established popular sovereignty. The Wyandots and Shawnees resisted white officials who introduced slavery in their midst. The course of their struggle presaged the larger national struggle that would come with the Civil War.

While slavery had a small foothold in Kansas Territory, it was not widespread. The Wyandots assisted fugitives escaping from enslavement in Missouri. This resistance by the tribes may have been a factor in the ultimate outcome of Bleeding Kansas. Slavery had not taken root in Kansas while it was Indian Territory, despite pressure from Indian agents and missionaries. If the character of a territory in reference to slavery determined its character when it became a state, the question of slavery taking root in Kansas while it was Indian Territory becomes more important. Had slavery become prevalent, the possibility of Kansas becoming a slave state would have increased.

The legacy of this period continues to the present. Descendants of the Wyandots and the fugitive slaves they assisted at Quindaro, for example, still maintain contact 150 years later. Descendants of citizen Wyandots who remained in Kansas petitioned for federal recognition and identification as a “successor-in-interest” to all treaties with the historic Wyandot Nation. The U.S. recognized the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma as the successor tribe. Disputes between the two groups arose over ownership of the Huron Cemetery in modern-day Kansas City, and funds derived from easements of the cemetery property.²

This study of the Wyandot and Shawnee interaction with African American slavery suggests a larger story of Indian abolitionism. Other northern tribes removed from Ohio to Kansas, such as the Ottawa and Delaware, also took part in the Underground Railroad. Further research could explore other tribes. Treaties and other documents show that tribes in the colonial and early national period helped self-liberating Africans. What impact did this early alliance have on national development? Were some tribes more active than others? Was this a factor in the gradual abolition enacted in northern states? It is important to include other peoples that are present, such as Indians and African Americans, in our analysis of historical events. Studying the interaction among these groups and with whites can enrich our understanding. These groups, though they may not have dominance and power, play a role in the unfolding of our collective history.

² Wyandot Nation of Kansas AKA Wyandotte Tribe of Indians v. United States, 2016–1654 Justia.

METHOD AND SOURCES

For the past twenty years, I have managed a program within the National Park Service (NPS) to commemorate the Underground Railroad. Established in 1998 by the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act, the Network to Freedom (NTF) Program works with communities to document, preserve, and interpret their Underground Railroad heritage. To date, the NTF has validated over six hundred historic sites, interpretive and educational programs, and research facilities in forty states plus Washington, DC and the Virgin Islands.

From these hundreds of documented local stories, a new understanding of the Underground Railroad has emerged. Local and regional studies have added to this picture. At the heart of the story are the freedom seekers that took the first steps out of bondage. Their journey to freedom was an act of resistance that complicated the political relationships among the states and moved the nation toward war. Several fugitives became Underground Railroad operatives themselves, once they settled in a life of freedom. Whites and free blacks who operated in small networks of trusted family and church members joined them. Several networks ranged across states and expanded westward. The work was bi-racial and cut across class lines.

With some regularity during my work with the NTF, associates would reference the help provided by Indian nations to freedom seekers. The Underground Railroad Advisory Committee that guided the National Park Service's *Underground Railroad Special Resource Study*, elected Rose Powhatan, of the Pamunkey tribe, as secretary. This study, that led to the NTF in 1998, made several mentions about maroon societies and

Native American groups as destinations for escaped bondsmen.¹ As NPS staff developed the NTF, we visited descendant Black Seminole communities in Nacimiento de los Negros in Coahuila, Mexico, Brackettville, Texas, and Red Bays on Andros Island, Bahamas. These visits led to a descendants' reunion and oral history project at an Underground Railroad conference in St. Augustine, Florida in 2012.

Yet, beyond the Seminoles, specific mention of other tribes was rare. If the Underground Railroad was difficult to document due to its secret nature, the Native American connection was even more elusive. Intrigued as I was, I could rarely get more than generalities in answer to my questions. Underground Railroad studies did not address the topic.² After I started working for the NTF, I visited Kansas City, Kansas where Marvin Robinson, a local resident, showed us the ruins of a town called Quindaro which he described as a tri-racial community of whites, blacks, and Wyandots involved in the Underground Railroad. Robinson's reverence for the site reflected an almost sacred space.³

Several years later, I encountered Genevieve Eicher, a woman from Ohio, who spoke of her Wyandot ancestors' involvement with the Underground Railroad there. Still, these threads did not resonate until I was leading a tour of Underground Railroad sites in Kansas for a conference we held in Topeka in 2010. Two sisters, Wyandots

¹ National Park Service, "Underground Railroad Special Resource Study" (National Park Service, 1995), 19.

² The first modern article on this topic, by Roy Finkenbine, appeared in Damian Pargas, *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018).

³ Quindaro Townsite has recently been designated as a "National Commemorative Site" by legislation signed by President Trump in March 2019. For press coverage of the dedication event in April, see <http://wyandottedaily.com/quindaro-celebrates-national-commemorative-site-designation/> and <https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article229600439.html> and <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article135161774.html>

Holly and Kristen Zane, had joined the tour. When we got to Quindaro, Holly commented that scholars have not acknowledged the role of her people in the Underground Railroad. When I thought about exploring this topic for my dissertation, I met with the Zane sisters and their relative Janith English, who is chief of the Kansas Wyandots. They supported the project and shared information with me about the tribe. I was fortunate to interview Genevieve Eicher before she died. I also toured Quindaro with Jesse Hope and Nancy Dawson, descendants of freedom seekers who settled there.

As a people with such a history of migration, multiple repositories contain portions of Wyandot records. I conducted research in three different states and at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and Kansas City, Missouri. State Historical Societies in Kansas, Ohio, and Oklahoma all hold collections of interest. The Ohio Historical Society maintains the Wilbur Siebert Collection which includes typed manuscripts of portions of his publications, but also correspondence from informants dating to the close of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Ohio Historical Society has since digitized the collection and it forms a base for Underground Railroad research, particularly in Ohio.

In 1875, the Kansas Editors' and Publishers' Association formed the Kansas Historical Society to collect newspapers and documents from the territorial period. Newspapers from the 1840s and 1850s were valuable for this study. Both Free State and pro-slavery papers during the Bleeding Kansas period covered issues related to slavery extensively. Abolitionists published the *Chindowan* in Quindaro from 1857 to 1858. Nationally, the subject of slavery in the territories excited articles, letters to the editor,

and editorials in newspapers across the country. Institutions around the country have digitized many of these newspapers and made them available through the internet. The Library of Congress's Chronicling America project and Newspapers.com aided this project with their keyword search and browse capacities.

The Kansas Historical Society has a wealth of documents from the Indian Territory and Bleeding Kansas periods. They have digitized and transcribed many of these documents. The Historical Society holds some Wyandot and Shawnee tribal records, including Wyandot tribal council minute and journals from William Walker, Abelard Guthrie, and several missionaries. It also houses materials from historian William Connelly who did extensive research among the tribes. The University of Oklahoma Libraries, Western History Collections contains more of his collection.

Wyandot abolitionists John McIntyre Armstrong and his wife Lucy Bigelow Armstrong created the most important records for this study. John Armstrong trained as a lawyer. He worked as a translator and represented the tribe in a variety of legal issues. His widow continued his advocacy role after he died in 1852. Their papers reveal great insights into the issues they confronted. John Armstrong's papers are at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Kansas State Historical Society, the Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, and the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library all contain some of Lucy Armstrong's papers.

Local history collections in local libraries are another important source of information about the Underground Railroad. For this study, the Upper Sandusky

Community Library proved invaluable. Much of the collection focused on family histories and genealogies, including of the Wyandots. The Thelma Marsh collection included research materials from this church historian of the John Stewart United Methodist Church in Upper Sandusky. The library also holds the church records.

Besides the records left by the Wyandots, other traditional sources exist for exploring this topic. Traveler accounts, narratives of Indian captives and slave narratives provided information for the early years in Ohio. Land records verified African American ownership of land at Negrotown and the Wyandot Great Reserve. Accounts from missionaries and annual reports from Indian agents provided details about events on the reservations in both Ohio and Kansas. Government records from the Secretary of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs included important correspondence. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Wyandot and Shawnee tribes concluded several treaties with the U.S. government. The American State Papers treaty records and reports from negotiations contained valuable information such as notes on discussions amongst the tribes leading up to the Treaty of Greenville. I also drew from the Congressional Record and reports from congressional inquiries. Wyandot journals and correspondence from this period provided an important corrective from relying on the perspective of these official records.

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