

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD AND ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT IN HUDSON, OHIO

Hudson Library and Historical Society

Hudson was founded in 1799 by New England pioneers who brought with them a hatred of the institution of slavery. One influential settler, Owen Brown, was an active Abolitionist and Underground Railroad "Stationmaster", as well as father to controversial abolitionist John Brown, who lived here for twenty years.

The debate in Hudson was not only about whether slavery should continue, but also about how to ensure freedom once the slaves were freed. There were two distinct and passionate factions of slavery opponents: the Colonizationists believed that the slaves should be freed and returned to Africa (an opinion shared even by Abraham Lincoln in the early years of his presidency), while the Abolitionists believed that they should simply be freed as American citizens. The Hudson community was torn apart by these diverging views.

The following are some of the significant sites in Hudson associated with this chapter of our history. A map has been provided for locations in the downtown area close enough for a comfortable walking tour; sites further away include directions.



1) Start your tour at the **Ohio Historic Underground Railroad Marker** on the green near the clock tower. It honors Hudson's role in the anti-slavery movement, and was the first such marker for Northern Ohio in May 2000.



2) **Free Congregational Church**, 5 E. Main St. Owen Brown established the Free Congregational or "Oberlin" Church in 1842, and paid to have this building constructed for the congregation. Members had to swear they would fight against slavery. John Brown made his last appearance in Hudson in front of this building in the summer of 1859 on his way to Harpers Ferry. The original church used a wooden structure at 27 E. Main (2a); it was here in 1837 that John Brown gave his first public speech opposing slavery upon hearing of the murder of anti-slavery newspaperman Elijah Lovejoy in Illinois.



3) **Norman Baldwin House**, 30 Division St. This house originally stood at 35 East Main Street. In the early 1830s it was the home of prominent local Abolitionist William Dawes.



4) **Harvey Coe House**, 92 College St. While not a known Underground Railroad agent, Reverend Coe was heavily involved in the American Colonization Society and helped precipitate the ideological crisis within the anti-slavery community in the early 1830s. He likely authored many of the letters published in *The Observer* and *The Telegraph*; as Coe was the Secretary of Western Reserve College's Board of Trustees, the letters demonstrated a deep division within the school.



5) **William Hanford House**, 145 Aurora St. Reverend William Hanford spoke out publicly against slavery even before his arrival in Hudson. This home was later occupied by the Reverend Beriah Green, an outspoken Abolitionist and key figure in the controversy which tore Hudson apart in the early 1830s. His sermons denounced the Colonizationists for "impiety and gross hypocrisy" and characterized them as unchristian and pro-slavery. Green would go on to head the Oneida Institute.



6) Elizur Wright Jr. House, 120 Hudson St. One of the most prominent Abolitionists in America, Wright lived in this house while he was a professor at Western Reserve College. From one of Summit County's strongly anti-slavery families, the Wrights of Tallmadge, he edited the anti-slavery magazine *Human Rights*, became secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society of America, and edited the anti-slavery newspaper *The Massachusetts Abolitionist*. He also authored the pamphlet *The Sin of Slavery and Its Remedy*, which became one of the leading textbooks of the Abolitionist cause for many years.



7) Old Western Reserve College, College Street and surrounding blocks, north of Aurora St. Now Western Reserve Academy, the first college in northern Ohio was the center of debate between the Colonizationists and the Abolitionists in 1832-1833. On November 11, 1834, John Buss writes in his diary "A runaway slave, his wife, and child..." arrived on the Western Reserve College campus. The boys at the college scraped up \$5.00 to send the family on to Cleveland. In the 1850s, Frederick Douglass gave a commencement speech at the college.



8) George Holcomb/Timothy Hudson House, 356 N. Main St. David Hudson's son Timothy was a prominent anti-slavery figure in Ohio. Prior to moving here in 1842, he edited an anti-slavery newspaper in Medina, Ohio and attended the 1834 Putnam Anti-Slavery Convention in Muskingum County. He was married to Katherine Brown, a first cousin of John Brown.



9) David Hudson House, 318 N. Main St. Town founder David Hudson was an early anti-slavery advocate. On January 5, 1826, his son, David Hudson, Jr. wrote in his diary: "Two men came this evening in a sleigh, bringing a Negro woman, a runaway slave, and her two children." While a believer in the Colonization movement, Hudson remained an active Underground Railroad agent. The David Hudson house is the oldest in Summit County.



10) Brown-Strong House, 258 N. Main St. Owen Brown had this house built for his son, Oliver. The Browns later sold the house to Ephraim Strong, another prominent abolitionist in Hudson. Although it is likely that runaway slaves were hidden on the property, there is no physical evidence of hiding places.



11) John Markillie, 245 N. Main St. A photographer and ardent Abolitionist, John Markillie lived in a wood frame home at the current site of the Hudson Chamber of Commerce office. Lora Case named Markillie as an agent to whom he often took his "passengers".



12) Titus Hand House, 220 N. Main St. Titus Hand was married to Owen Brown's daughter, Sally Marian Brown. Active in anti-slavery activities, they lived in this house in the 1830s. Both attended the 1839 Abolitionist convention in Cleveland.

These locations are further out from the immediate downtown area



Jeremiah Root Brown House, 204 E. Streetsboro St. John Brown's brother, Jeremiah, ran an Underground Railroad station at his farmhouse. He stored weapons for his brother on this site. Local tradition says that the dry cistern in the building was often used to hide people. *1/2 mile east of Main Street.*



Kilbourne-Oviatt House, 151 S. Main St. George Kilbourne was a member of the Free Congregational Church and an anti-slavery activist in Hudson. This house was moved here from 5735 Darrow Road. *1/3 mile south of 303.*



Thirty Acres

This was the home of John B. Clark, a prominent Abolitionist in Hudson. Traces remain of an escape tunnel that led from this house. *S. Main Street, 1/2 mile south of 303.*



Case-Barlow Farm, 1931 Barlow Rd.

This was the boyhood home of Lora Case, a well-known Underground Railroad activist and childhood friend of John Brown. Family tradition says that his parents, Chauncey and Cleopatra Case, hid fugitives in the wooded lot at the edge of the farm. Given the close connection with Brown, it is likely they were Abolitionists. *Barlow Road is 1.25 miles south of 303 off Route 91/South Main/Darrow Rd. The farm is 0.6 miles to the east.*



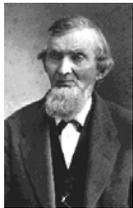
Asahel Kilbourne House, 1213 Barlow Rd.

Deacon Kilbourne was an associate of Owen Brown and a member of the Free Congregational Church. His anti-slavery convictions were well-known in Hudson. *0.9 miles west of Route 91.*



John Brown Tannery House, 1842 Hines Hill Rd.

This home was built on the grounds of the tannery John Brown ran in Hudson. Originally, the Brown family lived in a log cabin on this site, and by 1825, Brown had completed construction on this house. In 1826, he sold the house to his brother Oliver and moved to Pennsylvania. John Brown Jr. recalled that as a child, he observed his father and mother aiding fugitive slaves here. *Hines Hill Road is 1.75 miles north of Rt. 303 along Route 91/Main Street; the house is 1/2 mile west of 91.*



Lora Case Cabin

Gone for over a century, Lora Case's cabin on the south side of E. Streetsboro St. (Rt. 303) was an active Underground Railroad station. Lora Case wrote "It was a rare thing that a passenger attempted it [the Underground Railroad] or got through on our road." in July 1859. *The site is 2.5 miles east of Main Street, at 303 and Stone Road.*



Spring Hill Farm, 2827 Hudson Aurora Rd.

Owen Brown lived here from 1835 until moving next door in 1841. *From the clock tower in downtown Hudson, take Aurora St -- which becomes Hudson-Aurora Road -- about 2-1/3 miles east.*



Whedon-Hinsdale House, 2727 Hudson Aurora Rd.

When Owen Brown married the widow Lucy Hinsdale in 1841, he moved to this house and called it his favorite. Brown was one of the principle anti-slavery figures in Hudson and was the town's "Stationmaster" on the Underground Railroad; he passed his hatred of slavery on to his son, John. *Located next to Spring Hill Farm, above.*

Want to learn more about Hudson's history? Visit The Historical Society in the Library at 96 Library Street (off Clinton, two blocks west of the clocktower) or explore online at <http://www.hudsonlibrary.org> (select "Historical Society").

