

The Underground Railroad

Objective:

Students will understand the significance of the Underground Railroad.

Procedure:

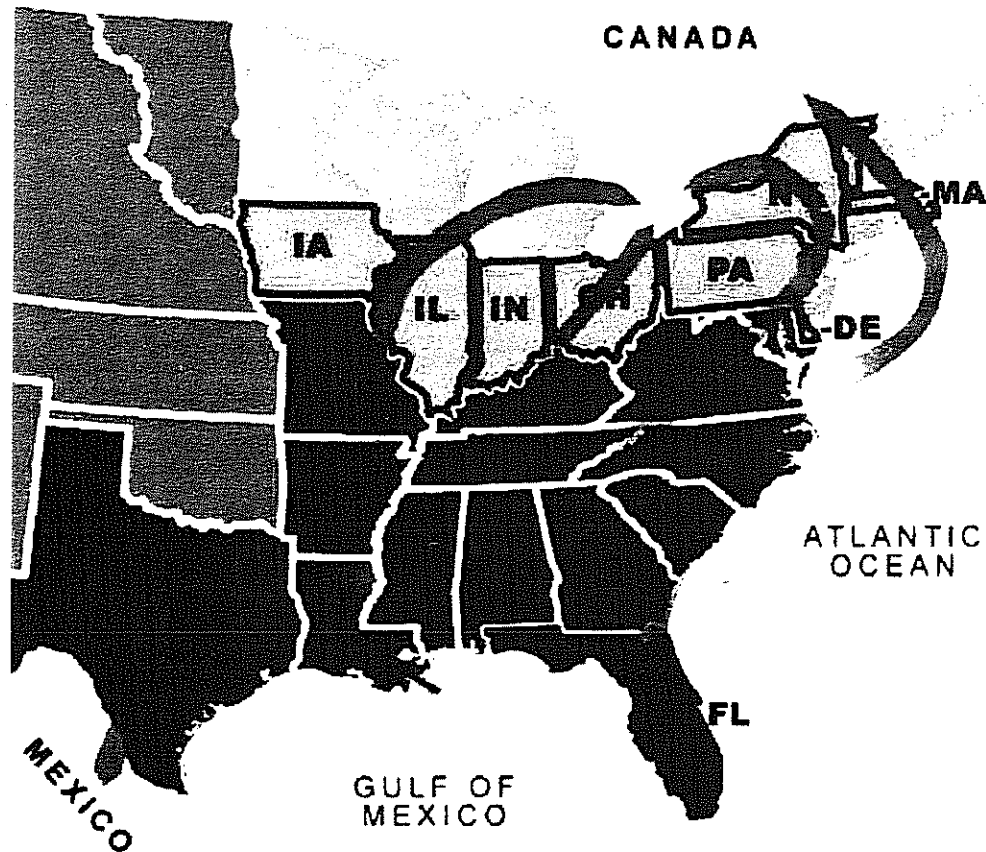
1. Students will discuss the routes used by slaves trying to escape from slavery.
2. Students will take an interactive tour of the Underground Railroad in the computer lab.
3. Students will read and discuss an article about the Levi Coffin House, an example of a safe house for escaping slaves.
4. Students will read and discuss "Harriet Tubman, Moses of Her People."
5. Students will answer and then discuss the study questions that accompany this short story.
6. Students will compare and contrast the life of Anne Frank with the life on Harriet Tubman.

Evaluation

Class discussion and paragraphs graded.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad is not literally a railroad underground, but a chain of help and transport, getting slaves from all around America to Canada. Without The Underground Railroad, many slaves would never have experienced the freedom they deserved. It involved the help and courage of many people who were willing to risk their lives for what they believed in. There were people at 'stations' all around the country along the railroad route, ready to take in slaves and transport them to 'other stations.'



This is a map of the railroad routes; the Maroon lines represent the routes.

[Click here](#) for an interactive guide to the railroad.

[Click here](#) to find out about the president of the Underground Railroad, Levi Coffin.

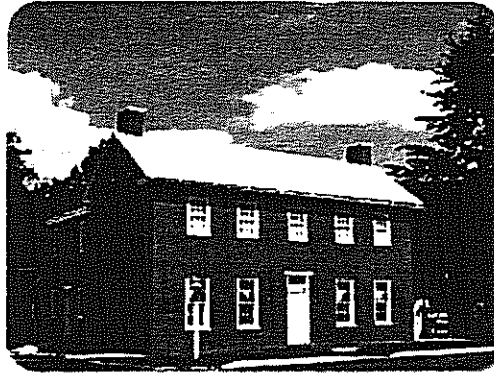
By Hannah MacGregor and Hannah Mechie.

[BACK TO HISTORY MENU](#)



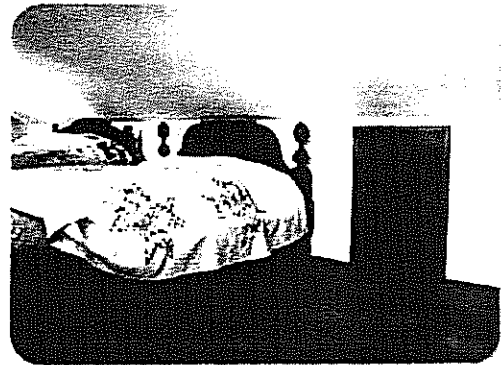
Levi Coffin House

State Historic Site



Location
113 U.S. 27 North P.O. Box 77 Fountain City, IN 47341
Admission
\$2.00/adults \$1.00/children (6-18) \$.50/pre-scheduled school groups
Hours
June 1 - Aug. 31 Tues. - Saturday 1p.m. - 4p.m.
Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 Saturday only 1p.m. - 4p.m.
(Last tour begins at 4p.m.) Group Tours by appointment
Phone
Museum Voice # (765) 847-2432 Museum Fax # (765) 847-2498
Volunteer (765) 847-2076
Tourism Board (765) 935-8687

A part of the legendary Underground Railroad for fleeing slaves of pre-Civil War days, this registered National Historic Landmark is a Federal style brick home built in 1839.



Escaping slaves could be hidden in this small upstairs room and the beds moved in front of the door to hide its existence.

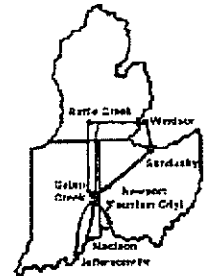
Levi and Catharine Coffin were legendary in helping many former slaves escape to freedom in the North. Levi is often referred to as the President of the Underground Railroad.

Life for a runaway slave was full of hazards. The journey to freedom meant traveling only a few miles at night, using the North Star as a map and trying to avoid search parties. Often, escaped slaves would hide in homes or on the property of antislavery supporters. These stops to freedom were called Underground Railroad stations because they resembled stops a train would make between destinations. "Underground" refers to the secret nature of the system.

To the thousand of escaped slaves, an eight-room Federal style brick home in Newport (Fountain City), Indiana, became a safe haven on their journey to Canada. This was the home of Levi and Catharine Coffin, North Carolina Quakers who opposed slavery. During the 20 years they lived in Newport, the Coffins helped more than 2,000 slaves reach safety.



In their flight, slaves used three main routes to cross into freedom: Madison and Jeffersonville, Indiana and Cincinnati, Ohio.



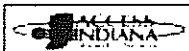
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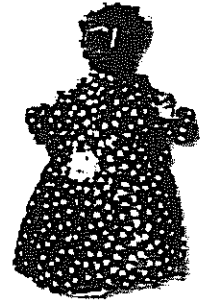
Escaping slaves were well hidden for their travels in this wagon when grain bags were piled around the hiding area.

Newport, not a single slave failed to reach freedom. One of the many slaves who hid in the Coffin home was "Eliza", whose story is told in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1847, the Coffins moved to Cincinnati so that Levi could operate a wholesale warehouse which supplied goods to free labor stores. The Coffins continued to assist the cause, helping another 1,300 slaves escape.

The Coffin house was purchased in 1967 by the State of Indiana. The house was restored and then opened to the public in 1970. The site is a registered National Historic Landmark and is operated by the Levi Coffin House Association.

From these points, the fugitives were taken to Newport. Once in the house, the presence of the runaway slaves could be concealed for up to several weeks, until they gained enough strength to continue their journey.

So successful was the Coffin sanctuary that, while in



Levi Coffin



Catharine Coffin

Recommended Links

- [View More Photos \(1 | 2\)](#)

- View recently discovered [manumission papers](#) that were witnessed by Levi Coffin - these are legal documents showing the purchase of slaves by Quakers who would then care for them until they could be transported into a free state. Be sure to [review the comments](#) that describe the significance of these documents.

- [Indiana Historical Society's Levi Coffin Site](#)

- Indiana State Museum State Historic Site - [Levi Coffin House](#)

- [Underground Railroad](#) by the National Park Service

- [Reminiscences of Levi Coffin](#) - Published in 1867 - full-text provided by [MOA](#) (Making of America - Digital Library), University of Michigan

- [Levi Coffin](#) - by the [National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](#)

- [Levi Coffin House - Aboard the Underground Railroad](#) - a national register travel itinerary

- [Guide to the Underground Railroad](#) - useful links by the Access Indiana Teaching & Learning Center

- [Conducting Underground Railroad Research](#) - a useful introduction to researching the Underground Railroad, includes a [directory of Underground Railroad operators](#).

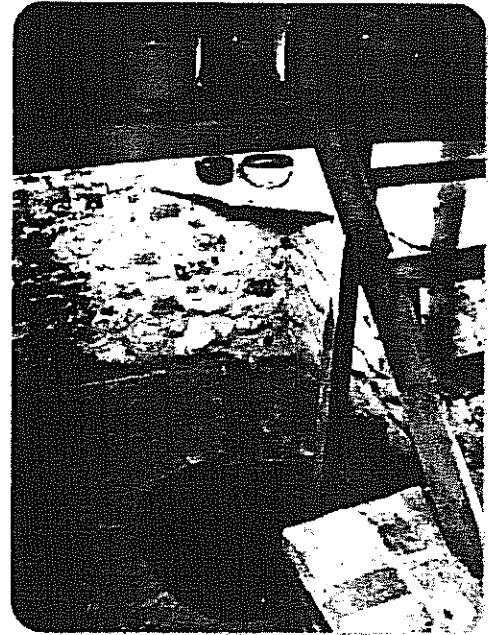
- [Quakers \(Society of Friends\) in Richmond and Wayne County](#) - learn about the beliefs of the Quakers, local Quaker history, and see local Quaker points of interest.

- [The Underground Railroad](#) - by National Geographic, an excellent site that gives a visitor the feeling of traveling along the Underground Railroad.

- [4th Graders Leave Their Mark at Levi Coffin House](#) - Young people connect with history - Palladium-Item Newspaper article.

- [Follow the North Star](#) - learn about this unique "first-person" program at [Conner Prairie](#) in Fishers, Indiana to teach students ages 12 and up about the Underground Railroad.

- [Freedom Quest](#) - a lesson plan that challenges you to investigate Indiana and its role in the Underground Railroad through primary literary documents, public records, woodcuts and artwork, and oral narratives.



The house contains an unusual indoor well. This allowed the Coffins to conceal the large amount of water needed for their extra "guests".

- [Underground Railroad Themes](#) - books, lesson plans, web-based activities, and many additional resources.
- [Friends of Freedom](#) - Ohio Underground Railroad Association does research to identify, document and preserve Underground Railroad sites throughout Ohio. Be sure to check their extensive [booklist](#).

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