

McLean County Museum of History  
**Underground Railroad Collection**

Processed by  
JoAnna Mink  
Summer 2020

**Collection Information**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 box
COLLECTION DATES:	1858 to 2009
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	

**Brief History**

The terms Underground Railroad, or Underground Railway, designated organized efforts to assist enslaved persons on their way through the free North and into Canada, in the 1840s and 1850s.

**Scope**

The Underground Railroad Collection consists of newspaper clippings, articles, papers presented at academic conferences, and excerpts from monographs pertaining to the Underground Railroad in McLean County, as well as about the fugitive slave John Anderson.

## Folder Inventory

### Folder 1: Newspaper Clippings

(from *Pantagraph* unless noted)

- 1.1 "Anti-Slavery lecture," August 17, 1858.
- 1.2 "Kidnapper in Town," March 24, 1862.
- 1.3 "Slavery Times," September 3, 1985.
- 1.4 "John McCoim, Last Survivor of Underground Railway, Dies," May 9, 1913.
- 1.5 "Escaping Negroes Hidden in Cave Near Lexington by Abolitionists," March 23, 1929.
- 1.6 "Old Cellar Hid Slaves," February 21, 1948.
- 1.7 "The Underground Railroad: A story of courage and Abolitionism in Central Illinois," December 30, 1990.
- 1.8 "Railroad moved people north to freedom" ("Back Then" column), July 2, 2000.
- 1.9 "Historian bringing Underground Railroad to Pontiac," November 29, 1000. (Note: Underground Railroad quilts have been thoroughly debunked—this article is an example of the mythmaking and well-intentioned false history on this movement.)
- 1.10 "Colony played anti-slavery role," February 24, 2002.
- 1.11 "History's Tangled Threads," *New York Times*, February 2, 2007. Essay warning about mythologizing the Underground Railroad.
- 1.12 "Underground Railroad myths obscure history of movement" ("Page from Our Past" column), July 25, 2009.

### Folder 2: Articles and Excerpts from Publications

- 2.1 "Friends of Liberty on the Mackinaw," by Erastus Mahan in *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society*, vol. 1, 1899, pp. 396-403.
- 2.2 "Illinois and the Underground Railroad to Canada," in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, vol. 23, 1917, pp. 76-98.
- 2.3 The Underground Railroad in Illinois special issue, *Historic Illinois*, vol 22, April 2000.
- 2.4 "Lincoln's Springfield: The Underground Railroad," parts 1 and 2, by Richard E. Hart, in *For the People: A Newsletter of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Spring 2006 and Summer 2006.
- 2.5 "Lexington's 'Other' Railroad," excerpt from *Lexington Illinois: 150 Years*, 2007, pp. 12-13.

### Folder 3: John Anderson, Fugitive Slave

- 3.1 "John Anderson" interview conducted in 1981 with formerly enslaved John Anderson, living in Canada. Excerpt from *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*, ed. John W. Blassingame, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977, pp. 353-58. Photocopy.
- 3.2 "Anderson's Escape from Slavery—Desperate Struggle for Life and Liberty," chapter from *The Story of the Life of John Anderson, the Fugitive Slave*, ed. Harper Twelvetrees, London: William Tweedie, 1863, pp. 9-13. Photocopy.

- 3.3 “Release of Anderson, the Fugitive Slave,” *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 38, March 9, 1861, p. 223. Photocopy.

**Folder 4: Miscellaneous**

- 4.1 “A Little McLean County History, by Albert Robinson Greene—a Native Son,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, vol 8, October 1915, pp. 459-65. Includes description, when 6 years old, of being awakened by slave hunters looking for two runaway slaves. Greene soon understands that his parents were a stop on the underground railroad.
- 4.2 Excerpt from “The Negro in Illinois” by Joseph T. Durham, Illinois State University, paper read before the College Alumni Club, November 20, 1970, pp. 8-10.
- 4.3 Typed notes, author and date unknown, 1 p. about underground railway in McLean County.
- 4.4 Photograph of a “token,” from a postcard.
- 4.5 Photocopies of Jack Muirhead’s notes, mostly relating to Mahan and Lexington, 9 pp.
- 4.6 “The Anti-Slavery Movement,” section in *The History of Livingston County* (1878; rpt. 1982). Reference to a “colored barber from Bloomington.”
- 4.7 “Network to Freedom,” National Park Service, c. 2009. Handout, 1 sheet.
- 4.8 Email, Brent Wielt, Macon County Conservation District, July 31, 2009, to Museum Library, referencing letter from Waynesville, IL (Logan County).
- 4.9 List of MCMH Library Holdings on Underground Railroad.

See also:

“The Underground Railroad in McLean County” by Alice Schlenker, typed manuscript, 7pp, in BNBHP, Box 2, Folder 3, item 1.

“Old Colony House at Delavan Part of ‘Underground Railway,’” newspaper clipping from unknown source, BNBHP, Box 2, Folder 3, item 4.

“The Underground Railroad: Conceptualized as a Social Welfare System,” by Mildred Pratt, Illinois State University, paper presented at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, October 1990, 19pp, in BNBHP, Box 2, Folder 3, item 5.