

## **Significant Events Timeline of the Underground Railroad\_1501 – Current \_Handout 1**

**by Vicki Ruthe Hahn 2025Apr19**

**1501—African Slaves in the New World** Spanish bring slaves from Africa > Santo Domingo. Other African tribes captured & sold for \$ & power

**1500s> Europeans** different countries influenced attitudes of American regions they settled.

**1619 –Slaves in Virginia:** Africans brought to Jamestown are first slaves imported into Britain's North American colonies. Like indentured servants, they were probably freed after a fixed period of service.

**1619** - Rhode Island constitution banned slavery.

**1693 - Second edict of Spain granted sanctuary & freedom to escaped** slaves from British colonies (North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) who reach Spanish territory of Florida.

**1700—First Antislavery Publication** Samuel Seawell, MA, published the first North American antislavery tract, The Selling of Joseph.

**1705 - Slaves as Property** Virginia lawmakers allow owners to bequeath their slaves as real estate & "kill and destroy" runaways.

**1719-1723** French shipped 500 Guinea slaves to Louisiana; Philip Francis Renault brought 200 miners, stopping at San Domingo for 500 slaves > N to "Illinois Country", La Louisiane Colony.

**1738 - Black Seminoles fled S. > Spanish colonial FL;** 1st settlement of free blacks America.

**1746 - Green Bay, WI** French garrison commander brought a Black enslaved man with him.

**1763 - French surrendered Wisconsin/Illinois region to English** - peace provisions allowed western Great Lakes 5,000 settlers to retain their 500 "negro and Pawnee" enslaved people.

**1763** - Some Wisconsin African American fur-traders were free.

**1775- Abolitionist Societies** Philadelphia - world's first. Benjamin Franklin its president 1787

**1776 - Declaration of Independence; Continental Congress** "these United Colonies are, & of Right ought to be Free & Independent States"; "All men are created equal"; Rights - Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness "

**1776 – 1783 War for Independence** - African Americans served on both sides hoping for freedom.

**1777 – Articles of Confederation: 13 States union & sovereignty.**

**1787 – Northwest Territory (Northwest of Ohio River) > “Ordinance of Freedom”:** First outright ban on slavery / but owners could recapture runaways who escaped into the Territory.

> When Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, & Wisconsin became states – their constitutions prohibited slavery.

**1787 – Constitutional Convention > Electoral College to elect President;** Not 1 vote for 1 person BUT # of electors = each state gets at least 3 regardless of size. States with smaller populations have more voting power than those of larger size. Slaves = 3/5ths of a person. Compromises that were resolved by Civil War.

**1789 - United States Constitution:** Enlightenment; “advancement of personal liberties.”

**1790 - First U.S. Census** - approximately 700,000 enslaved people in a nation of 3.9 million.

**1791 - Bill of Rights, 10 Amendments** – “Freedom Of”. Including Separation of religion.

**1791-1804 Haitian Slave Revolution.** Free (whaling) sailors spread the news to US slaves.

**1793 - Fugitive Slave Act** - US outlaws any efforts to impede the capture of runaway slaves; fines. Some N. states enacted **Personal Liberty Laws** > struck down by the Supreme Court in 1842.

**1794 - Eli Whitney Cotton Gin Invention Patent** (cheaper) > increased cotton acres/slaves.

**Late 1700s - 1850s Spiritual Revivals** - Methodist John Wesley, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.

**1803 -Louisiana Purchase**, US bought 828,000 sq miles West of Mississippi River from France.

**1807 - Britain banned Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.**

**1808 - United States Bans Slave Trade** - Importing African slaves outlawed; smuggling continues.

**1809** Ninian Edwards, first and only governor of Illinois Territory, had slaves.

**1812 - War of** > UGRR Until end of Civil War. African Americans served on both sides of Wars

**1816 The African Methodist Episcopal Church, established.** Helped black freedom seekers.

**1817 - American Colonization Society:** President Madison's gradual emancipation > Liberia, Africa.

**1817 - U.S. Federal troops waged a war against Seminole Indians and freedom seekers in Florida**

**1818 – Illinois becomes a Free state** after Mississippi became a Slave state in 1817. Many in S. IL from KY, TN & MO = slavery supporters. IL border moved 50 miles N into WI so Lake Michigan port would connect to Free NE settler growth. **1845 – N IL** Voters tried to vote to secede to WI (state) **1848**.

**1819** - Citizens of Bond County, Illinois harbored runaway slaves.

**-1819 IL Black Codes:** discourage immigration: Need certificate of freedom & bond \$1,000 entering IL. Jail/Flogging if assemble 3+; no voting, testify in court, serve militia.

**1820 - Missouri Compromise** - Missouri admitted as slave state, Maine as free state. Slavery forbidden in rest of Louisiana Territory N. of 36 degrees 30' latitude line. Equal slave/non-slave states.

**1820s - Slaves escaped Carolinas** > Bahamas (Atlantic); & Florida > Caribbean Sea Islands.

**1820s and 1830s – WI white settlers** came from southern states to mine lead; often brought enslaved people with them. Some were freed in Wisconsin.

**1823: Attempt to amend IL state constitution to legalize slavery** sparks widespread resistance

**1826** - Levi & Catharine Coffin move > Newport, Indiana. Their house becomes a station on UGRR.

**1827- (WI Terr Gov 1839) Henry Dodge** moved w many slaves from MO > Freed them in WI.

**1828 Abolitionist John Rankin** built Ripley OH house, as an UGRR “station/safe house” stop.

**Early 1830s > America's first railroads. UGRR coded language.**

**1831- The Liberator** begins publication, William Lloyd Garrison, newspaper publisher.

**1831- Nat Turner leads a slave revolt** in Virginia killing 55 white people.

**1831- George Washington** complained about Quakers helping his slave escape.

**1832 – end of Blackhawk Indian War in IL & WI** > 1836 Feds surveyed WI Territory > Settlers.

**1833 - Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society established.**

**1833 - William L Garrison, Boston**, founded Liberator Newspaper & American Anti-Slavery Society.

**1833-1838- Slavery Abolished in English West Indian Colonies** - Jamaica, Barbados, etc.

**1835 – UGRR starts in Illinois.**

**1836 - Texas won independence from Mexico;** (later joined the U.S. as a slave state).

**1836 - WI territory surveyed by US** > many settlers from NY, New England, & Germany > Especially S.E. WI. Formed abolitionist groups and helped UGRR thru WI to Canada.

**1837, The Panic of** > 7- year depression, banks failed, record-high unemployment. Tension.

**1837 - Mexico abolished slavery** > Slaves from Texas, Arkansas, & Mississippi escaped to Mexico.

**1837 - First Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women** held in New York.

**1837 - Illinois Anti-Slavery Society** founded by Elijah Lovejoy at Alton > Convention.

**1837 - Galesburg IL & Knox College founded by NY anti-slavery advocates** - UGRR leader in down-state West-Central IL, overwhelming majority of its citizens.

**1837 - St. Louis MO slaveholders** formed secret **Copperhead societies** to return runaways.

**1837 – Alton IL**, pro-slavery mob murdered Rev Elijah Lovejoy & his 3<sup>rd</sup> Abolitionist press destroyed.

**1838 - Second Anti-Slavery of American Women in Philadelphia.** Hall site burned by a mob.

**1838 - Frederick Douglass** runs away from slavery > major AA Abolitionist speaker & politician.

**1839 – First “UGRR” published mention:** Washington newspaper - young slave, hoping to escape bondage via railroad that 'went underground all the way to Boston.'

**1839 - First known case of a fugitive sent from Chicago to Canada.**

**1839** Joseph Goodrich founds Milton Rock Co WI & **1844** > built Milton Inn for UGRR stop.

**1840 - World Anti-Slavery Convention (London)** refuses to seat American female delegates.

**1840 - Anti-slavery societies schism** due to women leaders also wanting white feminism & suffrage.

**1840 - American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.** Black male leaders / Frederick Douglas.

**1841 – WI Church Convention at Beloit** – “American slavery is a sin.”

**1842 – Northern states Personal Liberty Laws** were struck down by the US Supreme Court.

**1842 - WI Territory first recorded UGRR escape in WI - Caroline Quarlls**, 16, from St. Louis to Alton, IL to Milwaukee to Prairieville to Spring Prairie in Walworth County to Gardner's Prairie to Waukesha to Illinois to Detroit River to Canada. **1842-1861 WI > 100+ escaped.**

**1842 - Morgan County, Ohio** citizens assisted 16 fugitive slaves to escape slave-catchers.

**1842-1861 Morgan County, Ohio** assisted 285 "Negros" to gain freedom!

**1843 – 300 men with guns stopped a Missouri auction to sell slaves** including Mark Firman.

**1844 – Congregational Church of Beloit, WI resolved to condemn slavery** > Beloit Seminary > Beloit College. 160 acres given to Beloit College on condition that admission not be denied by Color.

**1844 – Telegraph first invented.**

**1845 - Frederick Douglass** publishes “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass”.

**1845 Texas became a slave holding state.**

**1845 – N Illinois Voters tried to vote to secede to Wisconsin (which became a state 1848).**

**1846 Sewing machine patented**

**1846 – (white) WI drafted new state constitution that put voting rights of AA to vote > defeated.**

**1846-1848 Mexican American War** > South wanted to stop runaways & secure slavery.

**1847 – Frederick Douglass** publishes the first issue of “The North Star” newspaper.

**1847 - William Still, PA Anti-slavery Society** > Hid Diary of 900+ escapees at his home (publ. 1872).

**1847- First Telegraph line** connects NY to St. Louis.

**1847 - Matson Slave Trial:** KY slave-owner skirted IL slavery-ban laws by switching slaves yearly @ Coles Co. Freed Anthony Bryant, foreman > refuge w his slave family @ abolitionists. A. Lincoln defended Matson! Judge ruled in favor of freedom seekers.

**1847 to 1857+ - Lewis Coffin & wife, OH Quakers** > Indiana - led 3,000 slaves to freedom.

**1848 - First Women's Rights Convention**, Seneca Falls, New York.

**1848 - Ellen & William Craft escaped slavery** disguised as Southern white gentleman & (her) slave.

**1848: Illinois's constitution bans slavery**, with the exception of punishment for a crime

**1848 - WI became a state** > 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum – African American men got voting rights (not told)

**1849 - Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery** in Maryland to Philadelphia PA.

**1849 - James C. Smith, free black, helped Henry “Box” Brown** ship himself in crate from VA > PA

**1850 - Fugitive Slave Act - Compromise of 1850** - slavery > territories acquired from Mexico. For CA to enter US as free state, N. congressmen accepted a **Fugitive Slave Act** harsher than

1793 Act. Citizens may not assist any slave; must turn them in to Fed agents or get huge fines & imprisonment. Federal Agents paid bigger bounty to turn in (some free) "fugitives".

**1850 > Reverse Underground Railroad** - sites where free and escaped blacks were sold into slavery and sent South.

**1850-1860 "Reverse Underground Railroad": Crenshaw (Old Slave) House**, on KY border > 332/346 free blacks > slavery.

**Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Cent - American Renaissance** - technological improvements of **early Industrial Revolution** in printing & transportation increased # of books, newspapers, & magazines available. Widespread dispersion of written word influence on attitudes.

**1852 - Harriet Beecher Stowe OH published "Uncle Tom's Cabin".** 300,000 copies sold 1st year. Later Pres. Abe Lincoln said, "this is the little book that started the (Civil) War.

**1853 – Illegal for a black to enter the State of IL. The Illinois Black Code**, which prohibits free Black people from staying in the state for more than 10 days, is passed.

**1854 - Singer home sewing machine patented** > more clothes made; more cotton needed.

**1854 – Joshua Glover ran away from Missouri to Racine WI captured by owner & locked in Milwaukee, WI jail.** A sympathetic mob of 5,000 broke Glover out & helped him to freedom > UURR Waukesha > Racine > Toronto, Canada. Ringleader Sherman Miller Booth arrested > **Wisconsin Supreme Court declared the federal Fugitive Slave Law unconstitutional.**

**Mid 1850s – Voting is not secret.** Had to declare your choices to recording clerk in public.

**1854—Kansas-Nebraska Act** - Repealed Missouri Compromise of 1820, Congress permits these 2 new territories to choose whether to allow slavery. Violent clashes erupt - "Bleeding Kansas". NE church groups & villages moved there to sway votes. Spurred the formation of the Republican Party – to keep southern slave states from uniting with western slave states.

**1854 - Republican Party founded in Ripon, Wisconsin.**

**1855 – It took 133 votes/2 months > to elect Speaker of House.**

**1855 -** Photo & Sen. Charles Sumner's Abolitionist tours of **Mary Mildred Williams** – "white" slave girl.

**1856 – Lincoln gave speech as a new Republican Party member.**

**1857 - Dred Scott Decision** Dred Scott, an Illinois Freedom Seeker, sued to overturn the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, but lost. **US Supreme Court 7 to 2 - African Americans can never be citizens and that Congress has no authority to outlaw slavery in any territory!**

**1857, the Panic of** - Bad economy, Banks & 5,000 businesses failed > heightened political tensions. Telegraph > first financial crisis to spread across US & world. Not full recovery until Civil War.

**1857 – Train service Alton to Chicago** starts (also stops at St Louis & Springfield) > UGRR option!

**1858 - Frederick Douglass** (friend of Abolitionist Dexter Knowlton), and Stephen A Douglas > speeches = “**Freeport Doctrine**”, in Freeport IL.

**1858 – Seven Senate Debates between A Lincoln (anti-slavery) & Democrat Stephen A Douglas (extend slavery in Territories).** Freeport, IL, etc. Lincoln narrowly lost Senate race to Douglas.

**1859 - John Brown** organizes slaves to take over Armory at **Harper's Ferry**; & rebellion.

**1859 - Waukesha Co, WI (“Abolitionist Hole)** > “The Freeman” newspaper founded. > Republican values.

**1860 - Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, elected** first Republican to win the United States Presidency.

**1860s – Sewing Machines in most middle-class homes.**

**1861 – US population** 31 million. 21 million in North. 10 million in South but 4 million are slaves so only 6 million whites. (> Odds in Civil War).

**1861 - Feb. Secessions > Confederate States of America.** Slave states that stayed: West Virginia, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, (and Washington District of Columbia.)

**1861 Apr 12 – attack on Fort Sumpter > declaration of Civil War.**

**1861 – Escaped slaves became Union property / “contraband” of war** > camp workers.

**1861-1865 - United States Civil War** - 4 yrs brutal conflict > 750,000 soldiers/sailors died + more wounded

**1862 - Compensated Emancipation Act** - abolished slavery in Washington DC > Slaves from Virginia and Maryland escaped to the free D.C. 1863 > 10,000 former slaves; DC doubled Black population

**1862 – Confiscation Act of 1862 – “Freedman”** is the term for a slave given freedom after this act.

**1863 Jan 01 - Emancipation Proclamation**

President Abraham Lincoln decree - all slaves in Rebel territory are free. Only freed those slaves in states that were in rebellion against US. Did not free slaves in the states that never

**left the Union - West Virginia, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, (and Washington District of Columbia.)**

**1863 - African Americans could sign up to fight** in “colored” Troops or USCTs - Union Army & Navy. Substitute soldier for white man \$800. Before other states allowed African American Troops, they joined 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment. IL AA first all-black unit= 29<sup>th</sup> US Colored Infantry. Only WI Regiment = Co. F of the 29th Infantry, U.S. Colored Troops.

**1863 - Harriet Tubman with 150 African American Union Navy sailors** > NC raid & freed 700 enslaved.

**1863 Nov** - A. Lincoln Gettysburg Address 4 ½ months after battle. Gave lives that nation lives.

**1865 - Slavery Abolished - The 13th Amendment** to the United States Constitution outlawed slavery.

**1865 Apr 9 - Ulysses S. Grant** - Commanding Civil War General led Union Army to victory, winning against Robert E Lee at Appomattox.

**1865 Aug 20 - End of the Civil War declared.**

**1865 Apr 15 - President Abraham Lincoln assassinated**

**1865 -1869 - Andrew Johnson** > 17th US President, S Jacksonian Democrat (states' rights views). Pardon all taking an oath of allegiance. “Black codes” to regulate S freedmen begin.

**1865 – abt 1910:** “The Advocate’s” free “**Lost Friends**” newspaper ads to reunite African American families. Read & posted in Black Churches.

**1866 - Ezekiel Gillespie**, Milwaukee WI AA sued for right to vote, Wisconsin Supreme Court affirmed.

**1868 14th Amendment** - U.S. Constitution> required states to provide equal protection to protect civil rights of former slaves.

**1869 to 1877 - Ulysses S. Grant 18<sup>th</sup> US President** - created Justice Department & worked with Republicans to protect African Americans (from KKK etc.) during Reconstruction. Martial Law in South.

**1870 15th Amendment** - US. Constitution granted voting rights to all men regardless of race.

**1877 Hayes Compromise > To confirm election of President Hayes**, Federal troops taken out of Southern States > Jim Crow laws. Citizens tired of \$ spent on Reconstruction.

**1882 – WI Constitution** dropped “white” from suffrage text.

**1930s – UGRR oral interviews** written down in Federal Writers Projects.