

2/12/2020

Attachment 8
Application to Network for Freedom for Table Rock Cemetery

Box S4a – Describe the site’s significance to the Underground Railroad

I. THE TABLE ROCK CEMETERY

The Table Rock Cemetery in Table Rock, Nebraska was established in 1857. It is the resting place of a number of early settlers who helped route freedom seekers through southeast Nebraska, C. W. Giddings, his wife Clarissa (1817-1880), and their daughter Fannie Giddings Norris, as well as Asa E. Heywood, John C. Wood, and William Fellers. It is also the resting place of the members of two related families who came after the Civil War; at their original homes in Painesville, Ohio they and their families sheltered freedom seekers who awaited a trustworthy boat to carry them across the waters of Lake Erie to Canada. These later settlers are O. D. Howe, his wife Mary Pepoon Howe, and her brother Joseph B. Pepoon.

The Underground Railroad participation by persons in this small village may come as a surprise to some because it is not on the Missouri River. The common route for freedom seekers escaping the slave state of Missouri was to cross the Missouri River and travel up its west side through the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Their path would take them from Brown County, Kansas into Richardson County, Nebraska and on through Nemaha County and Otoe County, Nebraska, where at Nebraska City they would cross the Missouri River again to reach the free soil of Iowa.

However, as discussed below, the winds of adversity sometimes blew the travelers a little to the west, indeed, as far west as Table Rock. Table Rock is in Pawnee County, just four miles past the western border of Richardson County. It is about 25 miles west of the Missouri River and about 10 miles north of the Kansas border.

II. THE FOUNDING OF TABLE ROCK

Table Rock was begun in 1855 when men of the Table Rock Town Company began laying out a townsite. The company consisted of Robert Furnas of Brownville (a future state governor), John Fleming, and James Hinton. The government surveyors had completed a survey of the Table Rock Township for Pawnee County, which was being split off of the western side of Richardson County, and identified a good mill “seat” on the Nemaha River close by an unusual array of large sandstone rocks.¹ The Town Company’s main focus was the mill site.² Furnas wrote of a tour of the area, saying “water power” on the Nemaha River, “cannot be surpassed.”³ A mill was soon up and running, and by 1859 was a considerable success.⁴ The site also appeared to have an enhanced value because Table Rock seemed the most likely place to become the seat of the new county. But the election for county seat was lost in the Fall of 1856.⁵

In the meantime, Charles Woodbury Giddings (no known relation to noted abolitionist Joshua Giddings), had begun a quest for a new home in the west. Giddings was an ordained Methodist Episcopal minister who had served at fourteen different appointments in the Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania and New York during the past twenty-five years.⁶ Most of his years were as a circuit rider, and it was hard on his health; moreover, the rural areas he served had become economically depressed in the 1850s. In 1855, as Pawnee County was being surveyed, Giddings lived near Wilkes-Barre, the seat of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, which lay in the Wyoming Valley. His brother-in-law James Griffing, also an M.E. minister, had been sent to Kansas in 1854, and by 1855 the two had exchanged letters about the prospects of Kansas as a new location. In a May 1855 letter, Giddings wrote that if he chose Kansas he would be bringing

¹ Donald Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” *Nebraska State Historical Quarterly* 34 (March 1953), page 39.

² Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 39.

³ *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 12, 1856.

⁴ “A Trip to Table Rock,” *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 15, 1859, page 1.

⁵ See a good discussion of the circumstances, as assimilated from the various sources of the 1800s, in Doralyn Steiner Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha* (Table Rock Historical Society, Table Rock, Nebraska, 2016), page 8. A copy of this book is available online at <https://www.tablerockhistoricalsociety.com/network-to-freedom.html> (last visited February 10, 2020).

⁶ Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 17.

other families “of the right stamp” with him.⁷ He asked what Griffing thought of the prospects of Kansas becoming a free state.⁸ Such an inquiry is not unexpected. Luzerne County was going through the aftermath of an incident in nearby Wilkes-Barre in 1853, when federal marshals attempted to arrest a fugitive slave at work in a restaurant; a highly visible and violent encounter followed, and in the aftermath Wilkes-Barre found its citizens provoked and standing on both sides of the fence.⁹ The stance of the M.E. Church in Pennsylvania is not known, but in Kansas and Nebraska, which at that time fell under the same Conference, was generally against slavery.¹⁰

⁷ Private Letters: The Correspondence of Rev. James S. Griffing and J. Augusta Goodrich, accessed at [https://privatelettersjsg.wordpress.com/1854-1856-bleeding-kansas/families of the right stamp](https://privatelettersjsg.wordpress.com/1854-1856-bleeding-kansas/families%20of%20the%20right%20stamp).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ William C. Kashatus, “An Immortal Splendor; Wilkes-Barre’s Fugitive Slave Case of 1853,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* (Spring 2008): 24-31, available at <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/pa-heritage/files/immortal-splendor.pdf>

¹⁰ One meticulously-detailed history follows the pioneer circuit riders and the development of the church in Nebraska decade by decade. See David Marquette, *A History of Nebraska Methodism: First Half-Century, 1854-1904* (Cincinnati, OH: Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1904), 121. Marquette writes that the Kansas and Nebraska Territories were originally in the same Conference (the M.E. regional organization). The Conference was eventually split, and met for as a single unit for the last time in Lawrence, Kansas in early 1860. Marquette notes the abolitionist underpinnings of the conference, saying at page 122, “It may be of interest to know that this Conference in session in a city that had been the hot-bed of the pro-slavery sentiment, six months after the John Brown raid at Harper’s Ferry, and less than a year before the secession movement began, passed the following resolutions on the subject of slavery:

Resolved, That whereas, God has made of one blood all nations of men, we recognize in every human being the offspring of the same common Father, and admit the universal brotherhood of man.

Resolved, That no enactment made by any number of human beings can give one person the right of possession in another person as an article of property.’

In late 1855 or early 1856, Giddings paid a visit to his brother-in-law; thereafter, for unknown reasons – probably the volatile political climate in Kansas – Giddings opted against Kansas.¹¹ After his return, he led the formation of the Nebraska Settlement Company in 1856, although the Articles of Incorporation were not completed until 1857.¹² Giddings was elected the General Superintendent and Robert V. Muir the Treasurer.¹³ Giddings was a man of “forceful personality,” one of “great endurance,” with “great decision and firmness.”¹⁴ He was a man who would get things done, and he applied himself to the matter of relocation.

In the Spring of 1856, Giddings and Muir headed west to locate a town site for the new Nebraska Settlement Company.¹⁵ They found that the site they liked best was already occupied – by the Table Rock Town Company. On behalf of the Nebraska Settlement Company, they struck a deal to buy the site from the Town Company. Giddings later dismissed the Town Company’s interests as “more imaginary than real,” but the price agreed upon -- \$1,500 or \$1,6000 depending on the source -- reflects a healthier view of those interests at the time. An agreement was made that the money would be paid in Table Rock on a certain date that coming winter. Giddings and Muir returned to Pennsylvania to arrange capitalization. When the Constitution was drawn up in October 1856 and the financial commitment made, that amount was no small thing compared to the total capitalization, a little under \$10,000.¹⁶ Muir returned that winter. Local legend has it that as the deadline approached he found the Nemaha River at flood stage but fearlessly plunged in and swam across to complete the deal.¹⁷ Muir’s own recollections in 1912 reflect other but even greater hardships as he journeyed

¹¹ Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 8.

¹² Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 38.

¹³ Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 38.

¹⁴ Marquette, *History of Nebraska Methodism*, page 196-7.

¹⁵ “Married Sixty Years Ago; Mr. and Mrs. R. V. Muir Celebrated Anniversary,” *Nebraska State Journal*, September 12, 1912, page 21. See also Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 37.

¹⁶ Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 37.

¹⁷ Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 39, fn.

through ice and slush in order to make the deadline, suffering so physically that he was bedridden and unable to walk for almost a month thereafter.¹⁸

In 1857, Muir surveyed and platted the town of Table Rock while making Brownville his “headquarters.”¹⁹ He drew the final plat in 1858 and it was recorded at the Pawnee County court house.²⁰ This original plat included the site of the Table Rock Cemetery on the west edge of the village.

In 1856, a Territorial census was done, with Pawnee County included in Richardson County from which it had just been split. The Pawnee County part of the census consisted of two areas, the southeast corner and, in the northeast corner, Table Rock. The population in the Table Rock area was 121, living in about 17 homes.²¹ In an eighteen-month period beginning in late 1856, the Nebraska Settlement Company sent as many as 150 to 200 families from Pennsylvania and New York.²²

Of those who stayed, many of them and their families are buried in the Table Rock Cemetery. Those who came to be of importance to the Underground Railroad included Fellers, Heywood, and Wood.

William Fellers (1834-1906) came to Table Rock from Pennsylvania in 1856 with his wife of a year, wife Susanna.²³ He was one of the original shareholders of

¹⁸ “Personal and Pertinent,” *Times-Tribune* (Scranton, Pennsylvania), August 9, 1912, page 6.

¹⁹ “Married Sixty Years Ago; Mr. and Mrs. R. V. Muir Celebrated Anniversary,” *Nebraska State Journal*, September 12, 1912, page 21.

²⁰ Pawnee County deed book 1 OS, pages 1-3.

²¹ See a good discussion of the census in Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, pages 6-7.

²² Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 34. See also Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 42.

²³ Obituary of William Fellers, *Table Rock Argus*, February 15, 1906, page 1.

the Nebraska Settlement Company.²⁴ He was known as a man of “rugged honesty.”²⁵

Asa E. Heywood (1818-1918) came to Table Rock from Ohio with his parents and siblings, also in 1856.²⁶ He began work on his 120-acre homestead in the Spring of 1857.²⁷ In 1860, he married Frances Mumford, daughter of another family that arrived in 1856, and the couple left Table Rock for five years, returning to stay in 1865.²⁸

John C. Wood (1835-1912) came to Table Rock from New York in August 1857.²⁹ He began building a sawmill on the Nemaha River, but as he finished the river flooded and cut a new channel, leaving his mill high and dry.³⁰ He focused thereafter on farming; like most, his homestead was “raw prairie on which he set out the first tree and turned the first furrow.”³¹ He later (in 1870), married one of the daughters of Asa Heywood.³²

Finally, there came the wife and daughters of C. W. Giddings. While Muir had remained intimately connected with Table Rock, he had made Brownville his home base. Giddings, though, remained in Table Rock with his hands on the wheel, guiding the town through the hard times. He had gone back to

²⁴ The Constitution of the Nebraska Settlement Company and attached list of stockholders is transcribed in Danker, “C. W. Giddings and the Founding of Table Rock,” page 37.

²⁵ Obituary of William Fellers, *Table Rock Argus*, February 15, 1906, page 1.

²⁶ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1889), page 505.

²⁷ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, page 505.

²⁸ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, pages 505-6.

²⁹ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, “John C. Wood,” p. 583.

³⁰ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, “John C. Wood,” p. 583.

³¹ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, “John C. Wood,” p. 583.

³² *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, “John C. Wood,” p. 583.

Pennsylvania for his wife and daughters and the full family was in place by the summer of 1858.³³

It was difficult coming to this new country, trying to farm land that had never been farmed, living in a small log house with cracks “big enough to throw a cat through,” having no trained medical care, having to figure out how to institute everything from a school for the children to church.³⁴ The difficulties increased when the “Panic of 1857” dried up funding for the Nebraska Settlement Company; banks failed, and cash was scarce. Cash rewards offered for the return of slaves thus became of considerable consequence.³⁵ The winter of 1857-8 was severe and then the spring and summer of 1858 saw much rain and floods.³⁶ Juliana Gere wrote of the area flooding in her journal, saying that all of the bridges on creeks and rivers had been carried away.³⁷ Giddings later wrote about the flooding and aftermath, saying that “great suffering prevailed.”³⁸ It was in that summer that the Bodwell party of Topeka, escorting freedom seekers George and Fanny and their

³³ A. Gaylord Wilson, *A Short Biography of the Life of Fannie Clarissa Giddings*, pages 8 – 11, available online at <https://www.tablerockhistoricalsociety.com/network-to-freedom.html> (last visited February 10, 2020).

³⁴ Lydia Griffing’s memoirs and other descriptions set forth in Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 25 and throughout.

³⁵ On one occasion, freedom seekers who had taken refuge at the Giddings home in Table Rock were placed in jeopardy when a storekeeper named Strickler became aware of their presence. Strickler wanted the reward for their return and was plotting with others about securing their custody when William Fellers and another Table Rock men helped get them away. The story was told by Russell Samson in an article constructed from an interview of Samson. See J. H. Harrison, “Bits of Nebraska History,” *Nebraska State Journal*, July 22, 1900, page 4. Samson had earlier reported that “one lot” at Giddings were “very nearly captured.” See *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1889), “Russell Samson,” page 560.

³⁶ Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 32.

³⁷ Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 32-33.

³⁸ Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 32, citing the account as in sources from the 1800s.

three children, found themselves swinging west through Table Rock as creeks and rivers rose and blocked their usual way.³⁹

In the midst of those trying times, Table Rock offered refuge for others in greater need. R. V. Muir recalled Table Rock itself as a site on the Underground Railroad where freedom seekers found refuge. In a 1912 visit to Pennsylvania, a Scranton newspaper carried an extensive article about Muir, most of which detailed his extensive and adventurous involvement in the the founding of Table Rock, and also noted that the town had been a station on the Underground Railroad.⁴⁰ His recollection was echoed by others who also recalled Table Rock as a site.⁴¹

The path occasionally led to Table Rock according to the situation and circumstances existing closer to the Missouri River.⁴² The obituary of Asa Heywood explained the workings of the network in southeast Nebraska:

The common route was for the slaves to be brought in small parties through Kansas, into Richardson County from Brown County [Kansas], then up into Nemaha County and across the Missouri at Nemaha City, across the extreme southeastern corner of Missouri into Iowa. The object of the route through Kansas and Nebraska was to avoid the state of Missouri, which, as a whole, was pro-slavery. In northeastern Missouri, however, opposite Nemaha City, there was a chain of abolitionists leading into Iowa and furnishing a convenient

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⁴⁰ “Personal and Pertinent,” *Times-Tribune* (Scranton, Pennsylvania), August 9, 1912, page 6.

⁴¹ One example is “Kept Light in Window,” *Nebraska State Journal*, Sunday edition, June 10, 1917, page 48. This article collects the recollections of several old settlers, including those of J. W. Cassel, who grew up in Otoe County. Amongst other things, Cassel touched on John Brown. He remembers that his parents prepared for a planned visit by Brown at their home near Nebraska City, Brown being expected to come through with freedom seekers in tow. The family was told to prepare for 17 and they did, but John Brown did not stop but rather forged on by. He cites Table Rock as a stop on the Underground Railroad, saying that the route ran through Table Rock to Nebraska City then to Canada.

⁴² “Nebraska Pioneer is Dead. Last Survivor of Famous Underground Railroad,” *Nebraska State Journal*, November 13, 1912, page 8.

route into the latter state. Often the negroes were transported through Pawnee County further west, the choice between Pawnee and Richarson depending largely on the security of the one or other at the time the slaves werer being sent through.⁴³

The Lewis Bodwell party passed through in July 1858, driven west by high waters.⁴⁴ Bodwell of Topeka, Kansas had gathered an escort for a young family, George and Fanny and three children. Night journeys had led the family friend to friend to Topeka. Bodwell determined to escort them through Kansas and Nebraska. With a “long span of iron grays” and a covered wagon, Bodwell, a man named Emerson, and another called only “the preacher” departed with their precious cargo. Their first night took them across the prairie in pouring rain after fording a river over which the bridge had been washed away. The next night found them on the bank of a creek that was bank-full, cutting them off from travel by the known and usual route. The next night took them across another creek which then filled, a ten foot torrent that seemed sent by God to put a protective barrier behind them. Reaching the Nemaha River they found it uncrossable. They trekked for several days trying to find a way across the Nemaha, finding each way they tried barred. At last they found a crossing across the Nemaha at Central City, Kansas, from whence they followed Turkey Creek into Pawnee County, Nebraska. They camped just shy of Pawnee City, Nebraska. The rains had let up, and the uplands of the prairie afforded dryer passage, and the next day they passed through Table Rock -- July 24, 1858 -- and camped 12 miles east. On July 25 they reached Nebraska City and traveling to a more isolated part of the river, relinquished their charges to cross the Missouri to Iowa. Thus the route fretted by high water had taken them on a westerly route.

In 1858, those helping in Table Rock, which was thus on the western edge of the Underground Railroad, included six persons who are buried in the Table Rock Cemetery. C. W. Giddings, his wife Clarissa, who were their 40s, and their

⁴³ “Nebraska Pioneer is Dead. Last Survivor of Famous Underground Railroad,” *Nebraska State Journal*, November 13, 1912, page 8.

⁴⁴ Annotated excerpts of Bodwell’s journal were reprinted in “A Home Missionary Journey Never Reported,” *The Kansas Telephone* (Manhattan, Kansas), August 1893, found online at <https://washburn.edu/cas/art/cyoho/archive/Events/pathtofreedom/bodwellaccount.pdf>,

“A Trip to Table Rock,” *Nebraska Advertiser*, September 15, 1859, page 1.

daughters including the oldest, 17-year-old Fannie, lived in town. To the east of town lay the new farms of four young men in their 20s: Asa E. Heywood (1818-1918), John C. Wood (1835-1912), William (Billy) Fellers (1834-1906), and Russell Samson (1832-1921). Despite the hard times they faced, this little band of settlers did not shrink back when faced with others in desperate need, even though it was a difficult time in the new settlement.

III. C. W. , CLARISSA, AND FANNIE GIDDINGS. Four freedom seekers in the Giddings home for four days; story by Fannie Giddings Norris, oldest daughter of the family

When C. W. Giddings brought his wife and daughters to Table Rock, Fannie, the oldest, was 17. In 1931, Fannie turned 90, and then and the next year her grandchildren elicited and recorded many of her memories; they were compiled in an unpublished book, *A Short Biography Of The Life Of Fannie Clarissa Giddings*, 1932.⁴⁵ Fannie spoke of the Underground Railroad in Table Rock. She said that her father “had charge of the station at Table Rock, and used the basement of the house for this purpose.” She recalled one event which began on a “cold winter night” with the arrival of four freedom seekers.⁴⁶ They had to hold over at the Giddings home for four days before they were able to move on:

One cold winter night, four negroes stopped at our house for protection and food. One was an old man, and father would not turn them out. He gave them warm straw beds in the basement. They ate their meals in the kitchen. We had to keep them four days.

When they were ready to leave, some friends took their clothes and belongings and put them in bags making believe they were going to the mill with grain. In the meantime, the slaves crept down the creek [Taylor

⁴⁵ A. Gaylord Wilson, *A Short Biography of the Life of Fannie Clarissa Giddings*, page 31 (unpublished).

⁴⁶ A. Gaylord Wilson, *A Short Biography of the Life of Fannie Clarissa Giddings*, page 31. The year is not named. However, C. W. Giddings had not brought his family to Table Rock until May 1858. It must have been the winter of 1858-9, the winter after disastrous floods had washed out bridges, or possibly the winter of 1859-60. By the winter of 1860, Fannie was married and no longer at home.

Branch], to the mill where the wagon awaited to take them to Peru and on to the next underground station.⁴⁷

Many on the “main track” of the Underground Railroad experienced close scrutiny from the searchers and as a result their charges were often reported as fearful and cautious. However, it may be that travel on the outer edges of the network somewhat altered the situation, because Fannie observed as well, “The negroes were always well-armed and ready for anything. They were willing workers, cutting wood or anything else that should be done in return for their keep.”⁴⁸

Fannie’s story reflects a family effort with her father providing warm beds, and her mother presumably doing the cooking.

Fannie places the incident in winter but does not give the year. She came to Table Rock in the Spring of 1858 and she left the family home when she married Chauncey Norris on March 1, 1860, which thus leaves the winter of 1858-1859 or possibly the winter of 1859-1860 for the time frame.

IV. C. W. GIDDINGS, WILLIAM FELLERS. Three freedom seekers in the Giddings home for a day, escaped out a window to avoid a fight with locals who wanted the reward for returning the slaves; story by Russell Samson, a contemporary

The memories of Fannie Giddings Norris about the vitality of the freedom seekers was echoed in another incident described by Russell Hoadley Samson (1832-1921). Samson came to Table Rock in 1856 or 1857 and settled east of

⁴⁷ The mill would have been the mill at the site that brought the Table Rock Town Company in 1855. It was described in Lydia Griffing’s memoirs about early life in Table Rock after arriving in 1857, quoted in part in Cheney, *Stories of Early Settlers Along the Nemaha*, page 39. The mill was operated by John Fleming, one of the members of the Table Rock Town Company. It was located on the Nemaha River about half a mile east of the town as platted by Muir. Given that the wagon awaited the freedom seekers at the mill, Fleming was probably one of the band of settlers as well, even though he is not identified by name. (Fleming is not buried in the Table Rock Cemetery.)

⁴⁸ Wilson, “*A Short Biography of the Life of Fannie Clarissa Giddings*,” page 31.

Table Rock.⁴⁹ Samson and his wife Emeline and other family members are also buried in the Table Rock Cemetery.

Samson in 1889 referenced Rev. Giddings' part in the Underground Railroad, saying in a history of Table Rock Precinct of Pawnee County that "an underground railway for the use of escaping slaves passed through this precinct, running from Missouri to Canada, with the station at the house of Charles Giddings, Presiding Elder of the Methodist Church." Samson said that Giddings "assisted many slaves from one station to another, and one lot was very nearly captured in this precinct."⁵⁰

In 1900, Samson was interviewed about his pioneer days for a newspaper article by J. H. Harrison, a member of another of Table Rock's pioneer families.⁵¹ Harrison called it a "tale of rare interest." Samson arrived alone in 1857 and remained for three years before returning East for his family. He recalled another winter-time incident in Table Rock involving aid rendered to three freedom seekers. Those involved he named as C. W. Giddings, William Fellers, and Newman (or Luman) Sanford.⁵²

Samson said that three freedom seekers were in Rev. Giddings' "cellar," holding over for a day. Whether their presence was intended as a secret or not, Samson did not say, but a storekeeper named Strickler learned of them.⁵³ Strickler

⁴⁹ Samson reported the year 1856 for his arrival, in *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, page 558. He reported 1857 when interviewed for a 1900 newspaper article. J. H. Harrison, "Bits of Nebraska History," *Nebraska State Journal*, July 22, 1900, page 4.

⁵⁰ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, "Russell Samson," page 560.

⁵¹ Harrison, "Bits of Nebraska History," *Nebraska State Journal*, July 22, 1900, page 4.

⁵² "Newman" Sanford may actually have been "Luman" Sanford (1832-1918). No record of a "Newman" Sanford has been found. Luman Sanford was in Table Rock by at least 1861. Sanford married Sarah Cook at his residence in Table Rock, the ceremony being performed by Rev. Griffing. The marriage certificate was #24 in Pawnee County. In 1858, Luman Sanford was 26. (Sanford is buried in Pennsylvania.)

talked three other men into joining him in a bid to get hold of the slaves in order to get the reward offered.

Like Fannie, Samson recalled that the freedom seekers were usually well armed, and Samson. Not only that, “they were anxious to fight” for their freedom if necessary, “and wanted Giddings to let the four men come down after them.”⁵⁴

The fight was avoided. As Strickler and his co-conspirators were making their plans in Strickler’s store, “the negroes were helped out at a back window,” by whom Samson does not say. However, Samson did identify others who helped. William Fellers and Newman Sanford were waiting for the freedom seekers at the edge of town and got them across “the river.” Samson added that Fellers was still living in Table Rock at the time “and no doubt well remembers the risky trip.”⁵⁵ (The article was published in 1900; Fellers died in 1906.)

V. ASA E. HEYWOOD, JOHN C. WOOD. They also were Table Rock conductors.

Although no specific incident has been described that involved them, Heywood and Wood, also buried in the Table Rock Cemetery, have been identified as participants in the network, Heywood by his own account and both by the accounts of contemporaries.

In October 1912, John C. Wood died. The Underground Railroad was a part of history that was well-remembered in those days. The report of his death came with a report of his good works with the network and a mention of Heywood as well:

⁵³ The specific identity of “Strickler” is not known. J. M. Strickler was a notary public in Pawnee County; it was he who notarized many of the deeds in the 1850s, including a July 5, 1859 warranty deed for the cemetery. (Deed book 20S, 116). The 1860 Nebraska Territorial Census for the Table Rock Post Office, Pawnee County, lists a 30-year-old Virginian, “Martin Strickly,” in Dwelling 35; it is unknown whether he is the same as J. M. Strickler.

⁵⁴ Harrison, “Bits of Nebraska History,” *Nebraska State Journal*, July 22, 1900, page 4.

⁵⁵ Harrison, “Bits of Nebraska History,” *Nebraska State Journal*, July 22, 1900, page 4.

John C. Wood, whose death was announced yesterday morning, was one of the two surviving members of the band of operators of the famous underground railroad that operated across the southeastern corner of Nebraska in the old slavery days. Mr. Wood conducted many a fugitive slave across Pawnee, Richardson, and Nemaha counties to Nemaha City, where they were slipped across the Missouri and into the hands of friendly people who would see that they were sent across the line into Iowa. A. E. Heywood, who now lives with his daughter in Julesburg, Col., is the only surviving conductor of the underground railroad trains that passed through Table Rock.⁵⁶

In November 1912, Asa Heywood died, hit by a train while at a train yard in Colorado, where he had gone to live with a daughter.⁵⁷ The Nebraska State Journal headlined the story, “Nebraska Pioneer is Dead. Last Survivor of Famous Underground Railroad.”⁵⁸ The content of the article is noteworthy for its recognition and commemoration of the network in southeast Nebraska and Table Rock:

A. E. Heywood, the last survivor of the famous underground railway in Nebraska, who was injured in the railroad yards at Julesburg, Col., Monday, died yesterday morning...

Mr. Heywood is well known in Nebraska, particularly in Table Rock, where he resided for many years, settling there before the War. He was a member of the famous band of early settlers in southeastern nebraska and Kansas who formed the chain of friendly homes along which slaves were transported from the southern states to freedom in the north.

⁵⁶ *Nebraska State Journal*, untitled article, page 4. October 26, 1912. Same article in the *Pawnee Republican*, November 7, 1912, page 1.

⁵⁷ *Lincoln Journal Star*, “Last Conductor on Old Underground Railroad Run Down.” November 12, 1912, evening edition, page 6. Same text in *Beatrice Daily Sun*, “Aged Conductor Killed,” page 1 (citing “Lincoln News”) and *Lincoln Daily News*,

⁵⁸ *Nebraska State Journal*, “Nebraska Pioneer is Dead. Last Survivor of Famous Underground Railroad; A. E. Heywod, Injured at Julesburg, Died Tuesday and Will be Buried in Nebraska.” November 13, 1912, page 8 (photograph is included).

The common route was for the slaves to be brought in small parties through Kansas, into Richardson County from Brown County [Kansas], then up into Nemaha County and across the Missouri at Nemaha City, across the extreme southeastern corner of Missouri into Iowa.

The object of the route through Kansas and Nebraska was to avoid the state of Missouri, which, as a whole, was pro-slavery. In northeastern Missouri, however, opposite Nemaha City, there was a chain of abolitionists leading into Iowa and furnishing a convenient route into the latter state.

Often the negroes were transported through Pawnee County further west, the choice between Pawnee and Richardson depending largely on the security of the one or other at the time the slaves were being sent through.

These were stirring times in this part of Nebraska and Mr. Heywood took an active part. Jayhawkers from Kansas were terrorizing the territory and adding to the difficulty in transporting the blacks to freedom. Parties of so-called S. C. Rangers scoured the country on the lookout for the escaping slaves, and big rewards offered by slave owners made the occupation of transporting the negroes hazardous for John Brown and his conductors, of whom Mr. Heywood was one.⁵⁹

The obituaries of the two men did not come out of nowhere. Heywood and Wood's involvement had long been recognized.

In 1894, the *Pawnee Republican* reported that Heywood was in town "telling friends of the many negroes he had helped along on John Brown's underground railroad through Table Rock before the Civil War."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ The reference to "so called S.C. Rangers" is perplexing, apparently being a reference to South Carolina Rangers, a military unit going back to the Civil War for which there is no evidence of ever being assigned in the Midwest. Apparently para-military individuals acted as though authorized by law to search out runaway slaves. They were not lawful troops, but they were "so called."

⁶⁰ *Pawnee Republican*, May 24, 1894, as cited in the "Forty Years Ago," *Pawnee Republican* May 24, 1934, page 4.

In 1900, both Heywood and Wood were identified as conductors in an article in the *Omaha Daily Bee*.⁶¹ Both men were still alive and still living in Table Rock. The article relates to a successful tour by U. S. Senator Mark Hanna of Ohio, who was campaigning for William McKinley. McKinley who was running for president against William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska. Mr. Hanna's whistle stop visits of Nebraska towns made big news. This particular article gave a stop-by-stop commentary. Under the subheading "Table Rock Glad to See Him," is a comment that the families of two Table Rock conductors on the Underground Railroad, A. E. Heywood and John Wood, were in the crowd:

An unexpected stop was made at Table Rock. Senator Hanna appearing on the platform of his car long enough to speak a few words, shaking hands with a number of young women. There was a Bryan club on the platform shouting for the 'cheerless leader,' but the young women drowned out the cheers by singing one or two McKinley songs to Hanna's enjoyment. Along in the late '50s Table Rock was one of the stations on John Brown's underground railroad. Escaping slaves were brought across at this point from Kansas, kept in concealment during the day and then conveyed to Brownville at night, where they were sent into Iowa. Two of the 'conductors' on this underground railroad, A. E. Heywood and John Wood, still live there and both of their families were represented in the crowd at the station.⁶²

Recognition of the Heywood and Wood continued while their contemporary, R. V. Muir, Table Rock's old friend, was alive.

In 1917, Nebraska celebrated its 50th year of statehood, and interest in its Territorial history was heightened. In a newspaper article in the *Nebraska State Journal*, Heywood and Wood were again cited, along with Robert V. Muir of Brownville.⁶³ Muir was one of the founders of Table Rock, being the treasurer of

⁶¹ "Mark Hanna Stirs 'Em Up: His Trip Through Bryan's Stomping Ground One of Genuine Triumph: Every Stop Furnishes a Crowd to Hear the Great Republican Leader – Many Happy Hits Made During the Day," *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 21, 1900, page 5.

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⁶³ "The Founding of Table Rock. Placed on the Map by a Colony from New York and Pennsylvania," *Nebraska State Journal*, June 10, 1917, Sunday edition, page 49.

the Nebraska Settlement Company and also the man who prepared the final plat of the town. Although thus intimately connected with Table Rock, he made his home in Brownville. He was an abolitionist and by some accounts also assisted in the Underground Railroad, being known in Table Rock as what at one time was described as the “Bob Muir station.”⁶⁴ The article citing Heywood, Wood, and Muir provides an account of the early days, mentioning many of the old pioneers, including Elder Charles W. Giddings, Asa Heywood, William Fellers, Robert V. Muir, and R. A. Sampson (sic). The article references the Underground Railroad:

For many years this was a station on the underground railroad, the next station being Brownville, where the slaves who were hurried on to freedom, first crossed and stepped on free soil. If A. E. Heywood and J. C. Wood were still living, they could recount several trips they made to deliver the poor colored persons to “Massa Bob Muir” at Brownville.”⁶⁵

A 1920 newspaper article by Frank Harrison that appeared in the *Pawnee Republican* also cited Heywood and Wood.⁶⁶ Harrison was a child of early settlers and grew up knowing many of the first-wave pioneers. In telling the history of Table Rock, he described the colonists as Methodists who were both abolitionists

⁶⁴ “Review State History,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, March 5, 1917, page 5. This little article merely describes a celebration of 50 years of Nebraska statehood with a dramatization of local events which showed four slaves transported on the ‘underground railroad’ from the Table Rock home of C. W. Giddings to the “Bob Muir station” at Brownville:

A semi-centennial program of the admission of Nebraska as a state was given by the pupils of the schools at the opera house Friday night, to a crowded house. Dramatization of Table Rock history was given with a cast of characters representing many of the early pioneers of the Nemaha Valley. The famous county seat election of 1856 was portrayed with other incidents of the early settlement of Table Rock. Four slaves were shown as being transported on the ‘underground railroad’ from the home of Elder Giddings at Table Rock to the Bob Muir station at Brownville, Nebraska....

⁶⁵ John Brown’s stay is oft repeated but undocumented. If it was in 1850, there were not yet settlers in the Table Rock area at that time to remember it.

⁶⁶ Frank Harrison, “Stories of Old Nebraska,” *Pawnee Republican*, July 1, 1920, Page 4.

and prohibitionists, saying that C. W. Giddings was the “leader” and that he and others associated with him “entered at once into the work of freeing slaves, and many times were the black men brought up from Missouri through Kansas to Table Rock, where they were secreted until it was safe to run them up across to Iowa.” He named not only Giddings but also Heywood and Wood as being “prominent” in the Underground Railroad in Table Rock.^{67 68}

VI. ORVILLE D. HOWE, MARY PEPOON HOWE, JOSEPH B. PEPOON. Post-Civil War arrivals from two abolitionist families originally living at Painesville, Ohio, who served the Underground Railroad network.

Three people representing two families who were active in the Underground Railroad in Ohio are buried in the Table Rock Cemetery - Joseph Benedict Pepoon and his sister Mary Pepoon Howe, and Mary’s husband Orville Duane Howe. The northern part of Ohio where they lived in their youth was then “a hotbed of abolition.”⁶⁹ Both the Pepoon and Howe families were involved in the Underground Railroad and for a significant time lived near Painesville, Ohio. Painesville “was ideally situated for helping fugitive slaves. It was near the shore of Lake Erie, just miles from the port town of Fairport. Abolitionists would hide runaways till a sympathetic steamship captain could be found, and then the escaped slaves could be taken to safety in Canada.”⁷⁰

Mary Pepoon Howe (1831-1903) and Joseph Pepoon (1838-1921) were children of Silas and Sophia Pepoon, strong abolitionists. Silas “gloried in being recognized as the friend and helper of the famous Theodore Weld, whose lectures in 1835 awoke so much interest and sympathy and also so much fierce opposition,”

⁶⁷ Harrison, “Stories of Old Nebraska,” *Pawnee Republican*, July 1, 1920, Page 4. To the list were added George Griffing and C. H. Norris, but they are not believed to have participated in the Underground Railroad.

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⁶⁹ Joseph Pepoon autobiography of 1913-1914 as transcribed in Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 175.

⁷⁰ Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 78.

and even named his son Theodore Weld Pepon after him.⁷¹ Silas “was never afraid of being in the minority when this seemed to him the honest and consistent course.”⁷² His children remembered “many interesting incidents connected with the shelter of hunted fugitive slaves beneath his roof.”⁷³

Joseph Pepon wrote that the family farm east of Painesville Ohio had a large apple orchard.⁷⁴ “One winter we hauled several loads down to Fairport and sold them for 10 cents per bushel. Fairport was one of the lake stations on the Underground Railway. Our house was a station on that road. We used to have Negroes come to our house and stay until a boat would come to Fairport that would take them across to Canada. Only certain boats would take them, so sometimes they would be there for some time waiting for the right boat.”⁷⁵

Joseph Pepon also described the use of a cabin near their home: “There was a one-room cabin near our house with a stone fireplace, where we kept a harmless crazy woman for a while... She was perfectly harmless and very fond of us children. I remember visiting her cabin, and listening to her stories of goblins. We used to put the Negroes in that cabin, and when we feared the Negro-catchers might come, Mother gave them a boiler full of hot water and a dipper and said if anyone tried to break in to scald them with it. Fortunately, no one came.”⁷⁶

Mary Pepon Howe described some of her childhood memories that related to a foundry near the home. She said that the charcoal for the furnace was burned in great pits in the surrounding woods, and hauled in wagons with immense flaring boxes.”⁷⁷ She continued, “I remember another use one of those coal wagons was once put to. My father kept a station on the underground railroad, and a black mother with her little children had taken refuge there. How I remember the

⁷¹ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, Chapman Brothers, Chicago, 1889, Joseph Pepon page 500.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 173.

⁷⁵ Joseph Pepon autobiography of 1913-1914 as transcribed in *Fighting for the Cause*, page 175.

⁷⁶ Joseph Pepon autobiography of 1913-1914 as transcribed in Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 175.

⁷⁷ Mary’s recollections are in a December 2, 1886 Painesville, Telegraph column, “Letter from Nebraska,” transcribed in Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 156.

wondering interest we children all took in the affair, how the fugitives remained hidden away in an upper chamber, the poor mother scarcely daring to even have them approach the window, until one dark night a coal wagon was driven as quietly as possible to the door, the slave mother and her children were safely transferred to its deep seclusion and driven to Fairport where the good steamer Rochester, whose captain was known to be tried and true and not a human blood hound, carried them over the blue waters of Lake Erie to the dominion of the British Lion, where alone at the time the hunted fugitive could rest in safety.”⁷⁸

Joseph Pepoon later said of his own memories, “We used to burn charcoal. They cut cord wood, three or four feet long, and build a pile about six feet high, covering it with dirt. When set afire it would burn slowly. When it went out it left a great heap of charcoal. We would haul it to the town to the blacksmiths and to the furnaces. They had no stone coal in those days. The charcoal was very light and we used to have very high wagon boxes. We would put the Negroes in those wagons which were so high that if we met anyone, they couldn’t see them, and it was always night, anyway.”⁷⁹

Mary Pepoon Howe recalled attending a meeting held by the “brave and eloquent old abolitionist,” Theodore Weld.⁸⁰ She was four. A crowd forced the meeting from a courthouse to a schoolhouse, and a mob then attacked the schoolhouse in the course of which “various missiles” flew in a broken window. She was hit by an egg. The meeting was broken up and as they attempted to leave, the mob “crowded around still uttering threats and curses.”⁸¹ She mused with good humor, “I sometimes wonder if I am not the only person now living who was actually egged in the anti-slavery cause in those early times...”⁸²

The Pepoon family’s work on the Underground Railroad ended in 1850, when they moved to Illinois. According to family lore, their move was occasioned

⁷⁸ 1886 Painesville Telegraph column as transcribed in *Fighting for the Cause*, page 156. It is also recounted in Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 32.

⁷⁹ Joseph Pepoon autobiography of 1913-1914 as transcribed in *Fighting for the Cause*, page 175.

⁸⁰ Mary’s recollections of the event are set out in a December 9, 1880 newspaper article from the Painesville Telegraph, transcribed in Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 156-7.

⁸¹ 1880 Painesville telegraph column as transcribed in *Fighting for the Cause*, page 157.

⁸² Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 157.

by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which levied stiffened penalties for those who helped fugitive slaves.⁸³ From Illinois, however, five of the family's sons served the Union.⁸⁴

In 1861, Mary Pepoon married Orville Howe (1831-1917). Orville Howe had grown up near Painesville as well. He attended Oberlin College in the 1840s, at that time “a bastion of Abolitionist thought.”⁸⁵

Orville's father, Eber Howe, was a newspaper editor who founded two anti-slavery newspapers, the *Cleveland Herald* and then the *Painesville Telegraph*.⁸⁶ He married Sophia Hull in 1822, and she was to work with him “equally” to assist fugitive slaves from bondage.⁸⁷ Eber Howe later after that ran a woolen mill.⁸⁸ His mother was from an abolitionist family in New York whose home was also said to have been an Underground Railroad Station.⁸⁹ The Howe family homes in Cleveland and Painesville and the woolen mill were all used as station of the Underground Railroad.⁹⁰ Howe employed so many slaves at the mill that the area became known as “Nigger's (sic) Hollow.”⁹¹ Orville was raised in this “charged” atmosphere.⁹² The book contains transcriptions of Orville's letters home, in which Orville's tone “is strident, and his commitment to the anti-slavery cause is evangelical.”⁹³

⁸³ Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 79-80.

⁸⁴ Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 79.

⁸⁵ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5.

⁸⁶ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5. The *Cleveland Herald* was founded in 1819, when Eber was 21, and contained a strong anti-slavery article in the first issue. Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, page 27. The Cleveland paper was not a success and in 1822 he started the *Painesville Telegraph*. Saylor, *Home in the Heartland*, 29.

⁸⁷ Saylor, *Home in the Heartland*, pages 31-32.

⁸⁸ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5. Eber Howe acquired the mill in 1835, after a brother took over the paper. Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 33.

⁸⁹ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5.

⁹⁰ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5.

⁹¹ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 5.

⁹² Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 6.

⁹³ Saylor, *Fighting for the Cause*, page 6. The text of the letters, written in 1847 and 1848, are described in good detail by Saylor, *A Home in the Heartland*, 44-50. In the first, 16-year-old Orville decries the “unenthusiastic” condemnation of slavery he finds at the college. Portions of Orville's diary are also transcribed,

In 1867, Joseph Pepoon and his wife, married only a few months, arrived shortly after statehood. They took a homestead north of Table Rock.⁹⁴ In 1871, his sister Mary and her husband Orville Howe arrived in Table Rock. They stayed with Mary and Joseph's brother, Theodore Weld Howe, until they were able to build their home by the following year.⁹⁵ Theodore was later forced to leave Table Rock due to economic circumstances, but Joseph Pepoon, Mary Pepoon Howe, and Orville Howe remained for the rest of their lives.

although most of it is written in an unintelligible form of shorthand. *Home in the Heartland*, 46. Orville left Oberlin for other schools, and his subsequent letters and diary entries are also described in *A Home in the Heartland*, 51-62.

⁹⁴ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties*, Joseph Pepoon page 570.

⁹⁵ *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, Chapman Brothers, page 499.