

Kansas, 1855
An Act to Punish Offences
Against Slave Property:

“Section 1: Every person, bond or free, convicted of raising a rebellion of slaves, free negroes, or mullattoes - shall suffer *death*.”

“Sec. 2: Every free person who shall aid in any rebellion of slaves, &tc, or do any act in furtherance thereof - shall suffer *death*.”

“Sec. 3. If any free person shall by speaking, writing or printing, advise, induce, &tc., any slaves to rebel, conspire against or murder any citizen of Kansas, or shall import or aid in importing such documents, shall suffer *death*.”

“Sec. 4. If any person shall entice, decoy, or carry out of Kansas any slave belonging to another, with intent to deprive the owner thereof of the services of such slave, or procure the freedom of such slave, he shall suffer *death*, or be imprisoned at hard labor for not less than ten years.”

“Sec. 11. If any person [shall] print, write, introduce into, publish or circulate or cause to be brought into, printed, written, published or circulated, or shall knowingly aid or assist in bringing into, printing, publish, or circulating within this territory, any book, paper, etc., containing any statements, doctrines, etc. calculated to produce a disaffection among the slaves of this territory - he shall be punished by imprisonment at hard labor for not less than five years.”

“Sec. 12. If any free person by speaking or by writing assert or maintain, that persons have no right to hold slaves in the territory, or shall introduce into Kansas, print, publish, write, circulate, or cause to be introduced into the territory, written, printed, publish, or circulated in this territory, any book, paper magazine, pamphlet or circular containing any denial of the right of persons to hold slaves in this territory, such persons shall be deemed guilty of felony, and punished by imprisonment at hard labor for a term not less than two years.”

“Sec. 13. No person who is conscientiously opposed to holding slaves shall sit at a juror on the trial of any of the sections of this act.”

“Act to be in force after Sept. 15, 1855” (excerpts, *Dixon Telegraph*, Sept, 19, 1855, pg. 2, col. 4.)



Galena Trail Committee of
Peoria County

Vol. VII Issue #1, January, 2007



The Kansas Blac Klaw.
“the challenge has gone forth, and Slavery or
Freedom must die”
***Dixon Telegraph*, Sept. 19, 1855**

“We publish the following Act just passed by the Democratic Legislature of Kansas: [note: see column at left.. Galena Trail editor.]

“The Act is of itself too infamous to require a comment. We wish our readers to examine it and prepare for the future. However painful the thought may be, sooner than submit to such base insult to our fathers, ourselves and those that are to come after us, such perversions of the rights guaranteed to us as American citizens, and that too by a band of ruffians, receiving aid and comfort from traitors to freedom and enemies to humanity; men who love liberty, and hate tyranny, respect decency and eschew villainy, must prepare for the conflict, and be ready to do battle for freedom whenever and wherever it may be necessary. This last crowning act of Humbug Sovereignty, which in effect annuls all the laws of the general Government guaranteeing the right of speech, of the Press, and of Life, and that too, to perpetuate the black and dunning curse of Slavery, is more than a man boasting of American or civilized ancestry should or can submit to. - He who can, is fit only himself to be a slave. Then we say let intelligent, sober-minded freemen, coolly prepare themselves for the struggle that is but too surely gathering around them; there is no way of escape from the issue, the challenge has gone forth and Slavery or Freedom must die.”

(*Dixon Telegraph*, Sept. 19, 1855, pg. 2, col. 4)

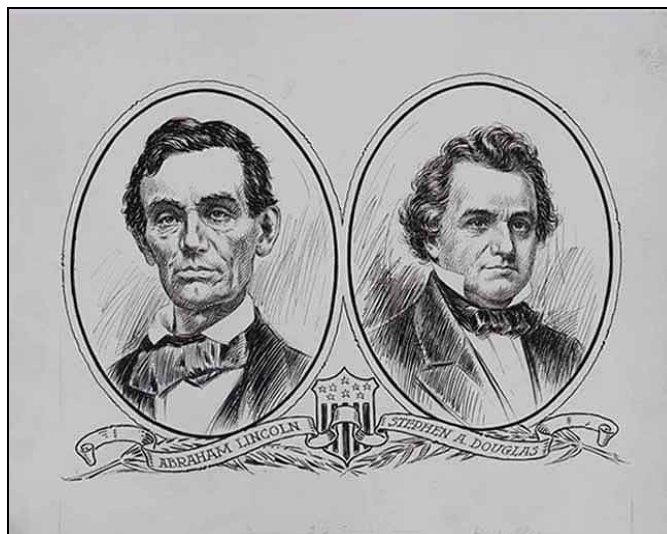
Dissent Explodes Along the Trail & Across the Land: 1854 -1859

Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act (enacted May 30, 1854) brought the Union to the brink of civil war.

The act, based upon Stephen Douglas' theory of "squatter sovereignty," allowed the residents of each territory to determine whether or not their territory would be slave or free, and whether they would apply for statehood as a slave or a free state. Abraham Lincoln strenuously opposed the act, and from 1854 onward, debated and criticized both it and slavery in a long series of encounters with Douglas along the Trail and throughout Northern Illinois.

The Lincoln-Douglas encounters attained national significance during the Senate campaign of 1858. Douglas appeared before large and enthusiastic crowds wherever he stumped, but the anti-slavery forces supported not only Lincoln, but brought in anti-slavery lecturers and community organizers who had been working for the abolition of slavery for more than a generation. Eventually, as much as Douglas was liked and admired, the anti-slavery forces led by Owen Lovejoy of Princeton, Elihu Washburn of Galena and others in every community, usually carried the day along the Trail.

Between 1854 and 1859, anti-slavery settlers along the Trail, from moderates to radical abolitionists, did more than vote anti-Nebraska; they gave material aid and support to the free soil settlers in Kansas and Nebraska. They sent guns, lawyers, money, and men to support freedom. They waged their fight against slavery repeatedly, constantly, and tirelessly, until finally, even preservation of the Union itself was not seen as justification for tolerating the expansion, or even the existence, of slavery.



Which is Right, Douglas or Lincoln!

“Judge Douglas says he does not care whether the territories come in as slave or free states, nor care to discuss whether slavery is an evil or not. Abram Lincoln says that he believes slavery to be a great moral and political evil, and that he desires to see it placed not only where the public mind will be at rest in regard to it, but where it will be undergoing the process of ultimate extinction. *Which is right, Douglas or Lincoln?*”

Judge Douglas says that he endorses the decision of the supreme court, which makes slavery the normal condition of all the territories, and from whence neither Congress nor the people can expel it. Abram Lincoln says that he is opposed to the Dred Scott decision; that freedom and not slavery is the normal condition of territories; that he does not ‘resist’ the decision, but refused to obey it as a political rule, and that if he were in Congress and a vote should come up on a question whether slavery should be prohibited in a new territory, in spite of that decision, he would vote that it should. *Which is right, Douglas or Lincoln?*”

“Judge Douglas says that he does not believe that the clause in the constitution which says that ‘citizens of one state shall enjoy all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several states,’ was intended to apply to certain classes of persons, and that he is in favor of giving the negro and Indian races such rights only as they are capable of enjoying. Abram Lincoln says he believes the framers of the Declaration of Independence were right when they said that it was a self-evident truth that all men are created equal; he believes in that clause of the constitution declaring that citizens of one state are entitled to all the rights and privileges of citizens of the several states, and says that the argument that certain races are entitled to such rights and privileges only as they are capable of enjoying, is the argument that kings have used to enslave their subjects, and is calculated to rub out the sentiment of liberty in this country. *Which is right, Douglas or Lincoln?*”

(Source: *Peoria Daily Transcript*, July 18, 1858, Wm. Rounseville, Editor; illustration: Chicago Historical Society.)

The Evening Republican
Peoria

February 24, 1856

**For Governor,
Abram Lincoln**

"He has long been known to the people of this State as a public man. Coming into our State (to take his own statement) flourishing an ox-gad, he has gradually won his way up from distinction to distinction, until there is now no man that stands before him in the hearts and judgments of the people of the State he has blessed by his citizenship...As a member of Congress, he made himself respected and his influence felt, and, while electrifying the House with his keen native wit and overflowing words for the Right, and launched many death-dealing arrows at official corruption and representative dereliction. Many a wily schemer has cause to remember with anything but pleasure the detection of his plots by the searching eye and their exposure by the merciless satire of Mr. Lincoln; and many an antagonist in debate, we doubt not, bears to this day the scars of wounds received in bouts with him.

"In the canvass in this State during the summer of '54, Mr. Lincoln won 'golden opinions' from the people, and earned a debt of gratitude from the Anti-Nebraska party, by his unwearied efforts in favor of their cause, that can never be fully repaid. Let it be remembered that Mr. Lincoln has successfully met Judge Douglas upon the Nebraska issue; and let it be remembered that it was Mr. L. who gave the Little Giant his final worsting, which occurred in our own city, and was the finishing stroke of that memorable struggle, in which, although the little champion of Nebraska bore himself with courage and vigor, yet the brave manliness, and the unflinching stand for PRINCIPLE maintained by his noble antagonist proved too much for him." (excerpts, pg. 1, col. 1)

THE ILLINOIS GAZETTE
LACON, ILLINOIS

August 2, 1856

From Kansas

"Edward Clark Private Secretary of Gov. Robinson, was in our city on Thursday and Friday of this week... He was induced by the Illinois Kansas Committee, at Chicago, to address his fellow citizens at various points, and solicit 'material aid' for the Free State cause in Kansas. He reports everything quiet in the Territory, the inhabitants being over-awed by border ruffian and military rule.

"Mr. Clark addressed a large number of our citizens on Thursday evening at the Court House....He stated that the accounts of oppression imposed and outrages perpetrated upon the people of Kansas, received in the States, were by no means exaggerated; and he eloquently drew a horrifying picture of the despotism and wrong, injustice and lawlessness, to which that unhappy territory has been subjected. Portraying in vivid colors the beauty and fertility of the territories thrown open to slavery by the Kansas-Nebraska bill, he declared it to be the object of the south to carry the 'peculiar institution' into each of them. A portion of Nebraska, he said, is adapted to slave labor, which is quietly and stealthily going there; and that territory now contains ten times as many slaves as Kansas. But Kansas is the battle-ground for slavery or freedom in the territories; and to establish slavery there, it has been over-run by hordes of ruffians and U.S. militia, who have murdered, plundered and destroyed, insulted women, prevented the prosecution of business, instituted -- a bloody 'reign of terror' in the heart of our Republican land. It is the only way, said the

speaker, that the black flag can be carried thee; for if the contest between liberty and slavery be honestly and legally waged, slavery must inevitably bite the dust."

"He referred to the leaders of the Free State movement in Kansas; they have expended their all for the cause - have suffered injustice, injury, and robbery - have in vain appealed to the U.S. Government for redress. They now in confidence appeal to their brethren of the Free North; they ask two kinds of aid - pecuniary and political. They ardently desire the election of John C. Fremont; for if Buchanan is elected, he will be, as Pierce has been, only a tool in the hands of the slaveholders, and will with them, labor to extend the slave-power over Kansas." (excerpts, pg. 2, col. 1)

Peoria Daily Transcript

Wm Rounseville, Editor

March 11, 1856

Kansas Aid Societies

"Associations are forming for furnishing material aid to the free-state men of Kansas, which means, we suppose in that connection, Sharpe's Rifles, and a few small necessities to accompany them. All this may be well enough, but we would give more for one voluntary emigrant, than for any number that are turned out by the instrumentality of an excitement got up by speeches at a public meeting. Real emigrants - men determined to live there if they can, and die there if they must, are wanted. Send donations by such men and they will be well expended."

March 24, 1856

Emigration Westward

Peoria, IL. "The emigration from Southern Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, has already commenced. We have seen quite a number of emigrant teams passing thorough our town, during two weeks past. *There will be a flood-tide of emigration the present year.*" (excerpts, pg. 2, col. 2)

April 14, 1856

Going to Kansas

Alton, IL., April 9. "A committee appointed by the business men of Kansas consisting of G.W. Brown, Editor of the Herald of Freedom and others are in town today to take the initiary step for establishing a line of steamers between this city and Kansas for the purpose of transporting Free State emigrants with their goods. They will proceed hence to Chicago, Cincinnati, & Pittsburgh and eastern cities to perfect arrangements." (pg. 2, col. 4)

April 26, 1856

Emigration West

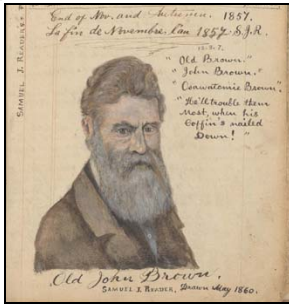
Springfield, IL. "For the last two weeks, the tide of emigration passing through this city to the westward has been very brisk. Every day, long trains of white topped wagons, filled with plunder and ruddy looking women and their children, are seen moving through our streets. The greater part of this emigration is for Iowa, though much will find its way into Kansas and Nebraska." (pg. 3, col. 1, first published in the *Springfield Journal*)

May 6, 1856

Kansas and Alton Steamers

Alton, IL., May 1. "the Kansas and Alton Committee have just completed arrangements by which steamers will stop at Alton and receive passengers and freight direct for Kansas. The Committee have prepared a circular to the press which will be forwarded by the next mail, giving all the particulars of the arrangement." (pg. 2)

John Brown 1800-1859



On Dec. 20, 1858, John Brown and his men liberated 11 slaves in Missouri, and led them to safety, arriving in Windsor, Canada on March 12, 1859. Supporters along the Trail read news reports of the raid and cheered.

Along the Trail, John Brown, fighting abolitionist, and anti-slavery icon, was often considered a hero and martyr to the anti-slavery cause. Like many radical abolitionists, Brown had been born to the cause and moved easily within the close, secretive world of the radicals who worked on the Underground Railroad. Their tight network consisted of individuals and families across the country who were bound together by a shared doctrine and close ties of kinship and friendship.

Brown's father, Owen, was an early abolitionist, member of the UGRR, and Trustee of Oberlin College, an abolitionist stronghold in Ohio. Oberlin graduates along the Trail, including reverends David Todd, Wm T. Allan, & Ammon Gaston, preached abolitionism and worked in the UGRR network. Todd's brother, John, was a Congregationalist minister in Tabor, Iowa, where he ran a safe house for John Brown, and stored guns and ammunition bound for the defense of free soil settlers in Kansas. The extended Gaston family was active in Tabor, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Kansas. (Sources include: DuBois, W.E.B., *John Brown*, a biography, 1997 edition; the *Western Citizen*, Chicago, Todd research, Dr. Jane Ann Moore, Dekalb, IL., private communication.)

“Poor Marsa! He’s in a bad fix; hogs not killed, corn not shucked, and niggers all gone!”

Former slave liberated by John Brown, Missouri, December, 1858

John Brown's liberation raid into Missouri in December of 1858 was initiated at the request of Missouri slave Jim Daniels. Daniels, who lived near the Missouri-Kansas border, entered Kansas, ostensibly selling brooms, on Sunday, December 19 to find free-state raiders willing to help him escape from slavery. He encountered George B. Gill, who was scouting a defensive line for Brown's nearby camp, identified Gill as a trustworthy anti-slavery raider, and confided in him. As Gill later recalled: ***“I found that his name was Jim Daniels; that his wife, self, and babies belonged to an estate and were to be sold at an administrator’s sale in the immediate future. His present business was not the selling of brooms particularly, but to find help to get himself, family, and a few friends in the vicinity away from these threatened conditions..... I immediately hunted up Brown, and it was soon arranged to go the following night and give what assistance we could. I am sure that Brown, in his mind, was just then waiting for something to turn up; or, in his way of thinking, was expecting or hoping that God would provide him a basis of action.”***

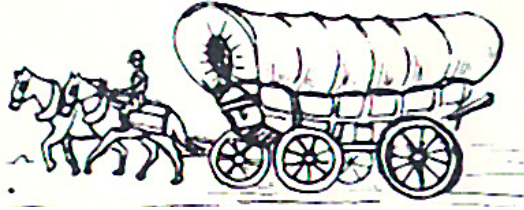
Gill continues: *“On the night of the 20th of December, we wended our way slowly down into Missouri, first stopping at Hicklan’s, with whom Daniels and family were staying”“Daniels was entrusted with the arrangements on the outside, as he was apparently the soul of honor, and a good friend of Hicklan, who, I believe, was a very fair man and, perhaps, a very good one. Daniels was very careful that nothing belonging to Hicklan should be taken or interfered with. It was also Brown’s intention that nothing, if possible, should be touched that did not, in his estimation, belong to the slaves.”*

The Daniels family was owned by the James Lawrence estate. “All of the personal property belonging to the estate that he could find, Brown intended to take as being owned by the slaves, having surely been bought with their labor. In his view, they were entitled to all the proceeds of their labor.” Hinklan, a tenant on the estate, and his property were left alone. Confiscated estate property was later sold to defray expenses of the long overland journey.

“From Hicklan’s we went direct to LaRue’s, whose house was surrounded. We found them in bed and asleep. The old man, being awakened with the usual ‘Hallo;’ which, when replied to by ‘What’s wanted,’ was answered by the old Captain stating the business thus tersely: ‘We have come after your Negroes and their property; will you surrender or fight?’ I think that they had been rather looking for such a company and were prepared to receive us, as we found in a few minutes that there were several men inside with plenty of arms. The immediate reply was ‘We’ll fight!’ ‘All right,’ said Captain Brown, ‘we’ll smoke you out then.’ This would have been attempted forthwith, as there was plenty of fire in the Negro quarters, had they not very quickly reconsidered their decision and surrendered. From this place, was taken five more Negroes” A second party, led by Aaron Stevens, liberated a slave named Jane from a Mr. Cruise, killing Cruise in the process. In total, 11 slaves, all family or friends of Jim Daniels were liberated by Brown's men.

“It was a very cold night, but to our contrabands, the conditions produced a genial warmth not endorsed by the thermometer. One of the women pitied ‘poor marsa! He’s in a bad fix; hogs not killed, corn not shucked, and niggers all gone!’ One who was driving the oxen inquired the distance to Canada. He was told that it was only about fifteen hundred miles ‘Oh, golly; we ‘uns never get dar before spring! He exclaimed as he brought the whip down on the oxen, shouting ‘Git up dar, buck; bung along!’ Daniels himself was very thoughtful, realizing to the fullest extent the dangers of the situation. The others seemed to have implicit confidence in their protectors.”

(Source: Hinton, Richard, *John Brown and His Men*, London, 1894, Arno Press edition, 1968, excerpts of letter to Hinton from Geo. B. Gill, pp. 218-221.)



Peoria Daily Transcript
Wm Rounseville, Editor

January 27, 1859

Kansas Troubles, A New Branch of the Underground Railroad

Leavenworth, Jan. 25.

"The times published a letter with an account of the conflict between a party of men under Brown and a posse under the Deputy Marshal near Paoli, Lynn County. It says that two of Brown's party, the Deputy Marshal and two of his assistants were killed. Account not vouched for and probably exaggerated. The friends of Brown assert that he is not in the Territory."



Peoria Daily Transcript
Wm Rounseville, Editor

February 18, 1858

How Old John Brown was followed And how he wasn't captured

"It is very well known that Old John Brown is a character. He is one of the 'institutions' of Kansas. "During the recent troubles in Southern Kansas, he has been ubiquitous - now here - now there - turning up wherever danger seemed most threatening, or assistance most needed. His name is a terror throughout the whole border of Missouri. A thousand attempts have been made to capture him, but he has invariably 'turned the tables' and captured his pursuers. The Old Man always travels openly, makes no concealments, and frequently challenges pro-slavery men to meet him. He has all the craft of a Marion, and the daring of a Lawrence. He is the Cromwell of Kansas. His open marches betrayed his designs, and a company of pro-slavery men organized to take him 'dead or alive.' Following close on his trail, they cornered him in a log house not far from Lawrence. He had but four men, and yet they held the valorous pro-slaveryites at bay till rescue came, and Old John Brown went on his way unharmed.

"Arriving north of the Kaw River, a company of Hotspurs dashed out of Atchison to achieve immortal glory by annihilating the Old Hero. They took their position. Brown's 'caravan' approached. The Hotspurs trembled. There might be glory in an attack. - There was certain safety in flight. Discretion overcame valor, and away they went, "Old Brown's' men in hot pursuit. The chase was a merry one and closed by Brown taking off three of his pursuers as prisoners, with four horses, pistols, guns &c. as legitimate plunder. The prisoners were carried some twenty miles and then sent back to Atchison, both sadder and wiser men. They feel rather chop fallen, and vent their wrath on their captain, whom they denounce as a blusterer and coward. The terms might be applied to the whole party as well for aught we know. Old Captain Brown is not to be taken by 'boys,' and he cordially invites all pro-slavery men to try their hands at arresting him. He is not yet out of Kansas, as will soon be demonstrated." *Leavenworth Times*
(*Peoria Daily Transcript*, (PDT) February 18, 1859, pg. 2, col. 3.)

Galena Daily Advertiser

Feb. 14, 1859

Old Brown Safe Again

Lawrence, K.T., Feb. 4, 1859

"Brown was blockaded at Holton, which is near Nebraska. A posse of Missourians from Weston, and some from Bates County, tracked him up and came while he only had four men with him. Their force was about thirty. Brown took shelter in some empty log houses and prepared for fight. The party was afraid to storm him, but remained out of gunshot closely guarding him. They sent for help to Weston, and also to Leocompton. The Governor, fearful of the effect of a Missouri posse taking Brown, sent Marshal Colby with troops to take him instead of letting them do it. Meanwhile, a party of Free State men arrived and raised the siege, the Missouri party flying precipitously as soon as they came in sight, and thus preventing a fight."

Signed: KAW

(Excerpt, *Galena Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 14, 1859, correspondence from the *Missouri Democrat*)



Journey to Freedom

Brown's Missouri raid alarmed his more conservative supporters, and they were hesitant to help the fugitives. As Gill explains: "*Brown, in the estimation of these free state men, had exceeded his privileges by invading Missouri and interfering with the divine institution of slavery. Their code confined all their motions to the defensive. Missouri might invade Kansas, but Kansas must not invade Missouri; pro-slavery men might cross the line and steal from, harass, or murder free-state settlers, yet free-state men must not retaliate by crossing the line, and must be very careful not to insult the slave interest.*" (Hinton, op. cit., pg. 222)

In spite of their fears, free-state men helped the party every step of the way. Augustus Wattles, who had preached along the Galena Trail, mollified Brown's critics, and secured their help. They provided food & clothing, and decoyed pursuers away from the fleeing fugitives. Dr. James Blount cared for the sick and delivered Mrs. Daniels' baby. Armed riders often scouted ahead and guarded the rear of the caravan. Ottawa Indians, Quakers, Congregationalists at Tabor & many nameless friends sheltered and protected the fugitives on the road to Canada.



Uncle Sol Proudly Flew His Anti-Slavery Flag

Waterbury and Shaver family traditions hold that Solomon Shaver of Eagle Point, Ogle County was a great friend of John Brown. According to this tradition, John Brown of Osawatimie and Solomon Shaver were the speakers at a great Fourth of July celebration in Kansas. There was shouting and firing of guns, and 'Uncle Sol' addressed the vast assembly. He quoted a part of Charles Sumner's great speech on the Kansas invasion, as was his custom to do when he had his war paint on, and the crowd cheered.

Solomon Shaver was an ardent and radical abolitionist who, along with the Waterbury family, was a driving force behind the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad in Ogle and Carroll Counties. While Aunt Hannah Shaver and Mrs. John Waterbury Sr. sewed warm clothing and prepared meals for desperate fugitives who traveled along the railroad, Uncle Sol and the Waterbury men secretly and safely transported the fugitives to the next station.

Henry Elsey, a close friend of the Shaver family, recalled that "Among the other things that Aunt Hanna made, was a flag. Uncle Sol told her how to make it, and like a good wife, she went to work at it. It was to have a blue field, with white stars, but no stripes. It was about two by three feet and occasionally Uncle Sol would stick the flag staff into a leather socket on his wagon box and drive to town."

"It was on a Fourth of July that he drove into Polo, and that flag attracted more attention than any other flag in town. The kids gibbed and jeered him, but he took no notice of them. At last, he was surrounded by a number of men who were seeking information. 'Where are the stripes, Uncle Sol?' Then, in a voice in which was blended sarcasm, scorn, and contempt, he said: 'On the n---rs' backs, you idiots!'"

Editor's Note: Betty Obendorf, Secretary of the Galena Trail Society and researcher at the Polo Historical Society sends the above and following recollections of the Underground Railroad along the Trail in northern Illinois. The information used is from two articles written by Henry Elsey, a close friend of the Shaver family, and published by the Tri-County Press, Polo, Illinois, on February 21 and 28, 1907. "Black abolitionist" referred to a radical abolitionist, not necessarily an African American.

"It was the writer's good fortune to have known many 'black abolitionists'"

"It was the writer's good fortune to have known many 'black abolitionists' who were connected with the Underground Railroad system, having served as conductor upon the Fulton, Illinois and Genesee Grove section, and also between Shaver Hollow in Eagle Point Township and Byron. We have stated that it was our 'good fortune' because we can not recall one of them who was not worthy of respect and esteem, and whom any man could be proud to class as his friend."

"The only place in Byron where I unloaded passengers was at Jared W. Sanford's. --- It is with feelings of pleasure that I recall to mind Mr. and Mrs. Sanford. The kind hospitality extended to ourselves and to the runaway slaves, the care given to the horses in the basement stables of the barn, and the substantial meal at 2 o'clock a.m. are fresh in our memory after fifty years or more have passed."

"That there never was an arrest of any member of the Underground Railway company upon the line between Fulton, in Whiteside County, and Byron, in Ogle, is to be attributed to the cool level headed men who seldom mentioned the subject of slavery to any one except those whom they knew were ready to aid a fugitive slave."

"We recall to mind some of those quiet workers, George Dement and Ethan Colcord of Genesee Grove, John Waterbury, Sr., and his sons, Ezra, James, Daniel, John, George and Fordice, each of whom was ready at any time to take fugitives to the next station regardless of the darkness of the night or the condition of the roads."

"The Shaver Hollow station was in Eagle Point Township, and it mattered not at which house the slaves were taken, whether it be to 'Sol' Shaver's or to any of the Waterburys, they would be taken to Byron without delay, unless as sometimes happened, the fugitives were tired or sick and needed rest. In such cases, they would be kept over for a few days, and not a neighbor was any the wiser except those who belonged to the Underground Railroad company."

"In Polo and vicinity there were many abolitionists who were ready at all times to render aid by donating money and clothing to assist runaway slaves in their efforts to reach Canada. We recall David Lewis, Ezra and Samuel Waterbury, also James B. Gardner, a brother in law to the Waterburys, and Timothy Perkins. There were many others who would have rendered aid if called upon."

Henry Elsey
Polo, Illinois 1907



Chicago, Nov 6th 1858

Thomas Pierce

My dear friend:

I have made an arrangement with Fred Douglass to visit Illinois in the month of Feb. He will deliver 2 Lectures, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. Lecture in the afternoon – "Self Made Men," in the evening, the "Races".

I will bring him to Aurora if the proper arrangements can be made with a small admission fee of 15 cents. This will be done to pay expenses, as he charges fifty dollars per day, or twenty-five dollars a lecture. Please see our friend Dr. Hard and write me soon. Respectfully

H. Ford Douglass

(Source: private collection, sold on Internet, Sept. 2006)

BUREAU COUNTY REPUBLICAN FEBRUARY 24, 1859

Fred Douglass' Lecture

"This highly popular and spirited speaker, renowned in days gone by for his anti-slavery lectures and writings, when the old 'Liberty Party' first began to work out its great mission, spoke for nearly two hours, on Saturday afternoon, to a dense crowd of people at the Court House.

"The subject of the lecture was 'The Unity of the Races,' – a most interesting and absorbing topic. Fred, though marked with the furrows of twelve years since last we saw him, wind-broken and travel-worn, was the inimitable Fred Douglass still; while the occasional flashes of his rhetoric, and his well balanced logic, fell, as ever, with their overwhelming power.....Long life to Fred. – May his life be spared to still labor for his enslaved brethren.

"Another Douglass (H.F.) lectured in the evening of the same day. So it will be seen that though one Douglass cracks the whip over a plantation of slaves, two are advocating the rights of the slave, and accomplishing objects for humanity that in time will canonize them in the hearts of the world."

(excerpts of published article)(The Douglas who "cracks the whip" was Stephen Douglas, who financed his political career with profits from his wife's Mississippi plantation. Editor)

Peoria Daily Transcript

Wm Rounseville, Editor

March 1, 1859

Fred Douglass' Lecture

"Tickets for Frederick Douglass' Lecture tomorrow (Wednesday) evening, at Rouse's Hall, can be obtained at the different book stores; also at Mason's barber shop, Main Street. Price Twenty Five cents, admitting a gentleman and lady. Single tickets fifteen cents."

Peoria Daily Transcript

March 1, 1859

Fred Douglass' Lecture

"At the close, an enthusiastic burst of applause was given, without a dissenting voice."

"The company assembled at Rouse's Hall to hear the second lecture of Fred Douglass was, notwithstanding the unfavorable weather from a continued snow storm, more numerous than on the previous evening.....Douglass has the power of interesting an audience in a very high degree, and enlisting the sympathies; this was evident in the first lecture when his auditory requested him to continue speaking, long after the time had arrived for to close. As he had not exhausted his argument upon the subject of slavery, it is arranged that he should resume that subject again on Wednesday evening next.

Signed, Pluribus"



Friday Morning, March 4, 1859

Fred Douglass' Lecture

"The large and respectable attendance upon Fred Douglass' lecture at Rouse's Hall, Wednesday evening was highly credible to the good sense and candor of this community.....If we can judge of popular sentiment by appearances, we may be allowed to assert that the impression made by the speaker was highly favorable to his cause, and there was scarcely an individual in all of the large audience who will be inclined to deny the general justness of his views."

"Douglass having been a slave and having experienced to the full extent all the rigors of the institution, we must expect that he would speak of it with great bitterness. Hence *those who like to hear slavery spoken of apologetically, and to see slave holders handled with soft gloves and whose delicate 'sensibilities' could not endure to witness their excoriation by an unsparing hand, did well for themselves in staying away.* He did not undertake to give a glowing recital of individual wrongs and only referred to instances of enormity and outrage except so far as necessary to conduct and strengthen his argument."

"He assumed the position that slavery was repugnant to humanity and odious to God, and was sanctioned only by the depraved propensities of the human heart. It was not by any special device of Providence that negroes should be bondsmen.....Slavery was a curse to our country, affecting injuriously the morals and prosperity of the nation, and disgraced us in the eyes of the civilized world."

"The speaker contended that slavery was not approved or sanctioned by the constitution of the United States. Without violating any of its requirements, slavery could be abolished in the District of Columbia and a stop be put to the slave trade between states. Could these ends be accomplished, this great abomination would soon fall prostrate from the loss of its life blood. To attain these objects should be the earnest endeavor of every American who loves justice, freedom and humanity."

(PDT, excerpts of articles published Mar. 1 & 4.)

Frederick Douglass in Peoria

Peoria Daily Transcript

March 3, 1859

Frederick Douglass' Lecture

"Notwithstanding the unpleasant weather that prevailed, one of the largest and most intelligent audiences that ever assembled in Rouse's Hall, listened last evening to the eloquent and scathing lecture of Frederick Douglass upon the subject of American Slavery. The hall was literally packed, and the most marked attention paid throughout by everyone, the speaker being often interrupted by bursts of applause. Mr. Douglass was introduced to the audience by Dr. Taylor, President of the meeting, whose remarks were also received with much interest."

In his autobiography, **Life and Times of Frederick Douglass**, Douglass recalls that during a visit to Illinois, he told Elmwood abolitionist Ruthven Brown that when he was last in Peoria he "*could obtain no shelter at any hotel*" and that he feared the same treatment again. Brown was shocked and advised Douglass to go to the home of Robert J. Ingersoll, telling him that "*No matter about the hour, neither he nor his family would be happy if they thought you were shelterless.....*" (Douglass, Frederick, **Life & Times of Frederick Douglass**, Hartford Conn., 1882, pp 512 & 513.)

Fortunately, Douglass' fears were groundless. He had no trouble obtaining a room in the best hotel in Peoria. The following morning, he paid a visit to Mr. Ingersoll, where he was warmly welcomed by the famous atheist. Douglass wrote that "Perhaps there were Christian ministers and Christian families in Peoria at that time by whom I might have been received in the same gracious manner. In charity I am bound to say there probably were such ministers and such families, but *I am equally bound to say that in my former visits to this place, I had failed to find them.*"

Douglass appears to be referring to his 1859 visit to Peoria. If so, his 1882 reminiscence does not coincide with the public record of the earlier engagement. Douglass' 1859 tour had been scheduled by African American abolitionist H. Ford Douglass, and the Peoria lectures were organized by local abolitionists, among them prominent African American barber and business man, Thomas Mason. This committee would have arranged for Douglass' lodging & meals, and he would have been introduced to leading area abolitionists. Peorians gave Douglass a warm welcome. He spoke before packed houses of enthusiastic and appreciative audiences in Peoria's largest lecture hall. At a time when news editors were very outspoken & often highly critical of lecturers, Douglass received rave reviews in Peoria.

Douglass' criticisms of Peoria cast an undeserved pallor on Peoria's abolitionists and portray Peoria as a bastion of prejudice and petty tyrannies. His criticisms have been remembered by many, while Peorians' enthusiastic support of abolitionism and Douglass' fight against slavery have been largely overlooked.

Patricia Goitein, Editor

It was Elsey's good fortune to have known many "black abolitionists"

Henry Elsey, 1837 - 1920

Henry Elsey met the radical abolitionists and temperance workers who shaped his adult life upon arriving in Illinois in 1850. At the time, he was a 13 year old orphan with a personal history of hardship and survival comparable to the fugitive slaves he soon met while working for abolitionists along the Underground Railroad.

Elsey was born in Epsom, Surrey County, England on July 9, 1837 to Henry and Eliza Loverage Elsey. His father was a painter and glazier who had a mind to educate his children, sending Henry to the local National School. When the boy was 10 years old, his childhood and education came to an abrupt end upon the deaths of his parents, brothers, and sister. Within weeks, Henry found himself lodged in the Epsom Workhouse, alone and penniless, with few prospects.

Fortunately for our young hero, Henry was rescued from the Workhouse by an uncle, who brought him to America, arriving in New York on August 30, 1849. Henry was 11 years old, and things were looking up. Within a year, however, Henry's Uncle died, leaving the boy alone in the world. Good fortune or good friends helped the 12 year old find employment on an Erie Canal Boat, and Elsey worked his way west, arriving in Illinois in 1850. He was 13 years old, strong, resourceful, and literate. By staying close to his fellow English immigrants settling in northwestern Illinois, Henry was able to find a place for himself on the frontier.

Elsey presently hired on as a laborer at Franklin Dodge's sawmill in Fulton and boarded with the Dodge family. According to Elsey, Franklin Dodge was a well known fighter, who took his natural combativeness and made it useful by becoming a radical abolitionist. Fulton was an important Mississippi River crossing on the UGRR, and Elsey was soon involved in what critics called "n---r stealing," with Dodge and other abolitionists. Elsey later recalled that "*it was no easy matter to prevent him from doing rash acts in his efforts to assist fugitives on their road to Canada.*"

Elsey worked along the UGRR for 11 years in Fulton, Carroll, and Ogle counties. In 1861 he enlisted in the Union Army, serving for four years before returning to Ogle County. Many of his numerous descendants still live along the Trail in northern Illinois. (Sources: **Tri County Press** clippings, Polo Historical Society; obituary; **Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois & History of Ogle County**, Vol. II, Kaufman, 1909, pg. 886; U.S. immigration records.)



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