

Notes during preparation of the 2013 Underground Railroad Map for Chautauqua County  
by Douglas H. Shepard, February 2013

*[Further sources are needed in several cases, as mentioned in the following notes. Selected sources and suggestions for further reading appear at the end of the notes. Additional candidates for the map are also sought.]*

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Rev. John Amidon. John Smith **Amidon** was born on 2 September 1821 to Leonard and Esther (**Smith**) **Amidon**, originally from Connecticut. The family must have removed to NY State fairly early since John **Amidon** gave his birth place as Onondaga NY. Young's *History of Chautauqua County*, p.295, notes that Leonard **Amidon** contracted for or bought Lot 52 in Twp.1, Range 14, in January 1823. The first local record for Leonard **Amidon** (sometimes given as **Amadon**) is in the 1840 Census for Clymer NY. The Methodist Episcopal Church in Clymer organized around 1825. The first class included Lawrence and Adelia **Amidon**, Elijah and Sarah **Amidon**, and Leonard and Esther **Amidon**. When John S. **Amidon** joined the Methodist Episcopal Church and became a minister is not recorded. He married Charlotte A. **Curtis**, originally from Madison NY, probably around 1842. Their eldest son, John N., was born in PA in 1845; daughter Apphia in 1851; and William E. in 1854, so John **Amidon** may have had his early ministry there. Census records for 1855, 1860 and 1870 consistently list him as a farmer. One unverified report, said to be from family records, notes that he operated a UGRR station on the Corry-Clymer Road as well as manning the toll house on what was the Westfield Clymer Plank Road. The toll house can be seen on the 1854 wall map. Comparing the following homeowners' family names from the section of the 1855 Census that includes three **Amidon** households with the names on the 1854 map gives a reasonably accurate location for the home of John S. **Amidon** that may have been the UGRR station: John **Rowe**, Geo. Washington **Thompson**, Leonard **Amidon**, Deborah **Whitford**, Richard **Dutton**, Lewis **Amidon**, Amos **Greene**, Loron **Thompson**, John S. **Amidon**, Emmanuel **Beardsley**, William L. **Booth**, Francis **Tanner**, Chester W. **Tanner**, Seth **Payne**, Hercules **Rice**. John S. **Amidon** died in Corry PA on 3 October 1898.

Norman Backus was born in Onondaga County around 1800 according to his own statements to various census takers. Although his name does not appear in Onondaga records, there are many **Backus** families there from an early date. The earliest record for him is probably the Norman **Backus** in Salisbury, Herkimer County in the 1830 Census. (His wife, Charlotte, was from Herkimer County.) By 1840 they had relocated to Clymer NY. (Their daughter, Emily, was born in Chautauqua County in 1839.) He is not found in the 1850 Census, but by 1855 they were in Busti, where he worked as a cooper. He, his wife, and Emily had been in Busti for 15 years, and their son William had been born there in 1844. The 1860 Census finds him farming in Clymer, but back in Busti as a cooper again in 1865. In 1870 he is listed in Busti as a farm

laborer. He and Charlotte probably died soon after that. In 1875 William is found living with his married sister, Caroline, and her husband William **Seaver**, with no other **Backus** names in the record. Norman's UGRR affiliation is mentioned in the *Jamestown Morning Post* of 18 July 1923.

John C. Breed was born in Saratoga NY on 4 April 1804, the son of Thomas **Breed**. He came to Jamestown NY perhaps as early as 1820 with his older brother, William, who set up as a cabinet maker. In 1826 William took his brother John in as a partner. In the following year, John married Olive, a daughter of Solomon and Clarissa (**Hayward**) **Jones**, whose daughter Clara had already been married to William **Breed**. John **Breed** worked as a cabinet maker throughout his life. An online posting says he was "the first of the Baptist faith to settle here and the first superintendent of a Sunday School in the settlement." This seems to be a partial quotation from some unnamed source. *Young's History of Chautauqua County* mentions that whatever form the early Baptist gatherings took, they had formed themselves into a conference by April 1832 with John **Breed** as their Clerk. They reorganized as the Baptist Church of Jamestown in May of that same year. When John C. **Breed** died in 1886, his obituary in *The Fredonia Censor* of 15 December said, "He was one of the founders of the Baptist church there [Jamestown NY] in 1826." According to local legend, he and other members of his church were affiliated with the UGRR, and the church history does confirm that he was an ardent abolitionist.

Rev. John Broadhead was born in Ripponden, West Yorkshire, England to John and Dorothy (**Whitworth**) **Broadhead** on 16 January 1798. He joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1810, became a class leader in 1814 and a circuit preacher in 1818. On 25 December 1819 he married Hannah **Hall**. They came to the U.S. in 1827. (John Fletcher **Broadhead** was born in Hudson NY in 1830. Martha E. was born in June 1835 in Chautauqua County NY. ) Hannah **Broadhead** died on 22 December 1835 and in 1836 he married Elizabeth **Cheney** of Harmony NY. A memorial account in a Jamestown newspaper, preserved in the "**Damon** scrap book" describes his strong anti-slavery sentiments. He had been preaching in the Erie Conference "from the M. E. Church, which was his choice . . . but during the years of her slavery agitation he went out and preached for the Wesleyan connection . . . coming back to his own communion as soon as the Slavery question was settled." Broadhead's UGRR activity is cited in William S. **Bailey's** account in *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York* (William **Doty**, Ed. 1940). There are a number of **Broadheads** on the 1854 map of Busti including a J. B. **Broadhead** just across the road from W. **Storum**. The Rev. John **Broadhead** died on 7 March 1887 and is buried in the Busti cemetery.

Stephen J. Brown was born in Rensselaer County NY in 1794, although the census-taker in 1850 gave his birth place as Pennsylvania. **Brown's** wife, Rhoda, was born in Rensselaer County in 1791. He studied to become a lawyer and physician and the two relocated to Busti NY. Since he is mentioned there as "Dr. **Brown**," he probably worked primarily as a physician. He and his wife can be found in Busti by 1830 running through 1855. He died in Busti on 17 November 1857. His UGRR affiliation was cited in **Lockwood**, C.R., "Interview with Catherine **Harris**," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

Dr. James Catlin and his wife Dr. Martha **Catlin** were instrumental in the UGRR in Sugar Grove, PA. **Catlin** was cited in **Lockwood's** 1902 article and again in **Price**, Albert S., *History of Chautauqua County and its People*, Vol. I, John P. **Downs** and Fenwick Y. **Hedley**, Ed., American Historical Society, 1921. According to the Sugar Grove Historical Commission, **Catlin** hid his first refugee while attending Allegany College in Meadville, PA. **Catlin** founded the *True American* abolitionist newspaper in Erie, PA. His articles also appeared in other well known anti-slavery papers. The **Catlins'** farm was located at Catlin Hill Road and North Road. Their daughter Cynthia **Catlin Miller** also ran a UGRR station at her Greek Revival home one quarter mile southwest of the state line on Big Tree Road. She was a leading member of Sugar Grove's "Ladies' Fugitive Aid Society," as was her colleague Bebe **Blodgett**, who lived in a small Greek Revival home at 211 Main in Sugar Grove.

Hiram Chapman grew up in large family in Sheridan. He became a ship captain on Lake Erie and was cited in Eber **Pettit's** memoirs for assisting in the transport of UGRR refugees. **Chapman** later retired to Versailles, NY, where his wife Maria **Parker Chapman** had inherited land. He then became one of several well known horticulturalists in the Versailles area. The monument to **Chapman** and his wife is a prominent feature at the Versailles Cemetery.

Truman Rowley Colman was born in Coventry CT on 9 November 1809. While he was still young, the family moved to Madison County NY. When he was 12 he went to work, first living with the Hon. Gerrit **Smith**, who arranged for him to become a clerk in Peterboro NY, in the store of **Smith's** brother-in-law, a Mr. **Backus**. In 1826 the store closed down and **Colman** found a position in Utica, then transferred to Rochester in 1828 and, finally, to Ellicottville in 1829. On 21 April 1831 he married Sophia M. **Beecher**. In 1832 he became a full partner in the store he had worked in, continuing until 1844 when he became a land agent for western New York. In 1847 he bought a large amount of the land himself and began selling parcels from it. In 1854 he relocated to Dunkirk NY, establishing the Lake Shore Bank with himself as President. **Colman** was the youngest of three brothers. The others were Harlan **Colman** and Shepard **Colman**, who also settled in Dunkirk in the 1850s. There is a possible connection between Truman **Colman's** wife, Sophia **Beecher** and Harriet W. **Beecher**, who was born in Batavia NY in 1816. She married Delos E. **Sill** in Ellicottville in 1833. He was an editor active in politics who published the *Cattaraugus Freeman* for 25 years. Originally called the *Cattaraugus Whig* in 1840, "for 21 years it was the vigorous exponent of the principles of the Whig party. About 1854 the name was changed to the *Cattaraugus Freeman*." It was owned by C. D. **Sill** and C. M. **Beecher** in 1864. The UGRR affiliation of T. R. **Colman** is cited in **Pettit**, Eber M., *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*, Willard **McKinstry**, Fredonia, New York, 1879.

William Cooper's UGRR affiliation is cited in Eber **Pettit's** memoirs. **Cooper** was a supervisor for the Town of Perrysburg about the same time that **Pettit** served as a justice of the peace. **Cooper** also served as a trustee of the Methodist Episcopal Church. According to the *History of Cattaraugus Co., New York* by L. H. **Everts** (J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1879), **Cooper** was born in Stillwater, NY in 1793 and came to Perrysburg in 1816. He was the founder of the first school district in the town, and helped supervise the construction of the town's roadways. He died in Perrysburg in 1872.

William Cranston's UGRR affiliation is also cited in Eber **Pettit's** memoirs, where **Cranston** is referenced as "Farmer **Cranston**." He was born in Rhode Island about 1803 and later resided with his parents and siblings in Sheridan. In 1850, he was living on Dennison Road with his wife, five children, and two other adults. In 1860, **Cranston** and his wife and children were still listed at the farm, although four of the children were then adults. The home still exists, and small portions of its Greek Revival style are still evident. **Cranston** was evidently a member of the Forestville Baptist Church, and he is listed as a representative of that church at regional Baptist meetings of the 1850s.

Phineas Crossman (or **Crosman**) was born in Ulster County NY, probably in Wawarsing, where there were many of that family name, in 1829. He is first found in Ellicott NY in 1850 as a blacksmith. He and his young wife, Caroline, were living with the Charles **Lener** (?) family. It was the early '50s that Catherine **Harris** was referring to when she said that "Phineas **Crossman** and others" helped escaped slaves reach "Africa" as that section of Jamestown was called, on their way to freedom. The **Crossmans** continued to live in Ellicott with or next door to his in-laws, the Charles **Price** family. By 1875 Phineas described himself as a real estate dealer, although for the 1880 Census he was a blacksmith once again. He was still alive in 1900 when he was living with his daughter and son-in-law, James and Ella **Weller**, in Jamestown NY. Crossman's UGRR affiliation is cited in Lockwood, C.R., "Interview with Catherine Harris," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

Ransom Curtis. One source says that Ransom B. **Curtis** was born on 20 August 1803 in Genesee NY, and another says Peru MA. His parents were Comfort and Priscilla A. (**Whitney**) **Curtis**. Comfort **Curtis** is listed in the 1800 Census of Peru but in Warsaw, Genesee County NY in the 1810 Census, where he remained until his death in 1831. Ransom **Curtis** married Elizabeth (Betsey) **Wells**. According to Young's *History of Chautauqua County*, p.228, Ransom **Curtis** contracted for or bought on Lot 39 in Busti in September 1822. Their son Sidney was born there in April 1829. Ransom **Curtis'** role as a conductor on the UGRR was described in a talk given by Eleazar **Green** at the Busti NY Centennial celebration on 18 August 1923, found in the **Gourdey** booklet. He described what he saw as a very young child when his father, also Eleazar **Green**, and their neighbor, Ransom **Curtis**, hid runaway slaves and then transported them on to the next station. A portion of the talk is quoted in **Phelan's And Why Not Every Man?** p.89. The censuses for 1850 and 1855 show the Ransom **Curtis** and Eleazar **Green** families as close neighbors in Busti. The 1854 wall map locates R. **Curtis** on Lot 39 on the east side of a road with "**Green & Co.**" across the road. Ransom **Curtis** died in Sugar Grove PA on 16 April 1876.

Mr. Denny. In her *And Why Not Every Man?* p.93, **Phelan** seems to quote from the *Cassadaga-Lily Dale Sesqui-Centennial Booklet* to the effect that "Mr. **Denney**" built a brick house on the Frisbee Road that was an UGRR station. This is probably a confusion between father and son, Allen **Denny** and Alonzo **Denny**. (**Phelan's** indented paragraph is by no means an exact quotation from the original.) In *The Fredonia Censor* of 17 May 1871, Henry C. **Frisbee** wrote about a conversation he had had a day or two earlier with Allen **Denny**, who had come to Sheridan NY in 1811 when he was 17 or 18. The family settled between the Main road and the lake "but subsequently settled on the main road adjoining the Cemetery where priest Spencer

lies buried. Mr. **Denny** removed in 1835, with two or three of the well known **Holmes** families, to Illinois, thirty miles south-west of Chicago, where he has ever since resided. He is on a visit to his son, Alonzo **Denny** late of Buffalo, who has just built a very fine brick house on the shore of Cassadaga Lake." **Frisbee** goes on to point out that Allen **Denny** was a zealous anti-slavery man and "kept an acknowledged underground railroad station for the accommodation of sojourners in quest of inalienable rights." There is an A. **Denny** shown on Lake Erie in Sheridan, not far from the homes of Havens **Brigham** and other likely anti-slavery persons. Since the brick house in Cassadaga was apparently built in the 1860s and 1870s, it could not have been part of the UGRR, or at least not for more than a year or two. It has even been rumored that there was a tunnel connecting the house to the D. A. V. & P. railroad across the road, but the D. A. V. & P. railroad was not built until 1870. Hence, if there was UGRR activity by the **Denny** family, it may have taken place in Sheridan at their farm and saw mill near Lake Erie.

G. W. Fenton, Jr. There were at least two George Washington **Fentons**. One, born about 1784, the father of Gov. Reuben E. **Fenton**, had settled in the Town of Carroll by 1810. (For the 1855 Census he reported he had resided there 45 years.) Another son, named George Washington **Fenton**, Jr. was born there on 9 February 1812. **Phalen's** source for the **Fenton** family's UGRR affiliation is Jewel **Conover's** *Nineteenth-Century Houses in Western New York*, p.150, which notes that the house on Ivory Road built by George Washington **Fenton** in 1833 has a "hidden scuttle-door to the attic [which] could be evidence of the truth of the story that the house was a station for the Underground." The Carroll section of the 1854 wall map shows homes of G. W. **Fenton** and G. W. **Fenton**, Jr. on the east and west sides of Warren Road, and a G. W. **Fenton**, Jr. home and farm at 542 Ivory Road. If **Conover** is correct, it is G. W. **Fenton**, Jr.'s house that is being referred to. **Pettit** does state, however, that there was a northerly route to his Versailles station leading from Warren, so the possibility of stations in the Frewsburg area is certainly plausible. George W. **Fenton**, Sr. died near Frewsburg on 3 March 1860. His son George W. **Fenton**, Jr. died on 22 March 1895.

Rev. Alonzo Frink. Alonzo **Frink**, the second child of Thomas and Sylvia (**Pendleton**) **Frink**, was born in 1799 in Springfield MA. (The **Frink** children were John, Alonzo, Loren, Sylvester, Thomas and Harvey.) The family settled in Madison County NY where Alonzo began a career as a school teacher in 1816. Around 1820 he married Charlotte \_\_\_\_\_ (?) and in 1821 he became a Baptist minister. **Young's** *History of Chautauqua County*, p.207, in reporting on an old settlers reunion at Forestville in September 1873 noted that "an appropriate prayer was offered by Rev. A. **Frink**, of Corry, Pa., who was an early resident of the town. His first sermon was preached in the old brick school-house in Forestville, since demolished." The 1820 Census finds Thomas , Thomas, Jr., Francis, and Loren **Frink** in Hanover. There is no entry for Alonzo **Frink**. **Pettit** states that **Frink** "kept a station on the U.G.R.R. in Chautauqua Co." and had a brother in Fredonia. Loren, Harvey and Thomas **Frink** were still all in Hanover at the 1840 Census. It was Loren, who was settled in Fredonia by 1850, whom Alonzo was visiting at the time of the incident **Pettit** described when he referred to Alonzo **Frink's** "station." Alonzo **Frink** was in Sheridan at the time of the 1840 Census, but the *Centennial History of the Fredonia Baptist Church*, p. 145, notes that he was the Moderator at the 1841 meeting of the Chautauqua Baptist Association in Stockton and in 1843 in Clear Creek. According to minutes of Baptist Association meetings,

**Frink** represented Frewsburg in 1847. He then served on the arrangements committee for the Erie Baptist Association meetings in Forestville, represented Clear Creek and Leon and along with his father, the Rev. Thomas **Frink**, and represented the Forestville Baptist Church, all in 1848. In 1849 he again represented Leon. The 1850 Census recorded him as living in Sullivan OH. By 1853 he had settled in Hanover. He was still there in 1855 when he represented Hanover Center and in 1856. In 1857 he represented Napoli, in 1858 Napoli and Dayton, in 1859 Perrysburg and in 1860 the Census found him in North Collins. In 1862 and 1863 he represented Cassadaga. At the time of the 1865 Census he was living in Portland, but by 1872 he had removed to Corry PA.

George H. Frost (1796 - 1872) settled within what is now known as the village of Cherry Creek in the spring of 1823, and the following compilation of comments about his life are excerpted from Chas. J. **Shults**, *Cherry Creek Illustrated: A History, 1900*. "**Frost** lived in the Village until about 1839, when he purchased a large farm situated in a pleasant valley about two miles northwest of the Village on the Fredonia road. His near neighbors were Anson **Newton**, Harvey **Putnam**, Ira B. **Turner** and Elkeny **Steward**. Mrs. **Frost** was born in the State of Rhode Island June 25, 1803, and died at Cherry Creek May 27, 1889, surviving him 17 years. Of their marriage twelve children were born. George H. **Frost** was a man of strong earnest conviction. Human slavery disturbed the peace and threatened the destruction of the Union. From the time Mr. **Frost** became old enough to take an interest in public affairs, he was uncompromisingly opposed to the institution of slavery. His entire being revolted at this monster. No subject of public concern affected him more intensely. He believed that this government founded on the equal rights of men could not long survive with slavery. His opposition to it was outspoken, earnest, and active. He early allied himself with the Abolition party, in fact when it required no small degree of moral courage to take a position in the ranks of that despised political sect. His great opportunities for usefulness to the cause, in his poverty in the wilderness of Western New York, were small compared to those of the leaders of the cause, but he belonged to, and for a long time was actively engaged in the services of the Underground Railroad so-called, and many a fugitive slave was assisted by him on his secret journey in his effort to escape bondage to Canada. In his house he sheltered and fed alike the traveler and the fugitive slave."

William Gray was born in Pennsylvania around 1791. He first appears in public records as the Secretary of the newly formed Erie County [Pennsylvania] Anti-Slavery Society in 1836, according to Nathaniel Willard **Russell's** "History of Erie County" (Handwritten document 1870), p.276. The same information is repeated in Samuel P. **Bates History of Erie County** Warner Beers & Co. Chicago IL 1884. Russell is given credit for a great deal of the history in **Bates'** introductory remarks. In addition to the 1836 reference where he is located as in Wayne Twp., he is also listed as one of the "station agents" in Erie. The 1850 and 1860 censuses also record him as living in Wayne Twp. By 1870, when he was 80, he and his wife were living in East Providence, Bedford Twp., PA.

Eleazar Green was born in Oneida NY in 1800. He was married to Sylvina \_\_\_\_\_ (?) Around 1847 the family moved to Busti NY. Their son Eleazar, Jr. was born around 1846. On 18 August 1923

the son gave a brief talk at the Busti Centennial celebration in which he described the activities of his father and their neighbor, Ransom **Curtis**, as conductors on the UGRR in Busti. Portions of the talk were quoted in **Phelan's And Why Not Every Man?** (She quotes accurately except for one change. Where **Green** wrote about his father driving overnight to reach Barcelona where there was a *rowboat* ready to depart for Canada, **Phelan** substitutes the word *boat*.) **Green** also remarked that "from conversations I have heard between my father and a man who, in my boyhood days was known as Uncle Ed **Wells**, I strongly suspect that he was an official upon that [UGRR] road." This seems to refer to Edmond **Wells** of Harmony NY although **Phelan** refers instead to a James **Wells** in Leon who carried runaway slaves from "**Wells Hill**" to the **Tuttle** farm in Portland. (This may be a confusion between the **Wells** station in North Harmony, and the **Wells** station in Leon. The town of Portland in Chautauqua County would have been a direct route north from the **Wells** station in North Harmony. However, traveling from Leon to Portland would have meant backtracking west by over 30 miles, a highly unlikely route except under rare and dire circumstances.) The 1854 map of Harmony, where Eleazar **Green** had moved by 1860, shows both E. **Wells** and J. **Wells** on Lot 7, Twp.2 in today's North Harmony. Eleazar **Green** the elder died in Harmony in October 1884.

David Hall, the son of Asa and Phoebe (**Foster**) **Hall**, was born in Thompson CT on 29 October 1798. On 28 December 1820 he married Persis **Loomis**. They were in Westfield by the time of the 1830 Census. The assessment rolls show him on Lot 25 with 36 acres. He worked as a blacksmith for many years. Persis died on 6 February 1844 and on 1 January 1849 he married Martha **Thwing** or **Twing**. By 1867 they were living in the village of Westfield on Lot 27. *The Fredonia Censor* of 21 December 1881 in noting his death in Westfield stated that "For many years his house was an 'underground railroad' station and many a panting fugitive slave he helped to liberty." The station must have been his house on Lot 25.

Harvey Hall. There were two men by that name, father and son. The father was born in CT about 1779, Harvey, Jr. in NY about 1812. One of these men is mentioned in church records in Ripley, NY. The minutes of Session of the Ripley Presbyterian Church in 1836 twice note that a committee looking into Harvey **Hall's** "case" had not seen him to interview him. The entry of 20 November 1837 records that from the committee's interview with him "they are somewhat encouraged that he would return to his duty and that no further evidence of his secreting persons escaping from justice has been obtained." Although it is not specified, his error may have been related to U.G.R.R. activity, although other Presbyterian congregations in Chautauqua County at this same time are thought to have been sympathetic to the anti-slavery movement. Since **Hall** remained in the church, it would seem that either he did not continue as a conductor or stationmaster after 1837, or he rallied other church members to his cause. Harvey **Hall** and Harvey **Hall**, Jr. are both found in the 1850 Census but only Harvey **Hall**, Jr. is listed in the 1855 and later censuses. Comparing the 1855 list with the 1854 map of Chautauqua County locates Harvey **Hall**, Jr. in Ripley across from the Methodist Church, which is rumored to have been sympathetic to the anti-slavery underground. The as yet unconfirmed UGRR affiliation of Harvey **Hall** is cited in **Phelan**, Helene C., *And Why Not Every Man? An account of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and the road to freedom in New York's Southern Tier*, Helene **Phelan**, Almond, New York, 1987.



Catherine Dickes Harris was born in 1809 on a farm near Meadville, PA. She later lived in a small frame house on Seventh Street that was just north of the Jamestown village as its boundaries were known before the Civil War. Many other African Americans lived near her. She was interviewed regarding her UGRR activity by **Lockwood**. Among her other accomplishments was the founding of the Blackwell Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. She died in 1907.

William S. Hedges was born in Oneida NY around 1815 possibly to Jonathan and Betsy (**Sears**) **Hedges**. He is first found in the 1850 Census in Ellicott with his wife, Theda and daughter Janet. He is listed as a physician, in a later census as "homeopathic." In 1850 they were living in the household of Elihu G. **Cook**, also a physician, his wife, Salina and son Elliot. The **Hedges** remained in Ellicott through 1875. When he died in July 1878, his obituary said he "had lived in Sinclairville for some years," which may refer to the time before they moved to Ellicott. **Hedges** UGRR affiliation is cited in **Lockwood**, C.R., "Interview with Catherine Harris," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

Rossiter P. Johnson. An account in the *Westfield Republican* of 2 January 1924, written by Mrs. Amoretta **Fraser**, recalls her family's move into a new house at 42 Clinton Street in Westfield NY in 1840. Their "cottage" was next door to the large home of Rossiter P. **Johnson**, a lawyer. It was in the spring of 1841 that she was sent to the **Johnson** home on an errand and saw some twenty or thirty escaped slaves being fed by Mrs. **Johnson**. The clear implication was that Mrs. **Johnson's** husband was complicit in having his house function as a station on the U.G.R.R. It was in 1841 that Rossiter P. **Johnson**, along with fellow Whigs Austin **Pierce** and E. F. **Warren**, was elected to the NY State Assembly where he served under Governor **Seward**. **Johnson** apparently moved west soon after his term was up. He was a member of the Sacramento CA Common Council in 1853 and then Mayor in 1854.

Henry H. Jones was born ca. 1827, probably in Kiantone NY. His father and mother, Benjamin and Nancy **Jones**, had moved from Vermont to what is now Kiantone in 1820, according to **Young's History of Chautauqua County**. However, the Holland Land Co. records show Benjamin **Jones** contracting for Lot 4, Twp.9, Range 2 in December 1813, and Lots 23 and 28 in Twp.1, Range 10 on 30 May 1814. In 1816 he added Lot 16, Twp.6, Range 10 and in 1821 Lot 1, Twp.6, Range 11. Henry was the youngest son in the family. The other brothers were Austin, Orville, and Loren. By 1850 Henry was married to Abigail and they were living with his parents in Kiantone, where they remained on the family farm thereafter. **Young** says about Benjamin **Jones**, "He was one of the earliest and most active friends of the temperance cause, and highly esteemed for his integrity and moral worth." The UGRR affiliation of Henry H. **Jones** is cited in **Price**, Albert S., *History of Chautauqua County and its People*, Vol. I, John P. **Downs** and Fenwick Y. **Hedley**, Ed., American Historical Society, 1921.

Levi Jones was born in VT on 15 May 1802. He, his wife Susan, and their children are first found in Busti NY in the 1850 Census. In the talk he gave on the UGRR in 1934, William S. **Bailey** noted that he had interviewed one of their sons, Edward **Jones**, then living in Evanston IL. Edward was born in 1845 and described an incident he witnessed when he was 7, in 1852. That was the

incident in which the fugitive slave, Sam **Smith**, who worked for Levi **Jones**, was helped to flee to Canada by **Jones** and Silas **Shearman**. The L. **Jones** home can be seen in Lot 12 on the Busti map in the 1854 wall map on the same road but somewhat north of the homes of W. **Storum** and J. B. **Broadhead**.

Dexter A. Knowlton was born in Herkimer NY *ca.* 1813. He and his wife, Eveline, lived for a time in Stockton NY. In 1839 they moved to Freeport IL where he made his fortune dealing in real estate. In the spring of 1855 they returned to Westfield where he built a "palatial residence." The 1860 Census described him as a "retired merchant." He and his wife were visiting in New Orleans when he died unexpectedly on 10 March 1876. The "Knowlton" citation for the UGRR in Chautauqua County appears in **Pettit**, Eber M., *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*, Willard **McKinstry**, Fredonia, New York, 1879.

Oliver Lee. Phelan, p.95, states that Jewel **Conover** cites C. S. **Shults** on George H. **Frost** using his 1845 home as a station. The **Frost** reference can be verified. However, then **Phelan** goes on to say, "In Silver Creek, the Holman **Vail** House built in 1835 and the Oliver **Lee** House built in 1828 were also cited by **Conover**." **Conover** does discuss the architecture of those two houses, but makes no mention of any UGRR connections. Therefore, confirming information with regard to Oliver **Lee's** UGRR affiliation is needed.

John Little was an African American first recorded in Arkwright in 1855. (The census in those days referred to "black" or "mulatto.") He was born in Vermont *ca.* 1804. His wife, Harriet, 41 in 1855, was born in New Jersey. Both had been in Arkwright since 1838 and all their children were born in Chautauqua County. They were still in Arkwright in 1870. One of their daughters, Loraine, had married Henry **Mackorter**, who had been in the Union Navy since April 1864. The **Littles'** son Pat, 24 in 1865, was also in the Navy "promoted cpl." John **Little's** UGRR affiliation is cited in **Pettit**, Eber M., *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*, Willard **McKinstry**, Fredonia, New York, 1879.

Aaron Lyon (who owned the farm where the **Denny** house was built) was born in Buckland MA on 1 July 1789. He married Armilla **Alden** of Ashfield MA. Around 1819 they came to the Town of Stockton where he farmed. They are found there in 1850, 1855 and 1860. However, by 1865 they were living in the household of their son Franklin S. **Lyon**, still in the Town of Stockton. Armilla must have died soon after, since Aaron is found in 1870 living in his son's household but in Morgan WV. He died there in mid-July 1879. His obituary describes him as an early settler of Pomfret NY, holding various offices in Cassadaga over the years. He lived "on the west side of Cassadaga Lake." "[He was] a brother of Mary **Lyon**, founder of Holyoke Female Seminary ." Aaron **Lyon** is not mentioned in known sources in relationship to UGRR activity, but it is on a portion of his farm that the legendary **Denny** house was constructed in the 1860s or very early 1870s. Of course, the UGRR did not operate beyond the very early 1860s. Although the **Denny** home is cited in **Phelan** and other places as a legendary UGRR station, there is a chance that it was actually one of the two **Lyon** homes on this farm that was the station. Those two homes are Greek Revival in style, rendering them more likely to have been constructed sometime between the late 1830s and the mid-1850s, the period of the UGRR.

**Benjamin Miller.** Albert S. **Price** identified “Benjamin **Miller** of Stockton” as one of those assisting in UGRR activities in the Jamestown area. His sources were articles in the *Jamestown Evening Journal* between 21 July 1896 and 14 July 1910. **Phelan**, p.93, notes that “According to Gladys **Carlson**, two [UGRR] stops before reaching Cassadaga were the Benjamin **Miller** sawmill between Bear and Cassadaga Lake, [and] Joseph **Sackett’s** sugar camp, then from Cassadaga to Fredonia.” Gladys **Carlson** may have been the Cassadaga historian, although she is not otherwise identified. Benjamin **Miller** was born in CT *ca.*1787. The 1855 Census shows him living in Stockton, and he is entered in the 1857 assessment roll for Stockton, although he died there on 19 August 1857. The 1854 map shows his home on Lot 39 on the road southeast of Bear Lake. There are no references to a sawmill and none is marked on the 1854 map.

**Joseph B. Nessel** was born in Saratoga NY in 1800. In 1830 he was living in Manlius NY but he had moved to Ellington by 1833. He and his brother were involved there in manufacturing from the 1830s. In 1853 he bought the Jamestown *Herald*, moving it to Ellington as *The Ellington Herald*. **Downs’ History** reports that “he continued its publication until 1856, when it was discontinued. . . . In those days Mr. **Nessel** was a strong anti-slavery man and was closely identified with what was then called the ‘Underground railroad’.” He is found in Ellington in the 1855 Census but his name and location are not included on the 1854 map, perhaps because he resided within the village itself. Varenus **Page** was living in Ellicott NY in 1900 about the time he was interviewed by C. R. **Lockwood** for the article on the UGRR that was published in 1902. **Page** explained, “Yes, I was interested in the ‘underground railroad’ in 1851-2 and 3 and thereabouts. . . . I then resided in Ellington. . . . I took three [refugees] at one time from Mr. **Nessel’s**, my team was got ready and the slaves got in the carriage and were covered up with blankets; I drove towards Sinclairville. . . .” **Lockwood’s** article is cited as a source by A. S. **Price** for his UGRR chapter of 1921.

**Varanes Page** and **Surveyor Page.** The UGRR affiliation of Varanes Page is cited in Bailey, William S., “The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York,” *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, William **Doty**, Ed., Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940. There were two men name Varanus **Page**, father and son. The names have been spelled in a variety of ways. Both had wives named Adeline. The elder **Page** was born in New Hampshire. **Young’s History of Chautauqua County**, p.635, says he was from Vermont, which may mean he had lived in Vermont before coming to Chautauqua County *ca.*1793. **Young** says he settled on Lot 12 in Poland NY in 1818. In October 1825 he bought Lot 12 in Ellington NY where he was in 1830 and 1840. In 1842 he moved to Conneaut PA where he died. The younger Varanes **Page** was born *ca.* 1827 in Ellington. When **Lockwood** did his interviewing for the 1902 article, “surveyor **Page**” said he was then 73 years old. The only Page in the Ellington area around 1900 was Varenus **Page** b. Feb. 1827, 75 years old. By 1853 he had settled in Poland NY. The 1855 Census lists him as an “engineer,” the 1860 as a “farmer,” and the 1865 and 1870 censuses as a “carpenter.” **Young’s History** (p.635) says he was residing in Kennedy (in 1875) and was a justice of the peace there. The younger Varanes **Page** was most likely the “surveyor **Page**” interviewed by Lockwood and also the “Varanes **Page**” cited in **Bailey**, William S., “The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York,” *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, William **Doty**, Ed., Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940.

Alvin Plumb was born in Paris NY on 6 September 1802. He moved to Fredonia NY in 1816 with his elder brothers Joseph and Ralph **Plumb**, who opened a store in the village. The *Buffalo Gazette* of November 1816 reported that J. & R. **Plumb** had a “new store at Canadaway Village,” the item dated 21 October 1816. From 1820 Alvin clerked in Rochester and then Geneva NY, where he also attended the Geneva Academy. He resettled in Jamestown NY and by 1824 was in “the mercantile business” as well as “the milling business 4 miles below Jamestown.” In 1827 he formed a stock company which built and launched a side-wheel steamer, the Chautauqua, which made its first trip to Mayville on 4 July 1828. In 1832 he married Mary Ann **Davis** of Westfield. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1833 and was County Clerk for Chautauqua in 1843-1846. (His obituary says 1853-1856.) After that he moved to Westfield where he bought and sold land. He was Town Supervisor there in 1848 and 1852. **Young’s History of Chautauqua County** (p.609) says, He has been an active friend of the temperance and anti-slavery causes.” **Plumb** died on 13 May 1877. His UGRR affiliation is cited in **Bailey**, William S., “The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York,” *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, William **Doty**, Ed., Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940.

Linus Humphrey Pratt was born on 6 April 1810 to John Burroughs and Hannah (**Stedman**) **Pratt**. That is probably the John **Pratt** in Cambridge NY in the 1810 Census. Linus married Julia **Catlin** or **Caitlin**. In 1834 he “built a cabin in Sugar Grove [PA]” and “brought his wife from Gorham NY.” “They ran an Underground railroad to assist fleeing slaves.” The couple can be found there in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. The Sugar Grove historian reports that Billy **McCoo**, a member of the group with whom captured fugitive slave Harrison **Williams** arrived, was harbored by **Pratt**, who followed **Williams** and the slave catchers to Buffalo, NY and stayed for the trial in front of the Federal Commissioner. Linus served in the Free Democracy Party County Committee, a party once of only 5 individuals, and in 1856 he was elected one of the heads of the County Vigilance Committee at the meeting of the Radical Abolition meeting in Sugar Grove. Linus **Pratt** died in Sugar Grove on 9 March 1898. His UGRR affiliation was cited in **Bailey**, William S., “The Underground Railroad in Southwestern New York,” *The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, William **Doty**, Ed., Lewis Historical Pub. Co., New York, 1940.

Addison A. Price was born in Cortland NY in 26 June 1814. His father Charles **Price** was born in New Jersey, his mother Mary (**Neff**) **Price** in New York State. The 1835 Pension List for Cortland County NY includes a Stephen and a Timothy **Price**. Addison **Price** is consistently identified as a carpenter or a carpenter/joiner throughout his life. He was residing in Ellicott NY no later than 1839 and married Charlotte **Green** of the Town of Chautauque (originally from Vermont) on 5 January 1840. They resided in Ellicott well into the 1870s and in Jamestown thereafter. Charlotte died at some time after 1880 and Addison married again by 1887. He and his second wife, Cynthia A. **Price**, she was 59, were living in Jamestown’s 1<sup>st</sup> Ward in 1900. Addison died 21 June 1901. His UGRR affiliation was cited in **Lockwood**, C.R., “Interview with Catherine Harris,” *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

Wilson Andrews Price was born in Cortland NY on 24 February 1816 to Charles and Mary (**Neff**) **Price**. He was a younger brother to Addison A. **Price**. Like Addison, he is consistently listed as a

carpenter or carpenter/joiner, and he too moved to Ellicott NY by 1839. Around 1841 he married Amy Elizabeth **Butler**, originally from Vermont. They are found in Ellicott from 1850 on and in Jamestown's 1<sup>st</sup> Ward by 1900. Wilson A. **Price** died in Jamestown on 24 December 1905. His UGRR affiliation was cited in **Price**, Albert S., *History of Chautauqua County and its People*, Vol. I, John P. **Downs** and Fenwick Y. **Hedley**, Ed., American Historical Society, 1921.

Joseph Sackett and his brother David were early settlers in Stockton. Both took up land there in October 1816, Joseph on Lot 14-4-12. When the Town of Stockton was established, at the first meeting on 3 April 1821, Joseph **Sackett** was made one of the two Overseers of the Poor. He is recorded in the town in the 1820, 1830, and 1840 censuses. He died there on 18 September 1849. A. S. **Price** lists Joseph **Sackett** near Cassadaga as one of those involved with the UGRR. **Phelan**, p. 93, refers to a Gladys **Carlson**, who stated that "two stops before reaching Cassadaga were the Benjamin **Miller** saw mill between Bear and Cassadaga Lake, Joseph's **Sackett's** sugar camp, then from Cassadaga to Fredonia." The location of the sugar camp remains a mystery at this time.

Silas Shearman was born in Tiverton RI on 11 December 1803 to Silas and Elizabeth (**Perry**) **Shearman**. He moved with his parents to Cazenovia NY in 1808, attended the commons schools and was apprenticed to a harness maker and saddler. In December 1822 he began working for William **Knight** in Jamestown NY. He was in the military company that greeted LaFayette at Fredonia in 1824, and in 1825 Silas is said to have come to Fredonia (when he was 21), but in 1827 he returned to Jamestown and opened a harness and saddler shop at the corner of Main and Third streets. One of his later apprentices was John P. **Shearman**. On 29 March 1829 he married Mary C. **Marsh**, originally from Vermont. They lived their entire married life in Ellicott. An online post says he "was a democrat until the close of the Polk administration [1849], when he became an Abolitionist, and acted as a conductor on the underground Railroad, assisting slaves to reach Canada. After the Civil War, Mr. **Shearman** was a Republican, he was also a relentless foe of the liquor traffic and an advocate of equal suffrage." An online article about his home as an Underground Railroad station said, "**Shearman** was what is termed a rabid abolitionist at a time when active opposition to slavery was most unpopular. In the 1850s he became a conductor of the 'underground railroad' and his home was the principle station in Jamestown. It was not uncommon for him to come down in the morning and find his kitchen filled with escaping slaves who were brought to Jamestown during the night and directed to his home. He would feed them and hid[e] them during the day in his barn on Stillers Alley and then arrange for their transportation to the next station, often in the village of Ellington." "He was also active in the cause of temperance. As a result of his decided views upon both temperance and the slavery question, he lost many friends." Silas **Shearman** died in Jamestown on 3 September 1891. His UGRR affiliation was cited in **Lockwood**, C.R., "Interview with Catherine Harris," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

William and Sarah Storum were African Americans living in Busti near the **Miller** farm. Carolyn, one of the **Storum** daughters, was married to the Rev. J. W. **Loguen**, and Catherine, another daughter, was married to Lewis G. **Clarke**. **Loguen** and **Clarke** were both well known abolitionists. The **Storum** family's UGRR activity was cited in **Downs/Price** and elsewhere.

Hiram Evelyn Thayer was born in Ware MA on 24 August 1798, the seventh child of Jedediah and Rachel **Thayer**. He married Maryette **Eames** of Carroll NY on 10 April 1828. **Young's History** (1875), p.246, says he came to Jamestown in 1819 and to Carroll in 1820. After his marriage he took part of Lot 39 in 1829 "where he has resided till the present time [1875]." Phelan, p.87, stated that "the **Thayer** home also on Ivory Road had a false fireplace on the second floor with a space large enough to contain slaves with an opening below." The 1854 map shows a house on the south side of the road in Lot 39 marked "H. **Thayer**" (at or near 1027 Ivory Road). **Thayer's** UGRR affiliation was recorded in notes found in the attic of the home by Charles **Oberg** and published by June T. **Richards** in the *Carroll Sesquicentennial Booklet*, 1975.

Holman Vail: This is probably Hollam **Vail** who is mentioned twice in **Young's History of Chautauqua County** (pp.409 and 411). Both entries are in the Hanover NY section. Hollam is mentioned in connection with his brother John **Vail** who was a lake boat captain at Silver Creek. Hollam and John **Vail** are said to have built a saw mill in Silver Creek and later, in 1829 or 1830, Hollam **Vail** and James **Howard** built a grist mill, a carding machine and a cloth-dressing establishment. Holman **Vail's** name is found in Jewel **Conover's** book, p.39, illustrating a Greek Revival home built in Silver Creek in 1835 by "master ship builder" Holman **Vail**. His as yet unconfirmed UGRR affiliation is cited in Phelan.

Benjamin Franklin VanDusen was born in Perry NY on 3 January 1815 to John **VanDusen**, Jr. and Mary (**Forbes**) **VanDusen**. He is said to have come to Jamestown in 1842 where he worked as a cabinet maker. He and his wife, Mehitable (**Lovell**) **VanDusen**, who was born in Massachusetts, can be found in Ellicott in 1855 and at least through 1875. **Dilley's Biographical and Portrait Cyclopedia** (p.26) says, "He is a republican in politics and a member of the Baptist church." There are **VanDusens** as well in Sugar Creek PA in this same time period. Frank **Van Dusen's** UGRR affiliation is cited in **Lockwood**, C.R., "Interview with Catherine **Harris**," *The Evening Journal*, Jamestown, New York, 1902, reprinted in *The Post Journal*, Jamestown, New York, February 13, 2011.

Luther Webster was born in Columbia CT around 1825. His wife, Mariah **Whitney**, was also born in CT. They are first found in Charlotte NY in the 1850 Census. (The 1855 Census reported that Luther **Webster** and his mother had resided in Charlotte for ten years, since 1845. His wife had been there for six years.) The obituary of their son Charles states that he came to Fredonia with his family in 1856, although their name does not appear in the assessment rolls until 1858. In 1859 Luther **Webster** is recorded as having a house on a ¼ acre lot on Hamlet Street (22 Spring Street). Luther **Webster's** obituary reports that he first engaged in the boot and shoe trade with L. D. **Cole**, who had had a shoe shop on West Main Street since 1839. **Phelan**, p.93 states that "in Fredonia, the Luther **Webster** house, built in 1845, is also mentioned by Jewel **Conover**, in her book *Nineteenth Century Houses* as an underground stop." It is not clear if **Phelan** means that **Webster** was involved with the UGRR, or that the house he later owned had been a station. In any case, although **Conover** does discuss the architecture of the house, she makes no mention of any UGRR connections.

Ed Wells: This is probably Edward (usually given as Edmond) **Wells**, a wagon-maker. He was born in Washington NY in 1792. He and his wife, Jane, can be found in Harmony NY from 1819

onward. The 1870 Census of Harmony lists Jane living in the family of a son (?) Lewis **Wells**, but the 1875 Census lists him (age 86) and wife Jane (age 82) at the home of son George. Edward was still listed as a farmer and wagon maker. **Young's History**, p. 434, located him on Lot 7 in Harmony in 1826, adding that he "is said to be the only early settler living on the road between Mayville and Jamestown on this side of the lake." The 1854 map located the home and the wagon shop on Lot 7-2-15. The assessment rolls for 1857-1863 record George **Wells** with 82 acres in the northeast part of Lot 7 in (North) Harmony. **Young** also notes that "George lives on the homestead with his father." His UGRR affiliation is cited in **Gourdey**, Erma, et al, *Busti Centennial Booklet*, 1923.

James Wells was born in VT around 1803. He is first recorded in Leon, Cattaraugus County, as a Road District Overseer in 1833. He and his family remained in Leon at least through 1865. His involvement in UGRR activities was attested to by a stepson of Joseph B. **Nessel**. W.S.**Bailey** in his UGRR article, p.73, noted, "The Ellington station was conducted by Joseph B. **Nessel**, Mr. **Stafford's** stepfather, at his home in Ellington village. Mr. **Stafford** well remembered the frequent signal at the door during the night and of hearing his stepfather open the door and admit the conductor and his party. With the curiosity of a boy, young **Stafford** often stole down to see the strange visitors whom he recalls as extremely shy and in constant dread of capture. After the slaves had been fed by Mr. **Stafford's** mother [Polly **Stafford Nessel**], Mr. **Nessel** would immediately harness his horses and the same night drive on to the next station which was conducted by James **Wells** two miles north of Leon Center. The Leon station was in a more secluded location and the slaves could be secreted there during the day with greater security. Mr. **Stafford's** only knowledge of the route beyond Leon was that it led to Buffalo." There were three **Stafford** stepsons living in the **Nessel** family in the 1850s and 1860s, Austin, Joseph and Martin. **Bailey's** source was Austin **Stafford**. Earlier in his article, **Bailey** described other UGRR activities in Ellington, adding, "This statement was confirmed by Austin H. **Stafford**, whose memory of the activities of the Ellington Underground Railroad station was very clear."

Clinton Winsor: The only Clinton **Winsor** in the Jamestown NY area seems to be Clinton B. **Winsor**, son of Samuel B. and Ann (**Sears**) **Winsor**. However, he was only born in 1847. He can be found in the Samuel B. **Winsor** family in Ellicott in 1855 through 1865. It is more likely that he has been confused with his father, or that there is another Clinton **Winsor** who used a different first name. His as yet unconfirmed UGRR affiliation is cited in **Phelan**.

Edward Work. Dr. Elial **Foote** wrote a biographical account of Edward **Work**, whom he had known for 40 years as a friend and a medical patient. **Work** was born in Montgomery Twp. PA on 3 December 1773. He read law and then moved to Meadville around 1798. On 1 August 1807 with his friend Dr. Thomas R. **Kennedy** he bought some 1200 acres around the outlet of Chautauqua Lake. In the fall of 1807 and spring of 1808 he "erected his hewed log block house on the north side of the outlet, a little northeast of the mill, where he resided until he erected the frame house where he died. About the year 1836, he sold his mills and real estate at Worksburg, except his family residence, and a few acres of contiguous land, and retired from the bustle of active life, having a competence for himself and family. His declining years were spent in retirement, mingling but little with society." Edward **Work's** connection with the UGRR was suggested by W. S. **Bailey**, p.73. "It is reported that there was an Underground Railroad

station also at Falconer. Bert **Mosher** relates that when in 1860 his father moved into the old Edward **Work** house, which formerly stood on the corner now [1934] occupied by the Falconer Bank, there was a room on the second floor, the only access to which was a very skillfully concealed entrance from above. The general supposition has been that this concealed room was used for secreting slaves who came to the place as an Underground Railroad station. The existence of this station, however, cannot be definitely established."

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