The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishes slavery:

The first slaves arrive in Lancaster County.

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, blacks face new punishments for crime:

The Underground Railroad was neither a harbor nor a safe haven:

For thousands of times and women facing the oppression of slavery, the Underground Railroad became their lifeline, their passage to freedom. Known alternatively as the Freedom Line, the Lightning Train, the Freedom Train, Underground Rails, or the Tracteck Trails, the Underground Railroad wasn’t a system of rails or trains but a loose organization of freed slaves and abolitionists—people—who harbored fugitives often at great peril to themselves. The federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 made the assistance of a fugitive in a crime, and anti-slave sentiment made life unsafe for free blacks and white sympathizers alike. The entire movement was shrouded in mystery, but the place of its birth has been alternately Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.

As many as 50,000 to 100,000 men and women escaped to freedom using the Underground Railroad network, but the exact number will never be known—many of the ledgers documenting their flight were destroyed. Oral histories and some records did exist, however, and those accounts give us an idea of how free men made their way north. Songs like Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, Brother Brothers Go to the Promised Land, and More in the Waters and Other Osiris’ Goodly work as directions for fugitives to follow. Underground Railroad conductors and guides worked tirelessly as conductors and stations on the Underground Railroad in Lancaster County. They guided, protected, and cleverly concealed escaping slaves under furniture and in trunks, orange-shod, secret passages, and a variety of other hiding places.

Stephen Smith (1795-1873)

Stephen Smith, a black man, began his career as an indentured servant.

The People

You’ve heard the words to this traditional spiritual quote again and again.

William Whipper (1804 - 1876)

William Whipper was a conductor on the Underground Railroad. After the Civil War, she continued her fight for freedom. By that time, he had moved to Columbia, South Carolina, a city of 10,000 people.

Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868)

Thaddeus Stevens was an attorney who settled in Lancaster City in 1842 and operated a law office at 47-49 South Queen Street. In addition to his success in business, Stevens also fought for abolition, and contributed financially to freeing activities. His economic means and anti-slavery sentiments did not guarantee that he became the target of racism in 1842-1855. In 1858, Smith was ordained as an African Methodist Episcopal minister in Columbia. He left Columbia for Philadelphia, but not without leaving his mark as a humanitarian and statesman.

Lynne Hamilton Smith (1831 - 1884)

Smith, a real woman, became “Thaddeus Stevens’” stewardess after her death. She lived in a small house at the rear of Stevens’ Hotel in Philadelphia with assistants to care for her. Although Stevens’ Hotel was the site of many conventions, conventions and gatherings devoted to the abolition of slavery.

Credits/References

The following individuals contributed to the research and development of this guide: Dr. Louise Barnett, Cliff Edmond, Hillary Green, Dr. Leroy Hopkins, Tom Johnson, Pat Omicioli, Alicia Pierce, Dr. V. Funmi Kennedy, Dr. Shirley Turpin Parham, Bud Rettew, Gwendolyn Winfree, the Lancaster County Planning Commission. Recommended readings: Margaret Shaw Beale, Rebecca of Christmas, Charles Brockden, The Underground Railroad, Robert E. Wright, Changed Paths, Hidden Rails, Hidden Keys, John R. Vileman, The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania, and Phillip S. Klein, America’s Hidden History: African-American History Revealed, and the Lancaster County Historical Society.

Heritage Lancaster County Heritage is a partnership between the County of Lancaster, the historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, and the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau. Created in 1998, the goals of Lancaster County Heritage are to (1) enhance community pride in the Pennsylvania Dutch Heritage while providing desirable economic opportunities and benefits, and (2) to provide a diversity of heritage experiences for both residents and tourists.
Columbia, situated on the Susquehanna River across from York and near the Maryland border, was ideally located as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Its industrious and burgeoning free black population also made the town an excellent place for escaping fugitives to settle in. Although relatively small, Columbia’s white residents erupted in violence. White mobs beat several black men, terrorized families, and destroyed their homes. Although four white men were tried for treason, they were acquitted and released without paying restitution. The black community came to understand that it was not going to be protected by the laws of white citizens, and black vigilance groups, like William Parker’s, emerged to protect the rights of African-Americans.

**Columbia**

**Zercher’s Hotel and Tavern**

24 West Market Street, Columbia, 717-682-3700

**Mt. Bethel Cemetery**

Corner of Bethel and Cherry Streets, Columbia

**Bethel A.M.E. Church**

415 East Strawberry Street, Lancaster, 717-394-3811

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was active in the aid of fugitives throughout the North and the Lancaster Bethel A.M.E., located at 717-396-8381, played a crucial role in the Underground Railroad network.

**Lydia Hamilton**

She was home to slave self-protection groups and refugee societies that protected fugitives from masters or their agents. Lydia Hamilton was one of the first women in what would become the Underground Railroad movement.

**Thaddeus Stevens**

He worked for the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and fought for African-Americans’ right to vote.

**Mr. Bethel Cemetery (Forter’s Field)**

Corner of Bethel and Cherry Streets, Columbia

This center portion of the cemetery was reserved for the burial of African-Americans who lived in the Columbia area, many of whom served in the Civil War. The African-Americans’ graves often provide a window into the lives of their families and community.

The Underground Railroad could never be measured by numbers. It must be measured by its effect on a nation. The people, both black and white, who helped you, committed an act of civil disobedience and open resistance to the spiteful Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and an act of treason. They risked their lives and livelihoods to keep fugitives safe.

**Legend**

- **Other Underground Railroad Site**
- **Lancaster County Heritage Resource Sites with this designation meet the architectural guidelines and criteria of Lancaster County Heritage Sites.**
- **Routes to freedom**
- **Legend**
- **Lancaster City**
- **The Pilgrim’s Pathway**
- **Zion Hill Cemetery**

Columbia was home to slave self-protection groups and refugee societies that protected fugitives from masters or their agents. Lydia Hamilton, Thaddeus Stevens, and Bethel A.M.E. Church provided assistance on the Underground Railroad by sending fugitives to larger cities and other large cities.

**With Mr. Bethel Cemetery**

The city was home to slave self-protection groups and refugee societies that protected fugitives from masters or their agents. Lydia Hamilton, Thaddeus Stevens, and Bethel A.M.E. Church provided assistance on the Underground Railroad by sending fugitives to larger cities.

**Shreiner’s Cemetery**

Corner of Chestnut and Mulberry Streets, Lancaster

This is the burial site of Thaddeus Stevens, a tireless advocate for the rights of African-Americans, both as an abolitionist and as a legislator. He worked for the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and fought for African-Americans’ right to vote.