

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SANDUSKY WALKING TOUR

While gazing across Sandusky Bay at a world class amusement park or watching pleasure craft glide serenely across the water while standing in Sandusky's Facer Park, we easily forget the active role the city's waterfront played in the operation of the Underground Railroad well over a century and a half earlier.

WALKING TOUR DIRECTIONS

Because the sites on the Underground Railroad Walk are spread over a fairly wide area, some visitors may choose to drive to the sites that interest them. Start here: Park in the Erie County Parking Garage – NW Corner of Columbus and W. Washington Row. Head south on Columbus Ave. to West Washington Row. Head west on Washington Row to:



LUCAS & HARRIET BEECHER 215 W Washington Row

Beecher represented Benjamin Johnson, a fugitive slave who arrived in Sandusky during the 1830's. Beecher won Johnson's freedom by arguing that Johnson was not the property of the plaintiff because the purchase was made in Ohio, which was a free state. Johnson then became a free resident of Sandusky. Harriet Beecher Stow wove the city into her widely popular Uncle Tom's Cabin storyline, released in 1852.



BEATTY CHURCH SE corner of Washington & Jackson Sts

On June 23, 1835 S G Wilson was to deliver three lectures on the

subject of slavery at the Methodist Meeting House. Amid petitions and threats, Sandusky's mayor, John Beatty, was determined that the lectures should be given. Wilson was allowed to give two lectures; then he was barred from the

Meeting House. Mayor Beatty promptly withdrew his membership in the church and formed a new Methodist Church known as the Beatty Church which stood on this site.

Continue west on W Washington Row and cross Jackson St. Turn left and then take an immediate right heading west on West Washington St to Decatur. Turn left to:



SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH

315 Decatur St

One of the most active stations in the Sandusky Underground Railroad network was the Second Baptist Church. It was founded as Zion Baptist Church in 1849 by a group of former slaves and freeborn Blacks. Just prior to the Civil War, the church was organized at its present site under the name First Regular Anti-Slavery Baptist Church.



JOHN & SAMUEL IRVINE HOUSE 320-322 Lawrence

The Irvine brothers lived in this double house, and regularly provided aid to escapes slaves. At one point they took possession of a coffin, which later contained a runaway slave.

Continue south on Decatur to Adams St, Walk east on Adams to:



FOLLETT HOUSE 404 Wayne St

Oran Follett, who was the publisher of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, resided here. Eliza, Oran's second wife, was very sympathetic to escaping slaves. According to Eliza's granddaughter, "No one knows how many slaves she concealed in the basement...or out in the woodshed. She warmed, fed and clothed them, then aided them in their escape across Lake Erie to Canada."



JOSEPH M ROOT HOUSE

231 E Adams St
Joseph Root was a radical abolitionist and was Sandusky's Mayor

in 1832 and 1833. It has long been believed that his was a "safe house" along the Underground Railroad.



HENRY MERRY HOUSE

330 E Adams St
Henry Merry was a builder who often employed those who had

escaped from slavery until they were able to head to Canada. Fugitives from slavery faced life threatening challenges from slave owners, slave catchers, hostile Northerners, and the elements.



RUSH R SLOANE HOUSE 403 E Adams St

During the 1850's Rush Sloane was a leading abolitionist in Ohio. In 1852, he defended seven men escaping slavery. The men were released, but one of the former slave owners, sued Sloane in the U.S. District Court in Columbus.

Continue walking east and turn north on Franklin to E Washington St Turn right (east):



GEORGE BARNEY HOUSE

422 E Washington
George Barney one of the "conductors" on the Underground Railroad in the

Sandusky area, and was Sandusky's best known abolitionist.



CAPTAIN THOMAS MCGEE HOUSE

536 E Washington
Sandusky was as important as the ports of Toledo,

Ashtabula, and Cleveland for Underground Railroad travel. Captain Thomas McGee, who lived in the house, was a master of several sloops and schooners on Lake Erie.

Cross E Washington and head west on south side of East Washington St to Hancock St. Turn right (south) to Facer Park.



FACER PARK S side of Hancock & Water Sts

In 2005, a group of young civic leaders in Sandusky initiated an

effort to recognize the city's role in the Underground Railroad. Facer Park, on the city's waterfront, was chosen as the location for a sculpture and related educational displays. Over 50 local organizations, businesses and individuals were involved with the project. The park was dedicated on October 9, 2007. Created by local artist Susan Schultz, the sculpture is a symbolic representation of fearless people escaping the chains of slavery.

FACER PARK ITEMS OF INTEREST

SANDUSKY DOCKS – In the 1850's the increase in railroad service enabled more fugitives to take actual trains to Sandusky where they transferred to steamships.

CONFEDERATE PRISON – From 1862 to 1865, the United States operated a prison for Confederate officers on Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay, only about two miles from downtown Sandusky.

JOSIAH HENSON – Josiah Henson explains in his autobiography how he and his family escaped passing through the area a few miles to the west of Sandusky, and getting on a ship in Sandusky Bay.

FRANCIS DRAKE PARISH – Parish was originally a bitter enemy of the fugitive slaves. As a result of a court case, Parish became an Abolitionist, saying "Yes ... I did prosecute them, but the Lord opened my eyes, and I intended to make up for those acts." And he did.

Head west on Water St to:



C C KEECH WAREHOUSE
231 E Water St

Christopher Columbus (C C) Keech was among the "earliest and earnest

friends" of the Underground Railroad of the Firelands. Keech was a "wholesale and retail dealer in hats, caps, furs, buffalo robes, mittens, buckskin and woolen gloves." His store was on the south side of Water St east of Columbus Ave.



MARSH TAVERN
100 E Water St
(now Civista Bank)

Rush Sloane wrote that the earliest story he knew about the

Underground Railroad in Sandusky was this one. In the fall of 1820, a man headed for Canada came to Marsh's Tavern, on the corner of Wayne and Water Sts, which today is the site of Civista Bank. He was hidden by John Dunker, the black hostler and Captain Shepherd, who sailed a small vessel and lived at the Tavern.

GETTING BACK TO PARKING & FURTHER EXPLORATION

Continue heading west on Water St to Columbus Ave. Turn left on Columbus to return to the Erie County Parking Garage.

NOT READY TO LEAVE YET?

After taking the Underground Railroad Tour, visitors are encouraged to visit:



THE SANDUSKY MARITIME MUSEUM

125 Meigs St
This museum contains several displays relating to

Sandusky's Underground Railroad.



OAKLAND CEMETERY
2917 MILAN RD

This is an old and very historic cemetery. The Sandusky Library

has done several specialty tours including an Underground Railroad tour. Oakland Cemetery is located south of downtown on Route 250 (just north of the Sandusky Mall near the intersection of Perkins Ave.). The Cemetery was established in 1850, and held its first burial on May 1, 1850. The City purchased the land from Jane S. Williams, heir to the 500 acres of land previously owned by John Beatty.



More information on each of these locations can be found on the Erie County Historical Society website. Just click on Walking Tours at

www.eriecountyohiohistory.org

