

Earlham Echo



February 26, 2018 Volume 2 No. 5 Your Hometown Newspaper since 1890 earlhamecho@gmail.com \$1.00

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: THE VITAL ROLE OF PIONEERS IN THE EARLHAM AREA

Part I

by Jess Lillie

As many Americans celebrate black history month in February, it should not go unknown by residents that the early pioneers of the Earlham area played key roles in assisting slaves in their flight to freedom. These pathways known as the Underground Railroad were formed by a network of early settlers whose religious convictions and respect for human rights led them to assist enslaved African Americans to escape a life of cruelty and imprisonment.

The network was made up of general agents who helped get slaves (referred to as passengers) on the underground railroad, conductors guided and transported fugitive slaves along the routes, station masters hid slaves on their property (referred to as a station/depot), and stockholders provided the financial backing to support the network. While the second passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 imposed fines and punishment to those who aided runaway slaves, it only empowered abolitionists like John and Anna Cook and their family to become station masters and conductors.

In 1854, John Cook and his second wife Anna moved to the Bear Creek Friends Settlement North of Earlham in Dallas County with their sons Joseph (from John's first marriage), Martin, and Uriah. They were later joined in 1857 by their widowed daughter-in-law and her second husband and her children by her first husband, Robert Cook, including grandson Harmon Cook.



An aerial photo from 1930 shows the former John & Anna Cook homestead on what is now known as H Avenue. Their homestead no longer stands today. graphic by Jess Lillie

Their descendant, Darius B. Cook, recounts memories of both Martin's son Ben and Harmon who was a conductor on the John Brown founded underground railroad in his paper entitled "Incidents of the Underground Railroad Through Central Iowa". Below is his paper originally printed in the March 7, 1935 edition of the Earlham Echo.

Incidents of the Underground Railroad Through Central Iowa By Darius B. Cook

In the days before the war when Guthrie and Dallas counties were on the frontier, there were many incidents taking place which should be made matters of record for future generations. Slavery recognized as a product of Missouri. Iowa, being a free state, naturally proved a highway for Underground Railroad. After John Brown came through Iowa, stations were known and accounted for. The trail started from Tabor in Fremont county, crossed Adair county striking the Quaker settlement of Spring Valley near the present town of Casey, the Quaker station at the residence of Samuel B. Chantry. From here to another Quaker settlement, Summit Grove station, home of Alistus W. Lewis also a Quaker, located where Stuart now stands. The next Quaker settlement to pass through was Bear Creek in Dallas County, the station, the Quaker home of John Cook and his wife Anna, also his son, Martin Cook, occupying part of the same house with his family. From here the trail passed through Adel on to the Jordan home a short distance west of the present town of Valley Junction, thence through Des Moines, Grinnell, Muscatine and on to Canada.

Harmon Cook, grandson of John Cook, writes some of his experiences as one of the conductors on the Underground Railroad.

In the winter of 1859-60 I was going to school to Darius Bowles and one Friday evening I was told if I wanted to go to Bear Creek I would not have you walk if I would drive a carriage and return it Monday morning. I drove the carriage and in it were two young colored women. They were sister from the west border of Missouri. Their master was their father and they had both been reared in the family. War was apparent and their master decided to sell them "down South". They heard the plotting and found out that they were to go on the auction block and made a run for the North Star. They had been on the road seven weeks when they arrived at A.W. Lewis's at Summit Grove.

Before daylight Saturday morning they were safely housed at Uncle Martin's. On Monday afternoon one of the sisters who had been out in the yard came running in and told grandmother "master is coming up the road." Grandfather went out in the front and sat down in his chair against the side of the door. By the time a number of men had ridden up and asked him if he had seen any slaves around. He told them slaves were not in Iowa. When one of them said "I am told that you are an old Quaker and have been suspected of harboring black folks as they run away to Canada. I have traced two girls across the country and have reason to believe they have been here." Grandfather said "I never turn any away who wants lodging but I keep no slaves." Then "I'll come in and see," said the man and jumped off his horse and started for the house. Grandfather stood up with his can in his hand and stepped into the door when the man attempted to enter and said, "Has thee a warrant to search my house?" "No I have not." "Then thee cannot do so." "But I will show you," said the man. "I will search for my girls."

While the parley was going on and loud words were being thick and fast grandmother came up and said, "Father, if the man wants to look through the house let him do so. Thee ought to know he won't find any slaves here." Grandfather turned and stared at her a moment then turned to the men and said "I ask your forgiveness for speaking so harshly. Thee can go through the house if mother says so." Grandfather showed him through all the rooms but stayed close to him all the time. After satisfying himself that they were not there he begged the old man's forgiveness mounted his horse and rode away. When the coast was clear it was found that when Maggie had rushed in and said "Master is coming" grandmother hastily snatched off the large feather bed telling the girls to get in and lie perfectly still. She took the feather bed, spread it all over them, put on the covers and pillow, patted out the wrinkles and so - no slaves were seen.

One time a load was being taken down the south side of Coon River and reached the timber on the bluffs near Des Moines about three o'clock in the morning as the carriage was leisurely going along, the sound of distant hoof beats were heard coming behind. At first it was thought the carriage could outrun its pursuers but prudence forbade. A narrow road at one side was hastily followed a few rods and the carriage stopped. The horsemen passed on swearing eternal vengeance on the whole "caboodle" if captured. When sounds were lost in the distance a dash was made for the depot in Des Moines and all safely landed before daylight. One evening some months after this I was returning from Adel on horseback and was opposite Mr. Murray's farm east of Redfield. I saw the old man Murray and a stranger back of the barn. I was motioned to come over which I did, and was met by an old man rather stoop-shouldered and of stern aspect. Mr. Murray said, "Here is the youngster who came so near getting caught going to Des Moines." The stern man with his shaggy eyebrows almost in my face said, "Young man when you are on the Lord's business you must be more discreet; you must always listen backwards as you are always followed. I am responsible for the track of the Underground Railroad and I wish my conductors to be more careful in the future as things are coming to a head and somebody is going to get hurt." I was dismissed with this admonition - "Young man, never do so rash a thing again as to talk and laugh out loud on the way." A few months later when Harper's Ferry was known to fame I remembered John Brown as the old man at Murray's.

When I enlisted in company C. 46th Iowa infantry and arrived at Memphis, Tennessee in 1864 I saw a regiment of colored soldiers. They were in camp and the first opportunity I was over to see how they looked as soldiers. One of the camp scenes was some of the soldiers conducting a school to teach these poor people their A. B. C.'s. Chaplain Ham and I had gone together and the teacher who was a lieutenant colonel asked us to speak to the colored school. When I had spoken a strapping fellow in blue uniform came rushing up to me shouting "I know you. You belong to Quaker Divide in Iowa! You drove me one night when we were trying to get into town and were followed by our masters and you drove off in the woods and we got out and hid." It was Henry who had been one of the party in that midnight ride. He never got to Canada but stopped in Wisconsin and when the war came on he enlisted. He was lieutenant of the colored regiment and a trusted scout for the general of our division.

Local Seniors Attend Simpson Scholarship Day

Cameryn Caskey and Jason Hopp, both of Earlham, were invited to compete for additional scholarships at Simpson Scholarship Day on Sunday, February 11 at Simpson College in Indianola Iowa. Participants who attended this prestigious event interviewed with a panel of judges and composed an essay as part of the competition



(Above) Cameryn Caskey and (Below) Jason Hopp at the event.

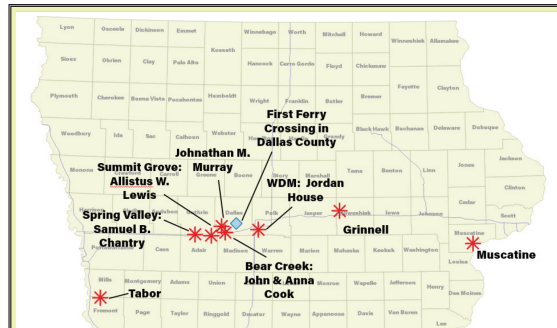


Local Land Donors Honored During Reception in Des Moines



Jerry and Jane Kuehn are part of 48 donors to be recognized for their land donation. The Kuehns have worked with Iowa Natural Heritage and Dallas County Conservation Board (DCCB) for over 30 years to establish and expand Kuehn Conservation Area, a 700+ acre public natural area near Earlham. The mainly wooded land along the Middle Raccoon River is home to several significant Native American sites, and serves as Dallas County Conservation Board's main education area. Many different classes from the Earlham School enjoy their time learning about conservation at Kuehn Conservation. Jerry and Jane donated a portion of the value on a 5-acre inholding near the entrance to Kuehn Conservation Area to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The recognition ceremony will include 5,500 acres across the state in 32 different counties where land will permanently protected for conservation. The Kuehn's will be recognized for their land or land value donation during a ceremony on March 5, 2018 from 12:45 to 2:00 p.m. on the first floor of the rotunda at the State Capitol in Des Moines.

Continued on Page 3



graphic by Jess Lillie

Underground Railroad locations noted by D.B. Cook. The first ferry in Dallas County to cross the North Raccoon River ("coon" river) was established 1850. It was located in Adel where the abandoned Pratt truss bridge stands today. Rates of ferrage in 1850 were \$0.25 for a single horse wagon and a double horse wagon cost \$0.35 to cross. It can't be confirmed or denied that this is indeed the ferry referenced by Ben Cook but was the only ferry crossing on the Raccoon River for quite sometime during that time period in Dallas County.



Source: <http://iowacountyhistory.blogspot.com>

Underground Railroad

Continued from Page 1
Ben S. Cook, son of Martin Cook, writes some of his recollections of the Underground Railroad.

Now in regard to the Underground Railroad. My father was one of the company, and the first time I ever saw negroes was one morning he sent Johnny and me up the stairs to a bedroom at the right of the landing after something. Four old big black men were just getting up. They saw we were scared and they opened their big mouths and their big eyes were so big that we ran down stairs as hard as we could go. They had brought them in that night and they staid until the next night. They had to hide during the day so they went down into the big cornfield southwest of the house and cut corn. I do not know what year this was but I was young (was born in 1855). I was out with my grandfather in the road in front of the house and some fellows came along hunting negroes. They asked him if he had seen any negroes around here. He says "I don't see any." They went in the house and hunted all over under beds and did not find any and they went on. After they left I went with grandfather down in the cornfield and he told them they would have to be still. They were dancing and singing and making such a noise we could hear them up to the house and they got quiet. When night came my father put them in a wagon and put a big wagon sheet over them and drove to the north with them. I do not know where the next station was but they crossed the ferry.

My father used to tell about the ferryman. He said "Mart, what are you loaded with?" He would ask the ferryman some questions. Once the ferryman was going to raise the cover but did not. Father went on with them and got along all right.

Another time a mother and some children were left there. They were all in the room when some one saw hunters coming after them and they told the mother. She and the children went out the back door into the grove in the back of the house as hard as they could run. I saw them go and could never forget the sight. They came in and searched the house and did not find them and went on. That is all I remember about the Underground Railroad.

In 1924 I visited the Jordan Farm for the purpose of securing some photographs and obtaining additional information concerning the Underground Railroad and John Brown's visit to the place. Here I met Henry Jordan a younger son of the family who kindly showed me over the place and contributed much valuable information. He

told me that after his father's death the family had tried to preserve as much as possible the original features of the original homestead. He showed a room they had furnished with this intent. There was the brick fire place large enough to admit a three foot log. Over the mantel was a set of elk antlers. The gun rack was near by with the old time rifle. A portrait of Abraham Lincoln hung on the wall. In a corner was the old family clock. On a hook in a conspicuous place hung a silk hat of the top kind worn by well dressed men in the 60's.

Out side at the well was the bucket and windles still in use. Even the burr oak trees were still standing as they were when Mr. Jordan the father, built his log house among them in 1848. "Here," said the son, "are the two trees between which father put up his tent when he first camped on the ground. Where these two knots are were two limbs on which he put his tent pole." He then showed me the stake-and-riider rail fence which they had kept up on one side of the wood lot where runaway slaves were frequently hidden. Many of the trees were still standing but, of course, the undergrowth was gone. Mr. Jordan entertained John Brown and his company on their way to Harper's Ferry. He tried to persuade Brown not to go. "It's no use Brown. This move is premature. The times are not ready for this". Brown refused to take his advice and the disaster of October 1859 became history.

The house now standing is not the one of slave days but is built upon the site. I have a photograph of the house and the rail fence also a photograph of the John Cook house taken near the same time but little has changed since Underground Railroad days. A photograph of Harmon Cook when he was conductor and one about the time he wrote the incidents here given."

The generosity of the Bear Creek Settlement during the days of the Underground Railroad was also chronicled in the August 26, 1926 edition of the Earlham Echo. The following was written about the annual reunion of students and teachers of the Bear Creek old school:

"At this time the chairman introduced a colored man present on the platform as Turner W. Bell, a prominent attorney of Lawrence, Kansas and one of the old school students. In his party were two sisters from Des Moines and another sister with her husband from Garner. My Bell opened his remarks with an explanation of his coming to Bear Creek with his parents in 1864 and their location on the south end of the present Clyde Nolte farm in a small building which since has long been destroyed. He was born in slavery in 1862 and one of

18 children, of whom 10 are still living. His parents Pete and Lizzie Bell were brought to the Divide through the offices of some of the Quakers whose strong opposition to the principle of human slavery caused them to work actively against it through the medium of the "underground railroad" in spite of its being outside the pale of the law and conducted with the utmost secrecy. This is one of the finest acts that can be credited to the Society of Quakers and displays in a clear light their determination to defend a principle which they knew was just. Mr. Bell attended the Bear Creek school but a short time, but he pursued education seriously at Adel, Penn College, and the State University and has achieved a nation-wide reputation as an attorney. He talked of his early recollections of Bear Creek and closed with a eulogy of the white people of the Divide who so generously befriended his family and himself."

I was first introduced to the Underground Railroad around Earlham in either 4th or 5th grade by a guest speaker at school. I was enamored with the idea and concept of an underground railroad so much that I thought for sure my great grandparent's home was at one-time part of the route because of their interconnecting bedroom closets where I would play and hide as a child. Of course that theory was just a child's daydream but it would seem that through all my readings and research over the last few weeks, as an adult I am still enamored with the idea. It is amazing how a spiderweb network of safe homes could be set up by John Brown without phones, technology, or vehicles. A time where people selflessly put

themselves in harm's way to save someone they never met. In my mind it is humanity at its finest.

I would like to thank the Madison County Historic Preservation Commission for providing resources and information about the Underground Railroad including the lineage of the Cook family. Past editions of the Earlham Echo online were also a valuable resource along with books online including: The History of Dallas County, Iowa and the DB Cook novel History of Quaker Divide. Vintage plat maps for Dallas County online at the Iowa Digital Library were also a great resource for pinpointing locations of the past. Further information of the John Brown Freedom Trail to Harper's Ferry through Iowa in 1859 can be found at <http://iowaculture.gov>.

Thanks for reading!
Jess Lillie

IF HISTORY IS NOT RESURRECTED FROM TIME TO TIME IT BECOMES JUST THAT... HISTORY.

Chili, Mac & Cheese Cook off at Bricker-Price: March 3
by Ken Sidney

If you're looking for a tasty meal, bring your appetite and taste buds; if you're a cook, bring your favorite recipe and a pot of chili or mac & cheese to the Bricker-Price Block's First Annual Throw-down Showdown

Job Posting Part-time Assistant Librarian

The Earlham Public Library is looking for an energetic, tech savvy individual who enjoys working with the public to join our staff as a part-time assistant librarian. Application deadline is March 8th, 2018.

The assistant librarian will work approximately 10-15 hours per week in the evenings and/or Saturday morning. Tasks include registering new users, checking materials out, assisting library patrons with finding materials, shelving and other tasks as assigned. Candidates must have excellent computer and customer service skills.

To apply, send resumes to:
Earlham Public Library
% Justina Wuebker
PO Box 3072
Earlham, IA 50072
justina.wuebker@earlham.lib.ia.us
or
apply in person at the Earlham Public Library

cook off on Saturday, March 3, noon to 2 pm. Admission will be \$7 adults, \$4 for kids (under 12). Diners can sample all the entries and vote for their favorite. Beer, wine, soft drinks and water will be available. Entrants need to prepare 1.5 to 2 gallons of chili, and/or 1 to 1.5 gallons of mac & cheese. There is no charge to enter. Cooks need to arrive by 11:30 am and be ready to serve by 11:45. BPB is seeking a minimum of four entries in each category. To sign up, go to the Bricker-Price Block Facebook page, Events, Find Tickets, and follow

the links to enter for free. Or contact BPB Director Ken Sidney at brickerpriceblock@gmail.com, or call 515-758-3980 for more information. Entrance to the BPB, at 501 S. Chestnut, is through the middle door off Chestnut (east side), or for elevator access, by the ramp and door on First Street (north side).

Earlham Echo

Earlham Echo LLC
dba Earlham Echo

Editors
Mindy Williamson,
Megan Frederickson,
Todd Weber

Business Manager
Jessica Lillie

Advertising Manager
Jennifer Weber

Treasurer
Nicole Petersen

PO Box 372
Earlham, Iowa 50072

For subscription information or to report a problem with services or for billing questions, please contact any of the owners above at earlhamecho@gmail.com

Annual subscription rate: \$45
Newsstand price: \$1
Non-refundable

The deadline for all ads, articles, and press releases is 5:00 p.m. Wednesday

The Earlham Echo is dedicated to providing informative, entertaining, and impactful stories of local interest to our readers and is committed to be a vital member of the business community.

Earlham Echo (ISSN XXXX-XXXX) is published weekly by Earlham Echo, LLC
445 NW 6th St, Earlham, IA 50072. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is pending at Earlham, IA. POSTMASTER: Send Changes to Earlham Echo PO Box 372 Earlham, IA 50072

EARLHAM SCHOOL & COMMUNITY INFO

Earlham Community Schools Lunch Menu

Monday, February 26th
Tenderloin, French Fries, Corn, Winter Mix w/ Cheese, Bananas, Apples, Dip

Tuesday February 27th
Chicken & Noodles w/ Roll, Mashed Potatoes, Peas, Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Pineapple & Strawberry Mix

Wednesday February 28th
BBQ Rib Sandwich, Tater Tots, Baked Beans, Coleslaw, Apple Crisp, Fruit

Thursday, March 1st
Not Yet Available

Friday March 2nd
Not Yet Available

Earlham Congregate Meals Menu
Earlham Community Center - Monday-Friday, Eat at 11:45 AM
Ages 60 & older Cost: \$3.00
Call Michelle at 758-2590 10:00AM - 2PM (Home Deliveries are Available)

Monday, Feb. 26	Tuesday, Feb. 27	Wednesday, Feb. 28	Thursday, March 1	Friday, March 2
Beef & Noodles	Fish Sandwich	Hamburger	Swiss Steak	Sloppy Joe on Bun
Asparagus	Tater Tots	Pattie	Seasoned Rice	Potato Wedges
Green Beans	Peas 1	Mashed Potatoes & Gravy	Winter Blend Vegetables	Broccoli
Mandarin Oranges	Strawberries	Broccoli	Peaches	Normandy Chilled Pineapple
Granola Bar	Cake	Tropical Fruit Applesauce	Pudding	Brownie

Find What You Need Fast... Earlham Echo BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The Iowa Theater - now reopen!

Movies Wednesday - Sunday

121 North John Wayne Drive, Winterset, Iowa

Visit the-iowa.com or call 515-462-2979 for showtimes

ANCHORED WALLS

Basement Waterproofing • Foundation Repair • Concrete Leveling • Crawl Space Repair • Egress Windows • Crack Injection

www.anchoredwalls.com
Family Owned and Operated Since 1978

FREE ESTIMATES • 800-221-4699
info@anchoredwalls.com

PEER, NELSON & BRALAND

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
115 E. FIRST STREET
P. O. BOX 370
EARLHAM, IOWA 50072

Humphrey Law Firm, P.C.

Attorney Marc A. Humphrey
Personal Injury & Sexual Harassment Attorney

300 Walnut Street Suite 5
Des Moines, IA 50309 Phone: 515-331-3510

Aggregate Testing • Asphalt Testing & Design • Concrete Testing & Design • Geotechnical Services • Non-Destructive Testing • Smoothness (Profilometer) • Soil Testing • Steel Inspections • Special Inspections

www.cmt-iowa.com

1610 East Madison Ave., Des Moines, IA 50313
Phone: 515.263.0794 Fax: 515.263.0851

Dan Werts Concrete

Contact Dan at 515-707-5210

LILLIE

PLUMBING, HEATING & ELECTRIC, INC.
425 NW 6th St. • PO Box 127
Earlham, IA 50072

Plumbing, Heating & Electric Services
515-758-2769
In business 38 years

Specializing in grass-fed, organic lamb

Breeding Stock Available
515-457-6362

Dalla Terra RANCH

Facebook: Dalla Terra Ranch

Kress Realty

Robert J. "Jim" Kress
Owner/Broker #B12152000

155 NE 2nd Street
PO Box 323
Earlham, IA 50072
www.kressrealty.com

Cell: 515.975.3283
Fax: 515.758.2329
Phone: 515.758.2251 (days)
515.758.2626 (evenings/weekends)

HammerBuilt

Shannon Flickinger
515-577-7373
shannon@builtbyhammer.com
www.BuiltByHammer.com

SPECIALIZING IN HOME REMODELING