

AREA 14 Underground Railroad & Abolition

This sign generously sponsored by

NEW-YORK DAILY TRIBUNE, THURSDAY, JUNE 29 1854

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.

Correspondence of the N. Y. Tribune.

MEDINA, (N. Y.) Tuesday, June 27, 1854.

In opening your paper of yesterday, I saw on the fifth page a notice that 'four more chattels' (I suppose human chattels) "were safe." Allow me to add another to the list. On Friday of last week, one of the chattels arrived by Underground Railway in our village, direct from Richmond, Va. Being almost destitute of clothes, his feet badly swollen and very sore, and without money, he was induced to tarry a little; which resulted in his being helped to money, furnished with better and cleaner clothes, and much recruited in his physical strength.

While sitting by a window, in the house of a friend, and looking out upon the passers-by, his eye fell upon a man whose residence is in the South and who the slave knew to be well acquainted with his old master. This added gloom to the poor fellow's already gloomy feelings, and he at once thought he was pursued. And while darkness still held the portals of the East on sabbath morn, he set out, accompanied with a friend, for his prospective home in Canada; where, we rejoice to know, he safely arrived on Sunday evening.

He gave his master's name as Jonathan More of Richmond, Va., a man well known to the Long Island race course directors. Thus, Sir, one by one, a few succeed in escaping from a Government where "Liberty" "lives only in name," to a land where their personality is recognized and protected.

New York Tribune correspondence from Medina, NY

Correspondence from a Medina resident was discovered in the June 29, 1854 edition of the New York Tribune— correspondence that was referenced in *The Ordeal of the Union* (1847, pg. 159) by Allan Nevins, where he states *"All over the North the news was the same. A fugitive slave reached Medina, N. Y.; the people hid him, supplied him with money, and hurried him into Canada."* The NY Tribune letter enumerates the details of a fugitive slave who arrived in Medina and was assisted to freedom by organized locals via the "Underground Railway." Where this "safe house" was or to whom it belonged remains a mystery along with any other names or locations. Undoubtedly, security and secrecy was paramount in their efforts. Nonetheless, this singular piece of historic information confirms local lore and clearly shines a light on Medina's efforts in assisting fugitive slaves to find freedom.

Despite the absence of any primary-source evidence, it has been a deep-rooted belief that the Village of Medina and surrounding communities played a significant role in the Underground Railroad and the case against slavery. Citizens have long told tales, handed down through generations of safe houses and hidden rooms that were used to assist fugitive slaves in finding there way to freedom.

Ceil White, esteemed former Village Historian, stated that there was evidence of locals who were involved in anti-slavery discourse with the Society of Friends as early as 1838. She further stated in an article published in the *Journal-Register*, February 5, 1979, that *"There appears to be some evidence that slaves did pass through here. Two homes that I know of have evidence of a hidden room in which fugitives could be hidden but no where, as of yet, have I found any concrete evidence that Medina was one of the communities in the underground railway system to help slaves."*

However, in 2018, the search for concrete evidence yielded surprising results that confirmed what many had suspected for generations— Medina, NY did in fact play a key role in the Underground Railroad.

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION! AT MEDINA.

The Friends of Freedom are invited to assemble, *en masse*, at the Village of Medina, July 4th, 1853, for the purpose of celebrating the day in a manner that shall be in accordance with the principles contained in the Declaration of Independence, promulgated on the 4th day of July, 1776.

ARRANGEMENTS have been made with the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls, and the Buffalo and Lockport Rail Roads to run extra trains on that day, to convey Friends to and from the ground.

A BEAUTIFUL GROVE

Will be fitted up, with a view to accommodate the thousands who will be in attendance. It is designed to have a PICNIC DINNER, and it is expected that the Ladies will not find their no provisions to abundance. The committee will provide no more on the grounds, so each one has space for their things.

Intoxicating Liquors will be Excluded.

HON. J. R. GIDDINGS!
OF OHIO, AND
HON. J. G. PALFREY!

The distinguished Scholar, and late Secretary of State of Massachusetts, have pledged themselves to attend.

Hon. F. P. MURPHY, of Rayston, will preside at the meeting, assisted by Vice Presidents from each county represented, to be appointed by the meeting.

MATHEW GREGORY, Esq., Marshal of the Day.

The procession will form at the Railroad Depot, on the arrival of the Excursion Trains, under the direction of the Marshal, proceed to the Village Hall, and proceed to the ground, where the exercises will be held.

1st. Election of Vice Presidents. 3d. Prayer, by Rev. H. L. DOX, of Lockport.
2d. Reading the Declaration of Independence, by OLIVER MOREHOUSE, Esq., of Albion.
4th. Oration, by Hon. JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS, of Ohio.

RECESS OF ONE HOUR FOR DINNER.

AFTERNOON.

Address, by Hon. JOHN Q. PALFREY, and such other exercises as the officers of the day may direct. The Meeting will convene at 4 o'clock, P. M., upon the arrival of the Excursion Trains.

It is hoped and believed, that all those who are opposed to the encroachments of the Slave Power, and the extension of Slavery into the western territories, will be present. It is desired that Friends from the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls, and the Buffalo and Lockport Rail Roads, will be present, and that they will be assisted by the Friends of Freedom in the vicinity of Medina.

Really, friends! Really! and let us have such a gathering as Western New York has never witnessed.

For the time of the starting of the several Excursion Trains, at the various points, the public are referred to the Arrangements of the Railroad Companies, each on printing and free of charge.

N. B. The Excursion Trains will carry for half price. Regular Trains will charge full price.

FOR THE COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS, J. G. PALFREY, Secretary.

FOR THE HILL.

Huge Free Soil gathering in Medina.

Many in Medina and WNY were also "Free Soilers." The Free-Soil Party, (1848–54), opposed the extension of slavery into the western territories. On July 4, 1853, local "Free Soilers" organized a mass gathering in Medina. Many hundreds from all over WNY attended. Featured notable speakers were Hon. J. R. Giddings of Ohio, and Hon. J. G. Palfrey of Massachusetts.

"It is hoped that all those opposed to the encroachments of the Slave Power, and the extension of Slavery— all those opposed to the Fugitive Slave Law and the Baltimore Platforms— in short all those who believe in the Declaration of Independence— will be on hand!"

Frederick Douglass

Mr. Douglass spoke in and around Orleans County on several occasions, delivering two orations in Medina.

The first was delivered on April 3, 1849 at the former Methodist-Episcopal Church on Main Street, and the second at a Medina event celebrating emancipation on August 3, 1869.

The 1869 event was widely publicized around New York State, and attracted hundreds of African-Americans to Medina, though sadly, little is written of the gathering. The speech delivered by Douglass entitled, "We Are Not Yet Quite Free" is renowned and appears in many publications and scholarly works.

Silas Mainville Burroughs, Sr.

Medina Attorney, NYS Assembly, US Representative— 35th and 36th Congresses, Brigadier General. Burroughs was at the forefront of the struggle against slavery and spoke out forcefully, often and fearlessly in opposition to the institution.

In 1859, a Richmond, VA newspaper labeled he and his Congressional colleagues as treasonous for supporting the John Brown Raid on Harper's Ferry, and placed a bounty on their heads.