

Getting to Maysville and Mason County



From Cincinnati ~ 65 Miles

From Lexington ~ 65 Miles

From Ashland ~ 86 Miles

For more about Maysville, Washington and other points of interest in the area contact:

Maysville-Mason County Tourism Commission

216 Bridge Street • Maysville, Kentucky 41056

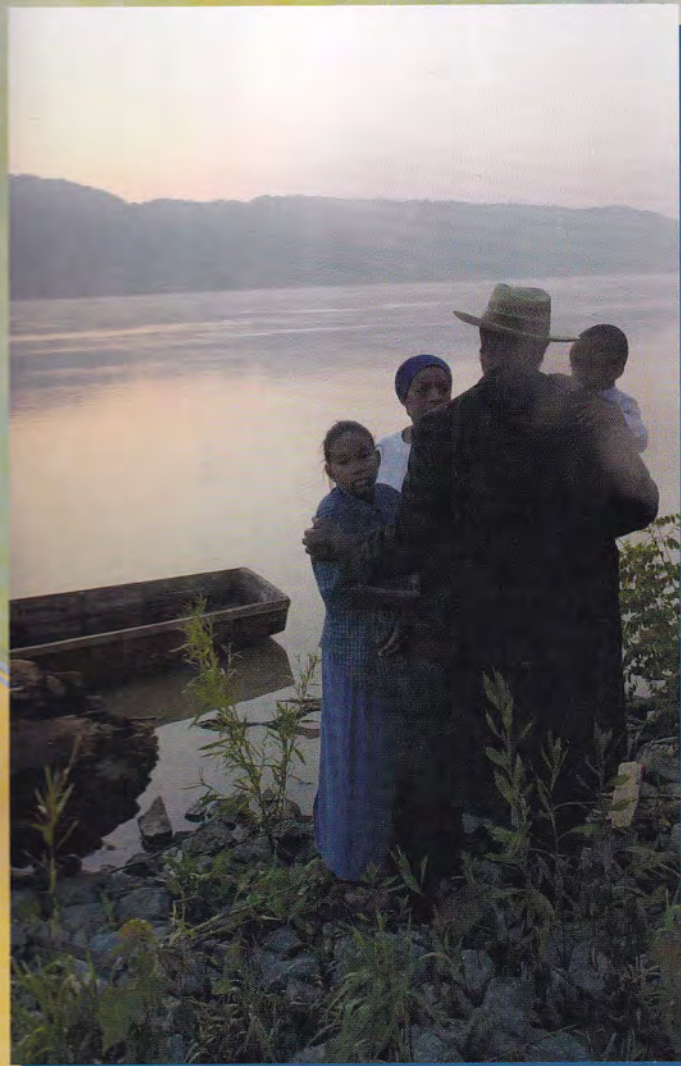
Telephone (606) 564-9419

www.cityofmaysville.com



**Printed in cooperation with the
Kentucky Department of Tourism*

A Self Guided Driving Tour of Mason County's Historic Underground Railroad



Mason County, Slavery and The Underground Railroad

Retrace the footsteps of countless fleeing African slaves as you travel the countryside of Mason County Kentucky, one of Kentucky's most notable historic routes to freedom along the path that became known as the Underground Railroad. A "railroad" that had many "conductors, safe houses and stations", all of which led to freedom across the Ohio River.

From its inception, the Underground Railroad has been cloaked in secrecy. It has proven to be a difficult task for scholars and historians alike to document its existence, dangers and achievements. For a slave, the railroad meant a pathway to freedom across the Ohio River into northern territory, where abolitionists and conductors helped thousands of slaves settle into new lives as "freed" people. For white Americans south of the Mason-Dixon line who didn't believe in slavery, it was a dangerous, and sometimes deadly, venture to participate in the escape of slaves.

Because of these dangers, very little documentation remains of the risks and perils taken by slaves, freed blacks and whites involved with the Underground Railroad. For freed blacks and white abolitionists, involvement with the railroad could result in the loss of property or even death. For the escaping slave, there was the knowledge that a harsh and brutal punishment would be meted out upon his or her return to his master. But despite these dangers, both whites and blacks, free or enslaved, helped form and operate the Underground Railroad until slavery was abolished in Kentucky after the Civil War ended.

Kentucky and The Civil War

With the first shots fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina in April 1861, Kentucky became a divided state. Because of its proximity to Ohio and Tennessee, Kentucky was a border state with families divided over the issue of states rights. The issue of slavery became part of the struggle between North and South as a way to break the back of the confederacy. The Marshall family in Washington, Kentucky found themselves divided over the issue of states rights and slavery; Charles Marshall fought for the North, his son-in-law fought for the South.

Most Kentucky plantations did not have large slave populations or plantation style homes like those found in the deep south. Pre-Civil War plantations were defined by the number of slaves owned rather than the sometimes-grandiose style of the master's home.

In Mason County most were small estates or farms requiring fewer slaves, usually 50 or less. In 1850, the 7th U.S. Census recorded Mason County's slave population at 4,272. In 1860, the 8th U.S. Census recorded 3,759 slaves in the county.

The Underground Railroad Movement In Mason County

During the early settlement of Mason County in the 1700's and 1800's, a few slaves were permitted to work alongside their masters, given the freedom to carry guns, hunt, live, and eat with white family members. But as the slave trade became more accepted and profitable in the colonies and Kentucky those privileges disappeared.

For the majority of enslaved Africans brought into the area, life was harsh and brutal with all freedoms stripped from them. Families were torn apart at the auction block, separating mothers from children, husbands from wives, and brothers from sisters. White masters even took away the freedom to congregate or worship openly, fearing slave uprising.

Many slaves were skilled craftsmen, contributing to the growth of the

county as master brick masons, wood turners, and blacksmiths.

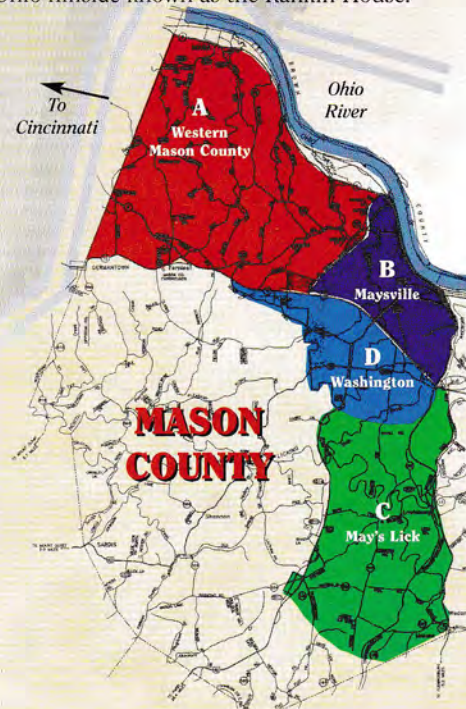
While practicing their trade skills under their master's ownership, slaves were allowed to earn money, saving their earnings until they could buy their freedom and that of family members. Once free, many of these former slaves established businesses in Mason County, becoming an integral part of the county's economy. Some served as conductors or operators of safe houses and stations along the Underground Railroad.

In 1822, while slave auctions continued to take place on the lawn of the Washington, Kentucky courthouse, Paxton Inn owner James Paxton joined the Colonization Society, a society founded in the East to promote the return of slaves to Africa. The Colonization Society was a forerunner to the abolitionist movement.

By the mid 1800's, former slave Elisha W. Green (1816? – 1893) had purchased freedom for himself and part of his family and helped form African American Baptist Churches in Maysville and Paris, Kentucky. Green was taught to read while a slave at the "Glen Alice" farm outside Maysville.

Arnold Gragston (1840 – 1938) helped many slaves escape while living on the Jack Tabb farm in western Mason County. Gragston rowed slaves from Dover (Mason County) across the Ohio River under cover of dark nights. Almost caught returning from one crossing, he escaped to the woods. After more than four years of helping others, Gragston crossed the river and became a free man.

There are hundreds of stories waiting to be told about slavery, the Underground Railroad and Mason County's role in the unfolding story of this historic and dark time in America's history. Let the journey through Mason County's rural setting take you back to a place and time captured forever in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel based upon true facts witnessed by Stowe during her travels. Follow the path taken by Stowe's character "Eliza" and her baby "George" to the Dover Landing, then crossing the Ohio River on ice floes to a beacon of light on the Ohio hillside known as the Rankin House.



About The Tour...

While driving this tour motorists will view the original site of a slave pen now housed in the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center; plantation homes that were once home to slaves. Tour the home, now museum, in Washington, Kentucky visited by Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; view displays, slave history and genealogy at Maysville's Museum Center, an official National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Freedom Station.

Tour takes approximately three hours and is designed to start in Western Mason County at the juncture of KY 9 and KY 10. Motorists are urged to exercise caution when pulling off the roadway to view sites and along Walton Pike, a very narrow, winding country road. An alternate route to Walton Pike is KY 435 from KY 10 into Minerva.

*Many sites are Private Residences-sites open to public are marked with an asterisk **

Photography by Terry Prather.

A. Western Mason County

...vital to the success of the Underground Railroad Movement because of its proximity to the Ohio River and the Rev. John Rankin's house in Ripley, Ohio. The communities of Germantown, Minerva and Dover had a high concentration of "stations", "conductors" and plantation homes along the route.

Germantown...split between the counties of Mason and Bracken, was home to Arnold Gragston, a slave and conductor, and abolitionist John G. Fee. Many Germantown homes had cellars where slaves were hidden from Union soldiers during the Civil War.

Minerva...settled in the late 1700's, is named for the first white woman of the village, Minerva Green. The town was known for its high education standards, at one time boasting five schools and six teachers for 200 inhabitants. Minerva was home to fine mansions and plantations, many built by brick mason and free person of color John Paddy in the 1850's. Some homes have been lost to time and progress, but others remain.

Dover...Famous Kentucky historian Richard Collins described Dover in 1870 as "In importance the second town in the county" when the town had many businesses and the largest tobacco and shipping point in the county. Free person of color John Paddy lived in the area from 1823 until long after the Civil War; many historians conjecture that Paddy may have been a conductor with Gragston and John P. Parker of Ripley, Ohio, but no records exist to substantiate this claim.

(Sites #A1 and #A2 located on KY 10 across from Independent Realty office; the farmhouse is gone, only barns remain on the property.)

A1. Elijah Currans Farm – John G. Fee's emancipated slave Juliette Miles had a daughter and grandchildren in bondage on the Currans farm. In 1858 Miles stole her daughter and grandchildren from the farm, but were captured west of Augusta, Kentucky as they attempted to flee to Ohio. Miles was incarcerated, dying in prison two years later. The story made headlines in 1859 in the *New York Daily Tribune*.

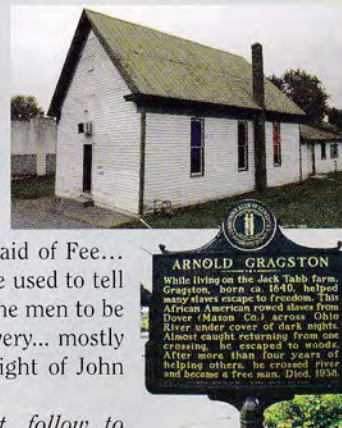
A2. Old Germantown Fairgrounds – Originally situated on the Currans Farm, the Germantown Fair began in 1854; grandstand seating was segregated. Site of Union Troop encampment during Civil War. *(Proceed into Germantown, turn left onto Broadway Alley at sharp right hand turn. Site #A3 is on the right.)*

A3. Broadway Christian Church
– founded in 1830
by former slaves.

(Turn left from Broadway Alley into Germantown, turn left onto KY 875)

A4. Fee/Gragston Historic Marker honors an abolitionist and conductor. Gragston once said of Fee... "How that man hated slavery. He used to tell us that God didn't intend for some men to be free and some men to be in slavery... mostly they (slave owners) hated the sight of John Fee".

(Return to KY 10, turn right, follow to Pinecrest Farm at 4245 KY 10. Old African-American cemetery on right just before leaving Germantown town limits)



ARNOLD GRAGSTON
While living on the Jack Tabb farm, Gragston, born ca 1840, helped many slaves escape to freedom. This African American rowed slaves from Dover (Mason Co.) across Ohio River under cover of dark night. Almost caught returning from one crossing, he escaped to woods. After more than four years of helping others, he crossed river and became a free man. Died, 1908.



A5. Pinecrest Farm (c. 1844) – site of log slave jail, focal point of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. Originally owned by Captain John Anderson, a Revolutionary War soldier, it is said the jail was built to house Africans waiting transport from Dover to Natchez, Mississippi and New Orleans, Louisiana slave markets. A barn was built over the structure, preserving the logs; barred windows, iron straps and rings with chains attached kept slaves from escaping.

(Turn right onto Walton Pike, which was an oft-used route for escaping slaves, as well as for slave coffles marched to market. Follow to KY 435, turn right into Minerva, then left onto KY 1235)

A*6. 1793 Minerva Baptist Church – Built by stonemason and minister Lewis Craig, this church is one of five oldest still standing structures in Kentucky. The church has a slave balcony and white pine flooring. The issue of slavery split the church in 1805. Craig also built the courthouse in Washington, Kentucky.



A7. Worthington Chapel – one of the oldest African-American churches in the county still used today; slaves are buried in the Methodist Church graveyard.

(Follow KY 1235 to junction of KY 8. Site #A8 situated .5 mile on left. Turn right onto KY 8, then left to Dover. Arnold Gragston led fugitive slaves to freedom along this route)



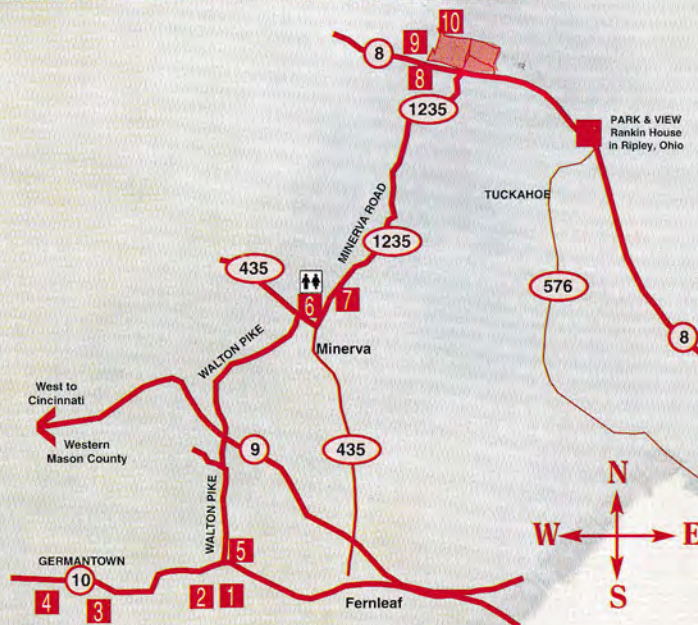
A8. "Webster" (1822)
home of Arthur Fox, Jr., known for
his thoroughbred horses and horse
track. Fox's son James was a
known fugitive slave catcher and
was involved in several
questionable slave abductions.

A9. Dover row houses
(c. 1850's) built by
free person of color
John Paddy on
Market Street
at Mechanics Alley.



A10. Dover River Landing – slaves loaded onto boats at this site for
transport to slave markets in Natchez, Mississippi and New Orleans.
(Return to KY 8, turn left; proceed 2 miles to junction of KY 8 and KY
576 (Tuckahoe Road). Area available to park and view Rev. John Rankin
House in Ripley, Ohio, the destination of escaping slaves.

A. Western Mason County



Many slave owners lived along Tuckahoe and South Ripley Roads and the town of South Ripley.

It was during a visit to Ripley, Ohio that Harriet Beecher Stowe heard first-hand the story of a slave woman named Eliza and her escape from a farm situated at the junction of South Ripley and Tuckahoe Roads to prevent the sale of her two-year old son. According to Presbyterian Minister Levi Coffin's book *Reminiscences*, Eliza and her son George escaped across the frozen Ohio River to the Rev. John Rankin's home in Ripley, Ohio in 1838.

Many people in the area believe it was the John G. Bacon farm from which Eliza escaped, though no documentation exists to substantiate this claim.

Other stories include that of fugitive slave Tice Davids and John P. Parker, a conductor and free person of color from Ripley, Ohio. During his escape Davids reached the banks of the Ohio River with his master and others close upon his heels. Davids jumped into the river and swam to Ripley. His master, giving chase in a boat, could see Davids in the water, but lost sight of him once he reached land.



"Hope at the Top of the Hill"
Artist Sha-Reese Cunningham

When Davids' owner couldn't find him along Front Street, or anywhere else in town, it caused him to say Davids must have escaped on an underground road, giving birth to the term "Underground Railroad".

Conductor and free person of color John P. Parker tells of one difficult slave rescue in his autobiography *His Promised Land*. When a white employee at Parker's Foundry found out about Parker's slave rescue trips, he dared Parker to rescue slaves from his father's farm in Kentucky. Parker accepted the challenge and after several secret trips to the farm, found a young couple who was eager to escape. The problem for Parker was the slave owner put the couple's baby in his bedroom at night to keep them from escaping. After careful planning, Parker stole into the house, took off his shoes and crawled into the bedroom. He picked up the baby and fled with the family across the Ohio River to Ripley, Ohio and freedom before the slave owner got across the river.

(Proceed east on KY 8 into downtown Maysville, turn right onto Wall Street, bear left, street name changes to W. Third Street. Turn left onto Sutton Street to begin downtown tour)

The Undergro

Explore the History on Both Sides of the River

B. Maysville

...was incorporated as a city in 1833 and by 1848 had become the county seat. Major crops were hemp and tobacco; Maysville residents owned slaves to work in the fields and households. The late 1830's and 1840's brought the slavery controversy to the attention of residents when Reverend John Mahan was in court twice for helping slaves escape. In September 1841 a black church was destroyed by a proslavery mob. By the late 1850's talk of war and slavery dominated conversation and abolitionists John G. Fee and Reverend James David were chased out of the county in 1860. Slave auctions continued to be held while fugitive slaves were making their way through the area via the Underground Railroad.

B1. Phillip's Folly (1831)
reported site of slave
confinement area
and slave escapes.



B*2. Museum Center (1881) – displays and memorabilia; National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Freedom Station; research center for African-American records. 606-564-5865.

B*3. Floodwall Murals – 1850 Underground Railroad mural; The Big Dipper and North Star are depicted which guided fugitive slaves to the Ohio River and freedom.

B4. Slave Pen – Used to house runaway slaves, those waiting transport south and holding slaves until they were auctioned for sale. After the Civil War the building became a pork slaughterhouse and was later demolished. In 1930, the Maysville High School Auditorium was built.

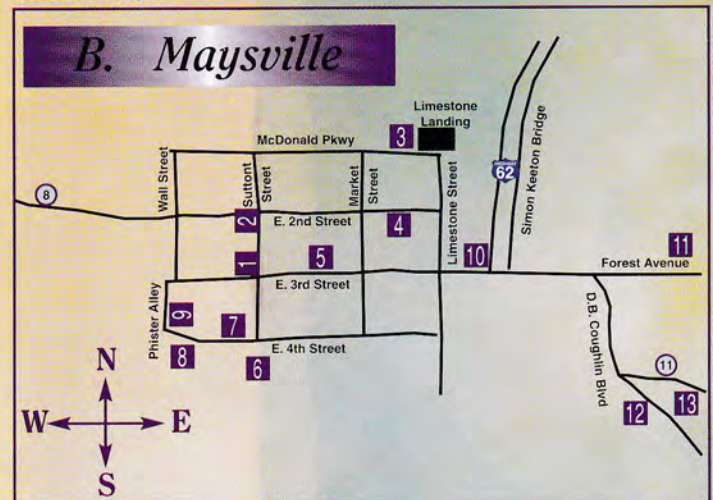


B5. Mason County Courthouse (1844) – originally called a City Hall, it became the Mason County Courthouse in 1848 when the county seat was changed from Washington to Maysville. Site of slave auctions.

B6. Bierbauer House (c. 1840's)

As you travel south on KY 11, you will pass the 1795 community of Lewisburg situated on Old KY 11. Lewisburg's large black population was known as "kinktown". At one time this small community boasted three African-American churches; Mt. Pisgah, Lee's Chapel and Grace Baptist Church. According to oral history, fugitive slave Addison White's escape route from Fleming County took him through Lewisburg.

(Proceed approximately 8 miles to community of Wedonia, turn right onto KY 324)



C. May's Lick

...is the birthplace of Charles D. Young, born March 12, 1864 to ex-slaves on the Willett estate. Young was the third African-American to graduate from West Point Military Academy in 1889; he was taught to read and play the piano by the daughter of the Willett family.

Young's first assignment after graduation was with the Buffalo Soldiers in the 10th Cavalry in Nebraska; elevated to the rank of Major during the Spanish-American War. Young commanded a squadron of the 10th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers in Cuba and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel during Pershing's 1916 Punitive Expedition into Mexico. Young was the first African-American to reach that rank in the army and was also the highest ranking African-American officer in the army when WWI started. Young died Jan. 8, 1922 during a research expedition in Lagos, Nigeria. He was buried in Arlington Cemetery with military honors.

According to oral history, this house overlooking the Ohio River was a station on the underground railroad; future home of The National Underground Railroad Museum.



B7. Richeson Academy Historic Marker – lost to the ravages of time and neglect, Civil War Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William “Bull” Nelson attended this academy as young men.

B8. Bethel Baptist Church (1845) – founded by former slave Elisha W. Green who served as its pastor for more than 30 years; the original building burned in 1977. Born around 1816, Green fought for human rights and equality throughout his life. In his biography *“Life of the Rev. Elisha W. Green”* Green wrote, “I believe that the stain of slavery and its degrading impressions will long linger in the minds of generations yet unborn.”

B9. Phister Alley – early free black settlement area and site of 1860 African Methodist Episcopal Church.

B*10. The National Underground Railroad Museum – slave artifacts, photos and memorabilia. Currently housed in Maysville Visitor’s Center.

(Proceed east on W. Third Street, street name changes to Forest Avenue at D.B. Coughlin Blvd. intersection. Follow two blocks, Bethel Baptist church sits on left)

B11. Elisha W. Green Historic Marker – located at current site of Bethel Baptist Church, 501 Forest Avenue.



(Return to D.B. Coughlin Blvd. intersection; turn left, go 1/4 mile, turn left into parking lot at Fee High School Memorial)

B12. Fee High School Memorial – site of Maysville’s black high school named in honor of abolitionist John G. Fee; when integration came to Mason County the building later became the Maysville Junior High School. The building was demolished, now the site of Mason County Detention Center.

(Turn right from parking lot, take immediate right at traffic islands onto KY 11 South. Follow KY 11 for 1 mile, “Glen Alice” house sets back in large yard on right)

B13. “Glen Alice” House (1848) – built by John Porter Dobyns, the house is also known as the octagon house. At one time there was a brick two-story, six-room building behind the house which served as kitchen and slave quarters. It was at this house Elisha W. Green was taught to read by Dobyns’ daughter Alice who called Green “Uncle Elisha”.

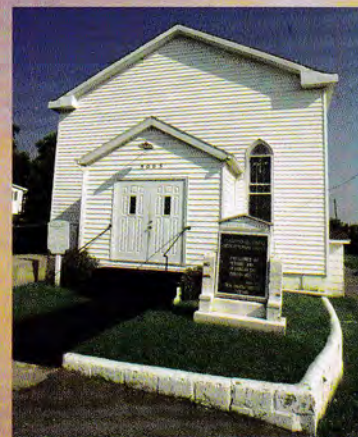


C1. Charles D. Young Historic Marker – one mile on right beyond Helena; site of slave cabin where Young was born and lived until his family moved to Ripley, Ohio.



C2. Ward Road (located on left when KY 324 makes sharp right turn) – site of early Black community called Banion Hill. Today the site is a vacant field and very little is known about the inhabitants or what became of them. According to local folklore the town was burned; it is said the building foundations are beneath a pond on the property. *(Follow KY 324 to intersection of U.S. Hwy. 68, cross highway into May’s Lick, sites #C3 and #C4 are on immediate right)*

C3. Second Baptist Church – since the 1850’s this church has served the needs of African-American Baptists in the May’s Lick area. Oldest African-American School in Kentucky located behind church, established c. 1889



C4. First Consolidated Black School in Mason County (1920). Children from May’s Lick, Helena, Wedonia and Lewisburg attended this school until 1960 when desegregation took place. The school has been identified as a Rosenwald School built between 1917 and 1932. Julius Rosenwald became involved with construction of schools for African-Americans through his friendship with Booker T. Washington.

(Drive to picturesque town center, turn right onto KY 2517 to return to U.S. 68; turn left toward Washington. As you travel U.S. 68 remember this was an oft-used Underground Railroad escape route north as well as slave coffles route to southern slave markets)

ound Railroad

er • Mason County, Kentucky & Ripley, Ohio



D. Washington

...early 1786 pioneer town, home of Frontiersman Simon Kenton, considered by many to be "the father of Mason County". Washington also has a strong tie to Harriet Beecher Stowe and her famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe visited the home of the Marshall Key family in the summer of 1833, as their daughter Elizabeth was her student in Cincinnati. To provide entertainment for Stowe during her visit, Mr. Key took her to the courthouse lawn to see slaves being sold on the auction block. The auction left such an impression upon Stowe she never forgot it and incorporated it into her novel, which became a best seller in 1853. The novel created a wave of anti-slavery sentiment across the nation. Upon meeting Stowe in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln said, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this Great War!"

D. Washington

8

D6. Basil Duke home
(c. 1810) –
former home of
John McClung
member of Colonization
Society.



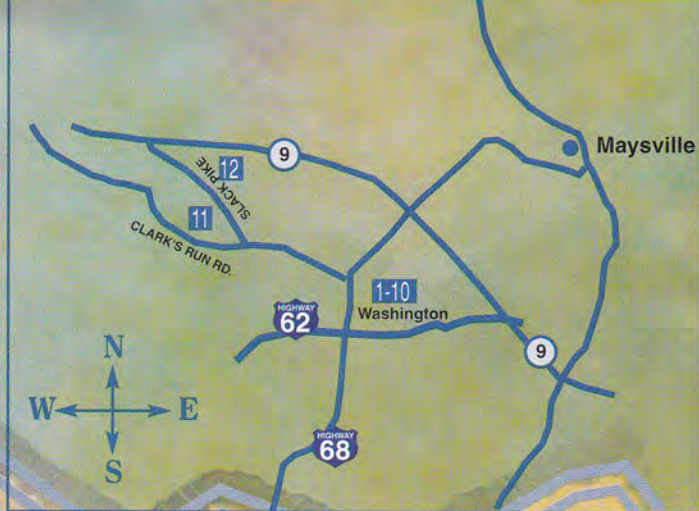
D7. Washington Courthouse (c. 1793) – slave auctions held on courthouse lawn, original building burned down in 1909, but stone foundation remains.

D*8. Paxton Inn (1810) – built by prominent Washington lawyer and abolitionist James Paxton. The inn was a popular gathering place for citizens to discuss politics and other issues of the day, including slavery. Oral history says fugitive slaves were hidden in a stairway.

D*9. Old Church Museum (1848)
– this Methodist Church was built with a separate loft for slaves. To gain entry slaves had to climb a ladder through the second story doors; once inside, the ladder was removed until services ended, eliminating the possibility of escape.

D10. Federal Hill (c.1800) - built by Captain Thomas Marshall, brother of Chief Justice John





D*1. Haven's Chapel – early Methodist Church formed in 1882. Began as a one-room frame building in 1874 during post-conscription era by free persons of color. The church was destroyed by fire on three occasions; current structure built in 1941.

D*2. Simon Kenton Shrine and early country store.

D*3. Cane Brake Visitor's Center – Information and costumed guides available for tours through village. Copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are available. 606-759-7411.



D*4. Marshall Key Home – now home of Harriet Beecher Stowe Slavery to Freedom Museum; Stowe witnessed a slave auction in Washington during her visit to the Key family home in 1833. 606-759-4860

D*5. Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston childhood home (c. 1797)

Marshall of the United States Supreme Court. The Marshalls were slave owners and slave quarters remain on the property.

(Proceed to intersection of Old Main Street and U.S. Hwy. 68; cross U.S. Hwy. 68 onto Clark's Run Road, travel 1 mile to Slack Pike, turn right. Proceed 3 miles to sites #D11 and #D12)



D11. Social Hall – construction date of this home and the Slack Plantation home (below) is unknown. What is known is several generations of the Slack family lived in the area and this home was one of three homes built for the Slack sons. The home

was the center of social activity in the Fernleaf community, playing host to chess games, debating societies, parties and events.



D12. Slack Plantation – At one time the Slacks were the largest slave owners in Mason County. One slave, known as "High Ball" Watson, escaped at the end of the Civil War, making his way to Ripley, Ohio. As the war drew to a close, Watson stayed in Ripley without fear of being returned to his owners. Brick slave quarters next to home.

(Follow Slack Pike to its end at KY 9, turn left toward Cincinnati or right to reach U.S. Hwy. 68)

D. Washington



- D-1: Haven's Chapel
- D-2: Simon Kenton Shrine
- D-3: Cane Brake Visitor's Center
- D-4: Marshall Key
- D-5: Albert Sidney Johnston
- D-6: Basil Duke
- D-7: Washington Courthouse
- D-8: Paxton Inn
- D-9: Old Church Museum
- D-10: Federal Hill

P Parking
♂♀ Restrooms