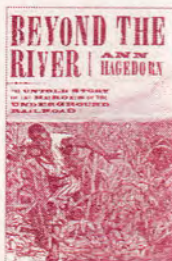


Recommended Reading

Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad

by Ann Hagedorn 2003

This is Ripley's story-Rankin, Collins, Parker, McCague and all of the local heroes in the Ohio River valley.



His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor

on the Underground Railroad

edited by Stuart Sprague 1996

"Usually we need to invent our American heroes. With..Parker's memoir, we seem to have discovered the genuine article" -Joseph Ellis, *Civilization Magazine*



Across the Wide River

by Stephanie Reed

Young adult novel based on the memoirs of Adam Lowry Rankin as a young man-his adventures on the UGRR as well as family life here in Ripley.



Books are available for purchase at Ripley businesses, museums and the public library.

For tourism information and package tours, please contact:

Brown Co. Dept. of Economic Development
937-378-1970

web site www.ripleyohio.net
e-mail ripleyohio@aol.com

For site specific questions:
Parker House-937-392-4188
Rankin House-937-392-1627
Ripley Museum 937-392-4660

Historic Ripley, Ohio Freedom's Landing



Ripley, from the Kentucky side of the Ohio.

Underground Railroad Tour



Part of the
National Millennium Trail

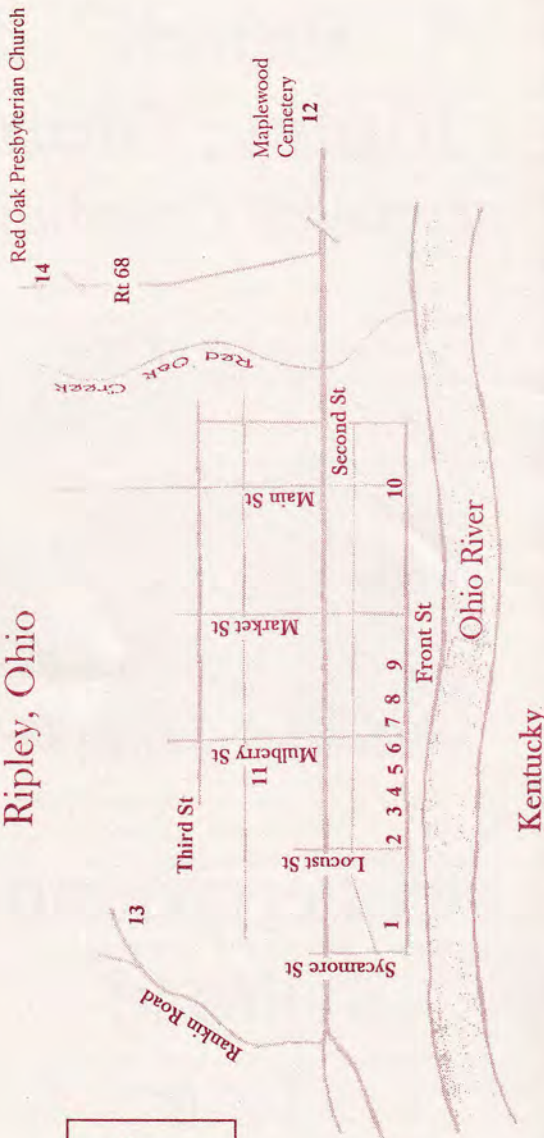
Village of Ripley is the recipient of the African American Trailblazer Award 2003



Site Legend

- National Historic Landmark
- * Open seasonally
- ◆ Admission charged
- 🏠 Private Residence

Ripley, Ohio



1. PARKER HOUSE◆*■

Home of the ex-slave, abolitionist and inventor John P. Parker. Born a slave in 1827, Parker, after several failed attempts to escape, purchased his freedom and moved north. By 1849, Parker had moved to Ripley and by day, worked in his own foundry, and by night, helped slaves escape from Kentucky. In the 1880-90s, Parker received patents for his soil pulverizer and tobacco presses. A National Historic Landmark. Open to the public



2. SIGNAL HOUSE 🏠



This 1830s Italianate house is currently a B&B. Legend has it that if a light was displayed from the attic 'sky light', the waterfront was safe for slave transport up to the Rankin House. The house

also was the residence of Civil War General Granville Moody, "The Fighting Parson", preacher and soldier.

3. RANKIN DWELLING 🏠

This 3 unit brick dwelling was built by John Rankin shortly after his arrival to Ripley in 1821. It was here that Rev. Rankin wrote his famous Letters on



American Slavery, first as letters in the local newspaper *The Castigator*. The newspaper editor David Ammen also lived here.

4. MCCAGUE HOUSE 🏠 Thomas McCague was an ardent anti-slavery advocate. On one occasion, John



Parker, an UGRR conductor, being pursued, brought a party of slaves to this location at break of day. McCague said "It's daylight, don't stop." His wife, Aunt Kitty said: "Daylight or or no daylight,

Parker, bring them in."

5. KIRKER HOUSE

Civil War General, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant boarded at this house while attending the Whitmore private school in 1838, shortly before he entered West Point. Grant was influenced by the abolitionist tone of Ripley.



6. COLLINS HOUSE



Thomas Collins, Englishman, cabinet maker, chief conductor on the Underground Railroad. Its portals were always open, through this door stole refugees innumerable, the night was never too dark, nor the journey

too long for its owner to issue forth leading the helpless across the hills to freedom.

7. BEASLEY SITE

Dr. Alfred Beasley, anti-slavery sympathizer and advocate. In a night encounter at the Ripley ferry landing, both a master and slave were severely

wounded. The slave escaped but lay in a barn of Theodore Collins for several months. The doctor attended each without the other knowing it.



8. POAGE HOUSE



Col. James Poage laid out the town of Ripley in 1812. In 1841 his son Robert Poage volunteered to escort runaways along with the Rankin's sons.

9. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL HOUSE

Doctor, merchant, and anti-slavery leader, a Virginian by birth, he moved to Ohio in 1803, freeing his slaves. U.S. Senator from 1809-1813. At the burning of the Capitol by the British he rode out of Washington never to return.



10. LIBERTY MONUMENT



The monument, placed at the foot of Main Street, was dedicated in 1912, and carries four bronze tablets that honor Ripley's abolitionist heroes. One side bears the names of prominent abolitionists in Ripley, Red Oak, Russellville, Decatur and Sardinia, the second side honors "the men who wrought for liberty were the forerunners of the abolitionist movement culminating in the Civil War". The third side lists admirals and generals from our area during the Civil War, and lastly, a plaque that honors the companies of infantry, cavalry and navy that came from Ripley.

11. FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF RIPLEY

located at Mulberry and Third Streets. This is the final (1867) 'edition' of the several Presbyterian churches that were built on this site, beginning in 1816. It was at this church site that Rev. John Rankin preached his anti-slavery doctrines.



12. RANKIN BUST



Located in the Maplewood Cemetery, less than a mile from the intersection of Main and 2nd Streets. This bronze was sculpted by one of his granddaughters. John and his wife Jean Rankin are buried here.

13. RANKIN HOUSE

Located at the top of Liberty Hill, this National Historic Landmark was John Rankin's home to his family and refuge to the thousands of slaves as they made their way to freedom. Open to the public.



14. RED OAK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Just outside Ripley on Rt. 68, this was abolitionist James Gilliland's church, as well as the location of the first religious meeting held within limits of Brown Co.

Early settlers ventured to the Ripley area in the late 1700s. Col. James Poage of Staunton, Virginia, arrived in 1804 claiming his 1000 acre tract of land in what was then the Virginia Military District. Opposed to slavery, Poage and his family freed their slaves upon landing in the free state of Ohio. Originally named Staunton by Poage, the town was renamed in 1816, in honor of General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley, an officer of the War of 1812. Ripley is bound by billowing hills, meandering creeks and the Ohio River. The setting is good for river traffic, with one of the deepest waters and straightest landings on the Ohio River, the main thoroughfare for transporting goods long before railroads and highways. In the nineteenth century, the Ohio River was shallower and only one-third its current width, making it possible for the river to freeze often in winter, and in summer during droughts making it easy to cross. Ripley's geography helped to shape its future, as the creeks offered a chance for escaping slaves to throw off the scent from the tracking dogs, and the hills served as hiding places and escape routes.

It was to this setting that Rev. John Rankin rowed his family across the river on December 31st, 1821 to begin a new life in a free state. From the pulpit, Rev. Rankin spoke of the evils of slavery, and the belief that all men should be free. One of Rankin's brothers lived in Virginia and purchased a slave—a move that provoked Rankin to write letters against slavery in the local newspaper, and to send the issues to his brother, admonishing him for his actions. In 1826, these letters were published in book form as *Letters on American Slavery*, which became one of the most important anti-slavery publications in the nation. For nearly forty years, Rankin and his family assisted fugitive slaves, hiding as many as twelve in their home at once, and over time helping thousands. Rankin's work inspired others to rally to the cause and Rankin's house became a symbol of freedom.

Calvin Fairbanks was told that Ripley was a 'black, dirty Abolition hole' when he crossed the ferry to Ripley in 1844—

During the Civil War, Morgan and other southern raiders had sworn to burn this "damned abolitionist hellhole to the ground..."

John P. Parker was born a slave in Virginia in 1827, and after failed attempts of escape, worked in Mobile, Alabama and purchased his freedom in 1845. By 1849, Parker had settled in Ripley, and began his day job of running an iron foundry, and at night, crossing the river to aid slave escapes. Hundreds of slaves benefitted from Parker's bravery, and, as with Rankin, there was a price on his head for capture. Parker was one of the few abolitionists who crossed the river back into Kentucky to bring slaves to the free state of Ohio. Another participant in the Ripley 'line' of the Underground Railroad was Thomas McCague, a pork-packing and banking magnate, who risked losing his wealth and good name by aiding fugitive slaves. McCague's neighbor on Ripley's Front Street, Thomas Collins, was a carpenter who made coffins that were sometimes temporary hiding places for slaves. These were among the numerous men and women, black and white in Ripley, who risked their lives and livelihoods for the cause for ending slavery.

The Ohio River froze in late February 1838, and a slave woman with a child living near the river in Kentucky decided it was time to escape.

Despite the ice breaking up, she somehow made it to the Ohio shore. John Rankin later told her story of courage and victory to Harriet Beecher Stowe which inspired Stowe to create the character Eliza in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Abolitionists were at work in the early 1800s, but the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act made their actions much more dangerous. The Act, which stated, in part, that anyone who obstructed the arrest of a fugitive or facilitated the slave's flight could be fined 1000.00 or jailed. No longer were free blacks on Ohio safe, as a slave catcher could come to a free state and 'reclaim' property for a reward.

In 1831, a slave named Tice Davids swam the Ohio River at Ripley. His owner chased after him in a boat and searched the Ripley shore for any sign of his escaped 'property'. The owner asked around, and to his dismay, no one had even seen the slave. Frustrated, he returned to Kentucky, where he told everyone his slave must have disappeared on an "underground road"—later to be changed to the **Underground Railroad**.

In 1861, the Civil War began, and Ripley rallied. Many sons of Ripley fought for the Union, and those too young or too old to enlist formed home guard units. Six of Rankin's sons and one grandson fought in the Civil War, and all survived.

Ripley's history continues to inspire and intrigue historians, residents and visitors. As you travel through Ripley, picture the past, with abolitionists and slaves running through the alleys, and up the hill to Rankin's house, the beacon of freedom. And think about the dangers for those who believed that enslaving humans was wrong—great Americans who put their convictions in motion and had the courage to say no to slavery.