

Incredible Journey to Midnight ***Detroit Underground Railroad Tour Primer***

A couple things:

Term ***Underground Railroad*** is figurative not literal. It was a secretive or clandestine way of moving people along a route/s and did not rely upon railroads or underground tunnels.

Slavery – institution of forced servitude upon enslaved Africans practiced in United States during 18th and 19th centuries. Demand for free workers developed into a huge industry of forced labor. Unlike indentured servants, slaves could be bought and sold at will and had no promise of freedom.

Abolitionists – supporters of the anti-slavery movement

Fugitive Slave Laws – harsh laws passed to protect property rights of Southern slaveholders and punish those who helped run away slaves

Northwest Ordinance – signed into law by President George Washington on August 17, 1789 created the Northwest Territory, the first such territory in the new United States. Northwest Territory consisted of what is now Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and part of Minnesota. Of important note: slavery was prohibited in the new territory.

Emancipation Proclamation – Presidential proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln freeing all slaves in the rebellious states (Confederacy).

A few names to know:

Frederick Douglas – mixed-race* male born into slavery. Became famous orator, social reformer and abolitionist **people of mixed race were automatically labeled Negro no matter what the percentage of African blood or ancestry they possessed.*

John Brown – famous white abolitionist who believed it was his destiny to work for the cause of abolishing slavery. Not content to wait for legal means, Brown was a proponent of liberation and insurrection.

Sojourner Truth – Born into slavery, she became a famous abolitionist and advocate for women's rights.

Timeline:

- 1607 Colony of Jamestown founded
- 1619 Twenty Africans brought to Jamestown as *indentured servants* (servitude with a definite promise of freedom)
- 1642 Virginia Colony enacts laws fining those who harbor or assist runaway slaves
- 1650 *Chattel slavery* (people are treated as the personal property [chattels] of owners and bought and sold as if commodities [marketable items such as coffee, sugar, cash crops, oil] becomes an accepted and popular practice in the colonies – a shift from indentured servants)
- 1663 First major conspiracy for freedom takes place between black slaves and white indentured servants
- 1775 Pennsylvania abolition society formed
- 1776 Colonies declare independence from Britain
- 1777 Northern states abolish slavery
- 1787 Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibits slavery in new territory
- 1793 Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 passed (right to recover a slave)
- 1804 Underground Railroad incorporated after slave holder refuses to relinquish a freedom seeker captured in new federal territories
- 1808 Slave importation outlawed
- 1838 Underground Railroad (UGRR) organizes in Michigan (one year after gaining statehood)
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 passed (Bloodhound Law requiring the return of slaves)
- 1852 Uncle Tom's Cabin published by Harriet Beecher Stowe and depicted the reality of slavery
- 1859 Supreme Court rules blacks not US citizens and slave owners have right to retrieve their property in free states (upholding the Fugitive Slave Law and confirming the supremacy of the power of the federal government over the power over a state)
- 1860 Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln elected president of United States
- 1861 Civil War begins with a goal of preserving the Union of the United States
- 1862 Slavery abolished in Washington DC
- 1863 Emancipation Proclamation declares all slaves in the rebellious states “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” While the Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave, it was an important turning point in the Civil War, transforming what had been a fight to preserve the nation into a battle for human freedom.
- 1865 13th Amendment to the Constitution frees all slaves; Civil War ends; Underground Railroad ends; President Abraham Lincoln assassinated