The Underground Railroad in *Rockville*

Using the name "Underground Railroad" (UGRR) to describe the network that helped freedom seekers began after 1828, when actual railroads were built in the United States, and the railroad language could be used to conceal movements among the users of actual railways.

Contemporary accounts such as William Still's Underground Railroad suggest there was a network of people in Rockville who assisted enslaved individuals seeking freedom. Unfortunately, we do not know their identities. It was illegal to help fugitives escape, and operations were conducted with great secrecy. This protected all involved from detection and helped to keep the routes open for future use.

The "passengers" seeking freedom received help from "conductors" following a route of "stations" that led them to safety in the North and beyond. The UGRR was not about secret rooms or hidden passages but brave men and women, Black and White, who risked their freedom to help others gain theirs.

Forging Freedom: Endurance and Escape

At Peerless Rockville, we see the story of the Underground Railroad as an example of our nation's struggle for justice. Maryland, as an upper-South border state, played a critical role in the story of slavery, the formation of the UGRR movement, and the survival of the Union during the Civil War. We are proud to share stories of the role that 1850s Rockville played, and the impact local people and events had on the national UGRR movement. Peerless Rockville invites you to explore this important part of our history by visiting our exhibit at the historic Red Brick Courthouse, and the places in Rockville that link our local history to these events.

To learn more about this topic:

VISIT

Josiah Henson Museum and Park
www.montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/josiah-henson-park/

City of Rockville African American History Tour
www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/978/Historic-Rockville-African-American-Walking-Tour-Brochure?bidId=

National Network to Freedom Sites
www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/explore-ugrr-sites.htm

READ

For more about Ann Maria Weems and her family:

- *A Shadow on the Household* by Brian Prince
- *Stealing Freedom* (YA) by Elisa Carbone

For more about Josiah Henson

- *Sharp Flashes of Lightning Come From Black Clouds: The Life of Josiah Henson* by Jamie Ferguson Kuhns

For more about the UGRR

- *Escape on the Pearl* by Mary K. Ricks
- *Heroes of the Underground Railroad* by Jenny Masur
- *The Underground Railroad by William Still https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15263/15263-h/15263-h.htm*

For a more complete list visit our website at
www.PeerlessRockville.org

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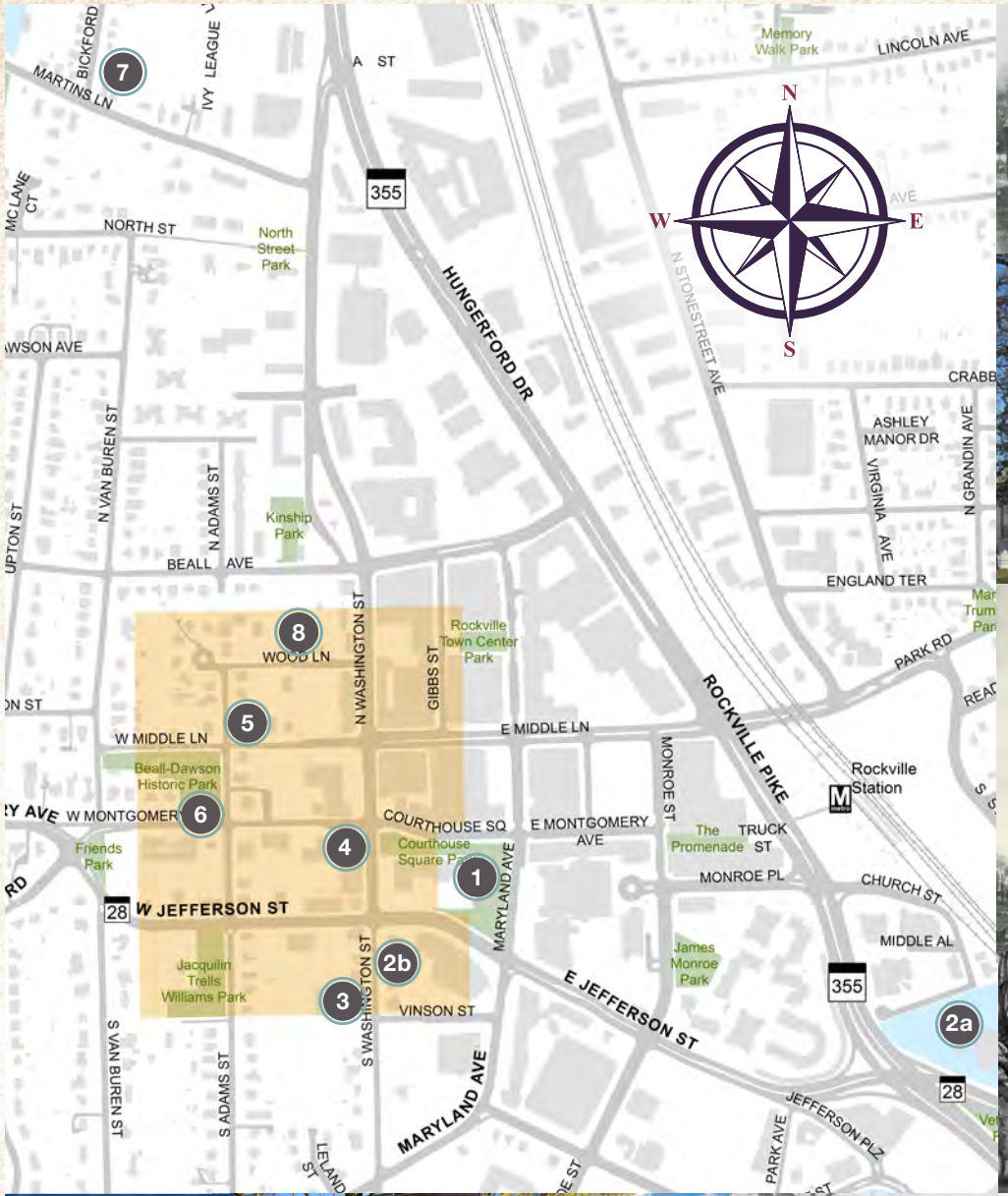
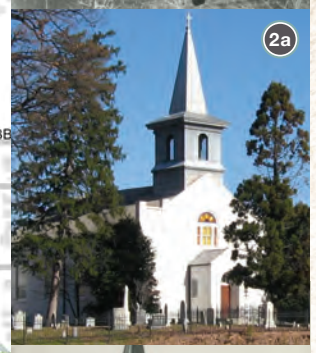
Forging Freedom:

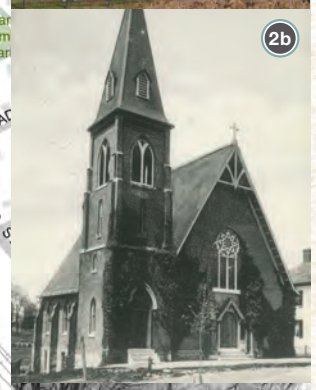
Endurance and Escape on Rockville's Underground Railroad

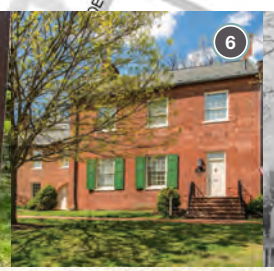
Peerless Rockville is located in the Red Brick Courthouse at

29 Courthouse Square
301.796.0072
www.peerlessrockville.org









For more information visit peerlessrockville.org

1 The 1840 **Courthouse** pictured is the second courthouse to occupy this location, before the standing 1891 Red Brick Courthouse. The courthouse was a focal point of the community, with people coming to conduct all manner of business. Property transactions which included the sale of enslaved persons, as well as the filing of manumission and freedom papers occurred here.

2a 2b **2a & b The Chapel at St. Mary's Catholic Church & Christ Episcopal Church**
In Rockville, Whites and Blacks, both free and enslaved, worshipped and received sacraments including baptism and marriage at the same churches. However, seating was racially segregated. Two of the oldest standing churches in Rockville are The Lady's Chapel at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Veirs Mill Road (1817) and Christ Episcopal Church on S. Washington St. First constructed in 1822; the current building was completed in 1887.

3 **Dr. John Anderson House**
Dr. John Anderson was a Rockville resident who, like many others in the 19th century, was a slaveowner. Dr. Anderson offered $100 reward for the return of enslaved man Alfred in 1856. Running away from slavery meant leaving behind family and friends, and carried a high risk. The assistance of others was often critical to a successful escape, and freedom seekers would have looked to UGRR connections for help.

4 **The Montgomery County Sentinel** was printed in Rockville for over 100 years. Ads for slave sales and the return of fugitives, such as the one here for Ann Maria Weems, often ran in the paper. Thirteen-year-old Ann Maria, who made a daring flight dressed as a boy, may have begun her escape from the home of Charles Price, a slave dealer who lived in Rockville. The names of many enslaved persons are only known through ads placed in newspapers after they escaped.

5 The house at **101 N. Adams Street** is the oldest standing house in Rockville. It was once owned by Adam Robb, who held enslaved workers at his tavern and on his farm. Robb briefly owned Josiah Henson, whose life story was one of the inspirations for Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Robb's death was the catalyst for several Rockville fugitives to risk escaping, as they feared being sold and separated from family members.

6 7 **6 & 7 Beall-Dawson House and Haiti**
In addition to stately brick Beall-Dawson House, the Beall family owned a large farm operated by slave labor, including John Henson, brother of Josiah Henson. After Emancipation, the three Beall sisters sold land to people they had formerly enslaved, who founded the community of Haiti (pronounced Hay-tie) located on Martin's Lane [7]. A privately owned cemetery in Haiti has graves of many family members from this community.

8 **Jerusalem M.E. Church**
Before the Civil War Jerusalem Methodist Church, like others in Rockville, served both the White and Black communities. After the Civil War, it became property of the Black congregation. The current building was constructed in 1892 on the site of the original church, reusing some of the original materials.