

In 1927 the Des Moines Sunday Register Magazine Section ran a six part series of the 1859 journey of John Brown across Iowa. Written by F. H. Polk, the series ran weekly from February 20 through March 27. The fourth in the series focused on the stop in Grinnell and was entitled "How Grinnell's Liberty Room got it's name." Works from 1927 are now in the public domain. Drake Community Library staff have transcribed the entirety of the series for easier reading.

PLEASE NOTE: These articles have been transcribed as published in 1927. It is our goal to preserve and make available this historical account. But please be aware that, some of the materials presented may reflect outdated, biased, offensive language. The library does not condone this language but offers this document as written for archival purposes.

PART 1

MARCHING across IOWA WITH OLD' JOHN BROWN – February 20, 1927

A Price of \$3,000 on His Head, "Old Osawatomie" Defied Nation and Led Slaves to Canada.

John Brown of Osawatomie spake on his dying day:

"I will not have to shrive my soul, a priest in Slavery's pay.

"But let some poor slave-mother, whom I have striven to free,

With her children, from the gallows-stair, put up a prayer for me."

John Brown of Osawatomie, they led him out to die;

And lo, a poor slave-mother, with her little child pressed nigh.

Then the bold, blue eye grew tender and the old harsh face grew mild,

As he stopped between the jeering ranks and kissed the Negro's child.

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell apart;

And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave the loving heart.

That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed the good intent,

And round the grisly fighter's head the martyr's aurcole bent. –Whittier.

Late in the afternoon of Saturday, March 12, 1859, the Detroit-Windsor ferry boat, plowing through choppy and ice flecked waters, drew slowly into its log slip on the American side, at the foot of Woodward avenue. The day was raw and disagreeable, as March days are apt to be in Detroit, with a sleety rain driven by a northeast wind. Few persons were there to witness the arrival of the ferry boat but one man in particular had been noted.

For an hour or more he had been pacing the waterfront, slowly, with bowed head, his hands behind his back—a compactly built man of medium height, with a long white beard and eyes of steely blue ray which scrutinized those he met from beneath shaggy eyebrows. He wore a suit of light material that showed the rents and stains of travel but was without overcoat or gloves.

Twelve Slaves Transported.

As the Windsor ferry drew near he hastened his steps and was close by when the plank was thrown out and the passengers filled ashore. Satisfied, apparently, he drew aside some yards, where he was joined in a moment by a younger man and the two, after a few minutes' earnest conversation, parted and moved in opposite directions.

Within an hour twelve Negroes, men, women and children—one a baby of a few weeks, were hurried quickly and stealthily in the gathering dusk, aboard the waiting ferry, led forward to a place of partial concealment, where they dropped to the deck and huddled together for warmth. Following them was the old man with the patriarchal beard. To each of the group he spoke a word of cheer; to each accorded a hearty handshake. Then, his head bowed, his arm raised above the crouching Negroes he spoke these words:

“Lord, permit thy servant to die in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; I could not brook the thought that any ill should befall you—least of all that you should be taken back to slavery. The arm of Jehovah protected us.”

He stepped ashore as the last bell was ringing then turned and watched the receding ferry as it chugged into the rough and ice-choked Detroit river; watched until it merged into the gathering darkness; still watched as the tiny red light on the cabin rail grew dimmer and dimmer until all was lost in the mist and blackness of the nearing Canadian shore.

A few moments he lingered, then faced abruptly about and, with hands again clasped behind his back, walked slowly and thoughtfully through the sodden, unlighted streets of Detroit's old waterfront to an ancient, weather beaten rooming house, now believed to have been in one of the many by-streets, leading out of Woodward avenue.

Such was John Brown, old “Osawatimie Brown,” in the fifty-ninth and last year of life—one of the most desperate and dangerous adventures in the long story of suffering and heroism in the west.

Eluded Posses.

A few days before Christmas brown and others made a raid over the Missouri line and forcibly reed eleven slaves. For eighty-two days he fed and protected these Negroes and transported them in the dead of winter, in an overland trip of 1,100 miles, more than 600 of which were by wagon and on foot. Without money, often without food, depending on chance charity, eluding posses intent on his capture for the big rewards, harassed by state and federal troops, he was successfully at last in this, his only attempt to make good the doctrine he had been preaching from early manhood, the freeing of slaves and the setting up of a new standard of equality in the United States. This, in brief, is the story to be told in this series—to follow in the footsteps of the old abolitionist from his last foray into Missouri the deliver his fugitive slaves to “underground railroad” agents at Detroit, who escorted them safely to the free soil of Canada.

The period embraced lies between Brown's wise and heroic efforts to free Kansas forever from the blight of slavery, upon which his fame chiefly rests and his foolish and treasonable attack on the federal arsenal at harpers Ferry, which brought him only death and the belated glory that goes with martyrdom.

This is in no sense a biography of John Brown and, indeed, it would be presumptuous to attempt one. The searchlight of American historical inquiry has played fiercely upon him for two generations. Probably as much is known now as ever will be known of his life, his ancestry, personality, aims and motives, his private life and his public actions. This much, however, is certain. After sixty-five years of intensive investigation, historians are still divided on what and who John Brown really was.

Hundreds of books and pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles have been written about him and around his interesting life story. A few—very few—are unbiased and of real merit. Mostly they are colored by the minds of the authors. Some are laudatory to a ridiculous degree; some are cheaply penned and display only ignorance; many are bitter and vicious attacks, under the neutral name of “biography.”

Inherited Courage.

This vast mass of material is the mine in which some real historian of the future will delve and evolve a just and accurate appraisal of the life and work of “Old Osawatimie.” To us today he appears, as he has appeared for fifty- years—the chief actor in the prelude to the great drama of the civil war, as played for five bitter years on the battlefields of the north and south.

But something must be said of John Brown’s life prior to his trip with fugitive slaves through Iowa and of the political situation, which first called him to Kansas in 1855. Again later a few closing words will be necessary, for the lonely old man can not be left indefinitely, sitting in a gloomy hotel on the Detroit waterfront.

The only story of John brown’s boyhood of any merit whatever is that written by himself at Red Rock, Ia., in July, 1857, at the request of the 13-year-old son of a Boston friend. He was born May 9, 1800, at Torrington, Conn., and was a direct descendant of Peter Brown, who came to Plymouth in the Mayflower in 1620. His father’s father and his mother’s father were officers in father’s father and this mother’s father were officers in the war of the revolution. His heritage, then, was moral and physical courage.

When he was 12 he saw a Negro boy about his own age, his playmate at times, starved and beaten for a trivial offense and he then vowed “eternal war with slavery.” In 1820, with the passage of the Missouri compromise he became openly hostile to the institution of human bondage; the militant abolitionist, convinced that slavery could be overthrown only by force.

He was a profound student of the bible and became such a master of its text, that, as his daughter, Ruth has recorded, he would correct instantly any misquotation. He was twice married and the father of twenty children, the last born shortly before he took the field in Kansas. He early became a member of the Congregational church, which years afterward, made him a welcome guest in the Congregational colony at Tabor, Ia.

By the time the Kansas drama opened John Brown had been a tanner, a wool dealer, a cattle merchant and expert breeder of stock, surveyor, farmer, real estate operator and village postmaster. By what evolution of mind he was changed from a peaceful man, in peaceful pursuits to a border ruffian, with blood on his hands and a price on his head, is a problem in psychology and not at all important to this story. But we find him ready when the call from Kansas came.

Seven Years War in Kansas.

The Missouri compromise, passed in 1820, provided for admission of that territory as a slave state but excluded slavery from all states to be admitted west of the Mississippi and north of latitude 36-30. This latitude formed the southern line of Missouri. Maine came in at the same time as a free state and the number of free and slave states remained equal.

But in the late forties Texas joined the union as a slave state and the Missouri slave holders were pushing west and taking claims in Kansas. Hordes of settlers rushed to Kansas, largely from the New England states and a new problem arose. Dissatisfaction with the Missouri compromise grew rapidly and in 1854, after an agitation of nearly ten years the proslavery forces in congress, led by Stephen A. Douglas, effected the repeal of the Missouri compromise and the passage of the notorious Kansas-Nebraska bill Squatter sovereignty—the right of each state to vote for itself whether it should be free or slave—now came into effect. It became and remained the most odious piece of legislation of pre-war days and three years later received added strength through the equally notorious Dred Scott decision of Chief Justice Taney.

The result was that hundreds of Missourians rushed over the Kansas border to vote the slavery ticket and found themselves opposed by the standpat abolitionist immigrants from the east. The seven years long struggle for Kansas was on and into this struggle went John Brown, promptly, incautiously, offering to “bleeding Kansas” every resource of brain and brawn at his command. He arrived in Kansas for the first time in October, 1855, and went direct to Osawatomie, where relatives had preceded him.

Between this time and December, 1858, John Brown made several trips between Kansas and the east, where most of the abolitionists who were backing financially, lived. This is a story of the underground railroad in north Kansas, southeastern Nebraska and across Iowa and it is necessary to omit all those important events that crowded Brown’s life in this active period—the night killings on the Pottawattomie, the battle of Black jack, the defense of Lawrence, the battle of Osawatomie, midnight forays into Missouri, the Marais des Cygnes massacre, narrow escapes from death, outlawed and hunted like a wild animal—the most momentous and interesting period of the old warrior’s picturesque career.

Followers Were Devoted.

During his militant antislavery period Brown had the closest friendship and support of two widely different classes of men. First the abolitionists of the east, men of brains and determination, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Garrison, Charles Sumner. Higginson and Theodore Parker, men who went to the limits of their purses continually to aid him, and, secondly, the young men who loved him and followed him as their leader to the end.

From the time of Brown’s last arrival in Kansas, June 26, 1858, until the end of the story, new characters are constantly crossing the stage, many of them Iowa boys, who, lured by the romance of Brown’s life, were ready to follow him, as many actually did to the final fall of the curtain at Harpers Ferry.

There is John Henry Kagi, newspaper man and lawyer, debater and brilliant speaker, brave, original and aggressive; Aaron Stevens, soldier of the Mexican war, who escaped from Leavenworth and joined the free state forces; superbly brave, of physique which no hardships could undermine, the

inspiration of the party in its darkest hours; Charles P. Tidd, who joined his fortunes with Brown's at Taber, Ia., in 1857 and was one of his leader's chief arms of support; George Gill of Springdale, Brown's sole companion on much of the long trek through Iowa—a master of terse, trenchant English, whose notes and letters are still invaluable to the historian; Jeremiah Anderson, a once Kossuth, Ia., school boy; Edwin and Barclay Coppoc of Springdale—all of them under thirty, many under twenty-five.

When Brown returned to Kansas in the summer of 1853 he came disguised behind a long white beard and under the name of Shubel Morgan for an altered personal appearance and a *nom de guerre* were necessary, now that Missouri and federal troopers were on the watch for him. His Harper's Ferry plans were fully matured in his mind and had been confided to several persons, close in his confidence, but he was not ready yet to leave Kansas for the last time. It was mere chance that decided for him.

On the night of Dec. 19, 1858, Brown and his men were encamped on the Kansas side of the Missouri line, in a part, known as the Osage district, from the river of that name, which George Gill, who had been doing scout duty about the camp, brought in a Negro who carried a load of brooms and apparently was seeking a market for his goods.

John Brown's Decision.

The Negro, whose name was Jim Daniels, repeated in the presence of Brown and the others, the story he had confided to Gill: that he, his wife and children belonged to a Missouri estate and were to be put up at auction soon and sold to the highest bidder to close the administration. His business he said, was not to sell brooms but to obtain help from the Kansas side for himself and family and for other Negro friends in the neighborhood, who were threatened with a similar fate.

Of this occasion Gill said later: "I am sure that Brown, in his mind, was just waiting for something to turn up; or, in his way of thinking, was expecting or hoping that 'God would provide him a basis of action.' When this came he hailed it as heaven sent."

On the following night Shubel Morgan divided his men into two companies, one led by himself and the other by Stevens, accompanied by Tidd, Hazlett and five others. Brown's party, including Gill, Kagi, Jeremiah Anderson and others to the number of ten, arrived about midnight at the home of Harvey Hicklan, Daniel's master.

Hicklan's door was forced and he was held at the point of loaded revolvers while the raiders seized five slaves and looted the house and outbuildings, taking even watches and personal trinkets, as Gill affirmed afterward. They then went to the home of one, Larue, less than a mile distant and liberated five more slaves. The property taken here consisted of horses, wagon, harness, clothing, bedding and provisions. Two white men, visitors at the Larue home, were taken prisoners and Brown and his men then made a hasty retreat to the Kansas side, with the slaves and stolen property.

The Cruise Murder.

In the meantime the Stevens party had gone to the residence of a wealthy, peaceable and generally popular settler by the name of David Cruise, who owned a woman slave, "which," Daniele insisted, should be rescued. Cruise opened his door on demand of the raiders and Stevens entered first. Noting that Cruise made a quick movement and imagining he was reaching for a revolver,

Stevens shot him dead. The house and barn were then looted, though Stevens and Tidd never were accused of this part of the night's work. Two yoke of oxen, provisions, eleven mules and several horses and the female slave were then taken to the camp on the Kansas side, where the two parties joined.

The slaying of Cruise was inexcusable and had far reaching effects. It at once put the lives and property of border settlers in jeopardy and many moved with their slaves and belongings to Arkansas. It aroused the people of western Missouri to a high pitch of excitement. The governor of Missouri offered a reward of \$3,000 for the capture of Brown and President Buchanan a reward of \$250. Poses, composed of Missourians and the peaceful element in Kansas, immediately took up the trail. Federal troops and state militia men were ordered out; the offices of men were ordered out; the offices of federal marshals and county sheriffs joined the chase. It was a dangerous and untenable position for John Brown and the doughty old warrior was due to leave Kansas and at once, no matter what his personal inclinations might be. One of the direct effects of the Cruise murder was to alienate the good will of the people of Tabor, Ia., as will appear later.

Hiding by day and traveling by forced marches at night Brown and his men arrived two days later at the home of Augustus Wattles, near Mound City. Wattles was a tried and trusted agent of the underground railroad. He remarked laconically that a "load of coal was always welcome in the winter," and hid the fugitives in an out-building.

Strangely enough no reference is made hereafter to the property alleged to have been taken by Brown in the Missouri raid and it seems unfair to hold him responsible on the testimony of his proslavery enemies. It was a one ox team only that left Wattles' early in the morning in charge of one guard and that night the party arrived at the Osawatomie home of the Rev. Samuel Adair, a relative of Brown's and a staunch abolitionist. The fugitive slave law was in full force and the position of the Adair claim on the north and south highway made it dangerous for the family to house runaway slaves.

Journeyed at Night.

However, they were kept in an out kitchen that night. Thirty hours later in the dead of night the Negroes were taken to an abandoned cabin on the open prairie, south of the town. It was a cheerless old shack, with no door, windows or flooring and the Negroes were forbidden to light a fire but brave men of Osawatomie, whose names are now lost to history, brought them food and bedding and patrolled the country for miles about, ready for any danger that threatened the safety of the slaves.

The woods along the Pottawatomie creek, on the shore of which the cabin stood, were searched by bands of Missourians but the hiding place was not molested. In the meantime Brown, who did not accompany the party to Osawatomie, but went south with his men to the vicinity of Fort Scott, came unannounced into Osawatomie Jan. 11, 1859.

He had stopped to bid farewell to his old friend Wattles and while there had written his famous "Parallels," too often quoted to need repetition but on the back, in pencil, appeared to following names of agents of the "underground" where he planned to stop: "Raynard, Holton.

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"Dr. Fuller, six miles.

“Smith, Walnut Creek, fifteen.

“Mills and Graham (attorneys), Albany, twenty-five.

“Nemaha City.

On River Road, Martin Stowell, Mount Vernon.

“Dr. Whitenger and Sibley, Nebraska City.

“Mr. Vincent, Ira Reed, Mr. Gardner.

“Tabor.”

Brown was now ready to start easy but unexpected delays occurred. One of these was the birth of a boy to one of the slave women. He was promptly baptized and named John Brown. He lived through the hardships of that awful winter journey and was in his mother’s arms when “Old Osawatomie” bid his fugitives a last farewell on the deck of the Detroit-Windsor ferry.

Jan. 20, 1859, John Brown, with George Gill for his only companion and helper, left Osawatomie with the slaves huddled in an ox-drawn wagon. And now began that long overland journey of more than 1,000 miles—that epic in American frontier adventure which has stirred men’s wonder and admiration for sixty-five years. The bitterest critics of Brown’s career pause here to do him justice.

Brown was a man nearing 59, not in robust health, for fever had confined him to bed for weeks in the preceding summer; broken with four years of deprivation and exposure; in constant personal danger, hunted by armed and purposeful men who would show him no mercy, a robber, a cattle and horse thief and accessory to murder in the eyes of the law. The hardships of this trip would have taxed the energy and endurance of a man half his age yet with a courage equal to all emergencies and sublime faith in the moral justice of his mission, he carried on, scantily clothed, without a dollar in his pockets, through mud and snow, sleet and storm, facing the bitter winds of the Kansas and Iowa prairies, fording ice-choked rivers, praying and hoping only that he might live to see his twelve helpless charges safely delivered from the horrors of slavery.

Contemptuous of Danger.

Two weeks after leaving Osawatomie Brown and his party crossed the Missouri river at Nebraska City to the free soil of Iowa. Neither Brown nor Gill seems to have kept much of a record of this period, but historical research has uncovered a vast amount of collateral material, bearing on the trip.

From this time on Brown’s contempt for the dangers that beset him is amazing. He traveled openly and in daylight, along well traveled roads, never however, taking unnecessary chances that might react on the safety of his twelve escaping slaves.

To avoid the dangers of the border road the party first went southwest to Garnett, Kan., then, turning north, arrived Jan. 24 at the home of Maj. J. B. Abbott, near Lawrence. It was near zero temperature when they drove into the Abbott yard and Gill records that his own feet were frozen and Brown’s hands, nose and ears were frozen and white. Abbott was a past master of underground

methods. He hid the Negroes safely, took Brown and Gill into his own house and sent the ox team to Lawrence, where it was sold and horses and wagons obtained.

From Lawrence the trail led to Topeka, where Kagi and Tidd had preceded Brown and were awaiting his arrival. Making a detour in the dark Brown pushed on, leaving Kagi and Tidd to procure provisions and join him later and reached Holton, in Jackson county, in a blinding snowstorm, Jan. 28. The party, for want of other shelter, stopped at the village hotel and the word spread rapidly that Brown and the fugitives were there and heading for the Nebraska line.

The result of this necessary incaution was seen next day when they arrived at a deserted cabin owned by Dr. Fuller, whose name appears in Brown's list of underground railroad stops. This cabin was on the bank of Muddy creek, which it was necessary to ford and Brown noticed drawn up on the opposite side of a crowd of volunteer man hunters, under command of a notorious deputy marshal, A. P. Wood.

The day was Sunday. Brown made no aggressive move but kept his Negroes closely guarded in the cabin and sent a messenger to Topeka to ask the aid of churchmen. Before this help arrived, however, Brown did not need it. Following his usual tactics of confronting the enemy without warning, his party began the fording at Fuller's crossing, swollen by a January thaw. Following is the story of an eye witness, as recorded by F. B. Sanborn:

The Enemy Routed.

"We marched toward the creek, but scarcely had the foremost entered the water when the valiant marshal mounted his horse and rode off in haste. His men followed as fast as possible but they were not all so lucky as he was in untying their horses from the stumps and bushes. The scene was ridiculous beyond description; some horses were hastily mounted by two men. One man grabbed tight hold of the tail of a horse, trying to leap on from behind, while the rider was putting the spurs into his side; so he went flying through the air, his feet touching the ground now and then. Those of our men who had horses followed them about six miles, and brought back with them four prisoners and five horses. . . . This battle of Muddy creek was known ever after in Kansas as 'The Battle of the Spurs'."

Here, too, may be added a true anecdote

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that portrays the kinder side of the stern and austere leader of the Kansas border. Brown asked a friend to try and procure some clothing and shoes for the fugitives, who, he said, were suffering from cold and exposure; also some food and a little money if possible. The friend noticed that Brown himself was shivering with cold and finding he had no underwear took off his own woolen undergarments and made Brown put them on. The clothing and shoes for the negroes were brought to Brown. A few miles further on Brown removed the warm woolens and gave them to one of the slaves who had received only a cotton shirt in the distribution, while he trudged on, with only a thin cotton suit, his feet wet, his own shoes soggy and flapping in the mud and slush.

The next stop was at Sabetha, near the Nebraska line. Three agents of the "underground" met the party south of town and the Negroes were divided into groups and put in secure hiding places.

The next day, Feb. 1, Brown bade his final farewell to Kansas. The weather was intensely cold. The Nemaha river was frozen over sufficiently to hold a man but not a team, so the wagons were taken apart and pushed across, the Negroes followed on foot and finally boards and brush were laid on the ice and the horses led over. Such was old Osawatomie's passing from the territory where nearly four years' untiring effort had made his name a terror to pro-slavery men, had brought down on his head the obloquy, bitter criticism and intense hatred that only border warfare can engender, but also, as the old animosities die out and the light of impartial inquiry burns brightly—a just and lasting fame.

Three days later the party crossed the Missouri river at Nebraska City and were on the soil of a friendly state. Brown wrote to his family:

“I am once more in Iowa through the great mercy of God. Those with me and other friends are well.”

(To be continued next Sunday.)

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PART 2

JOHN BROWN AND HIS FUGITIVES REACH TABOR, IOWA- February 27, 1927

*Hunted by Missouri Officers on Charge of Murder, Liberator Camped in Iowa School House
Preparing for Long, Cold Journey Across State.*

“When a tempest sprouts a pine on your hills, it looks green for months. Still it is timber, not a tree. John Brown has loosened the roots of the slave system. It only breathes. It does not live—hereafter.” –Wendell Phillips.

BROWN had looked forward to Tabor as a place of rest and recuperation from the fatigues of the Kansas and Nebraska trail. Both men and horses were all but worn out. So long as dangers beset him at every turn, the leader, ill and weak as he was, well knew that the success of the expedition rested on his own shoulders and had held up with wonderful fortitude when the party stood on Iowa soil and the strain of constant mental and physical alertness was relaxed somewhat, Brown suffered most from the reaction.

The old hero had every reason to expect a hearty welcome at Tabor. He had spent many weeks in the village, had drilled his Kansas soldiers and stored his arms there and counted the people among his closest friends and supporters in the free state cause. It was but twenty miles—a modest day's trip for Brown—from Nebraska City to Tabor and the little caravan drove in the following morning, Feb. 5, and went directly to the public square, as had been his custom on previous occasions.

Groups of people were awaiting his arrival, for his coming had been heralded far and wide through southwestern Iowa but to Brown's amazement the greeting he received was cool and formal. Some of his older and more intimate friends, it is true, came forward and grasped his hand but it was with a lukewarmness and want of enthusiasm he did not understand. Many stood aloof and made no overtures of friendliness whatsoever.

Brown soon learned the reason. It was the murder of David Cruise, the respected, peaceable Missouri planter, that the people of Tabor could not palliate or excuse. Reports, probably grossly distorted reports, of this affair had preceded him but the villagers, ardent as they were in the antislavery cause, drew the line at the taking of human life.

Brown was to find to his sorrow that the greeting of Tabor was only the first of several rebuffs yet in store for him, traceable to this inexcusable killing in the night raid into Missouri. That Brown did not actually fire the shot that killed the old man, made no difference. He had selected and warmed the men for that part of the night's work. He was the leader and was held accountable.

The results were even more far reaching, for Brown found on his return east that many of the men of brains and money who had financed him and care for his family, had withdrawn their support, after the news of the murder had been confirmed. It seems certain that it influences that Judge and jury after Harper's Ferry for the details of the raid were wormed into the evidence to show that Brown was a violent and dangerous agitator.

At this time the four most influential men in Tabor were the Rev. John Todd, George B. Gaston, S. H. Adams and Jonas Jones. The first three had founded the village and were its first settlers.

Tabor is on the north line of Fremont county, some ten miles due east from the Missouri river and has a population today of 1,200. It lies on the fertile eastern slope of the Missouri valley and its environs are dotted with prosperous and productive farms. Its only outlet by rail is over a stub line to the north, eleven miles in length and connecting with the main service of the Burlington at Malvern. This road is known as the Tabor & Northern and was built through the enterprise of the Tabor people when it became certain the big systems would pass them by. It runs no Sunday trains.

The village is conservative, dignified and old fashioned and the spirit of civil war days still hovers about it. Its streets are wide, fringed with beautiful old shade trees and, like Philadelphia, Des Moines, Cincinnati and many other cities, the main thoroughfares are named for the trees of the forest. It is an ultra-American community. The foreign elements that have sectionalized the state, absorbed much of its richest lands and crowded its larger cities, have passed. Tabor by and left it as it was in John Brown's day, an honest industrious, wholly literate Congregational village.

The founders came from Oberlin, one of the earliest and most active stations of the Ohio underground railroad. Its people were medical abolitionists. Oberlin college was the first in the United States to offer higher education to the Negro. Gaston believed that the high ideals of Oberlin—college and town---might be transplanted to the Missouri valley and in 1848 he interested Mr. Todd, ten recently ordained. They made a preliminary trip, selected the townsite and in 1853 returned, with their families, as settlers.

Tabor, almost immediately, became the most active abolition town in any of the northern free states and a "special object of suspicion and hatred to proslavery men of Missouri and Kansas." Its location in the most southwestern county of the state and close to the borders of slave holding Missouri and doubtful Nebraska gave it peculiar importance with the closing of the Missouri route to Kansas immigrants.

With the rush of free state men to Kansas the slavery forces of Missouri became alarmed. Immigrants through Illinois from the east were robbed and turned back by armed bands. It was said

every man was challenged with the word “cow.” If he pronounced it “keow,” he was considered a Yankee and a menace to slavery. Finally, in 1856, the river route was effectively blockaded and a new way in and out became necessary.

In June of that year Dr. Samuel G. Howe of Boston, arrived in Tabor from Kansas by way of Nebraska City and this marked the beginning of travel of free state men through the village. Howe routed the trail as far east as Des Moines. On his way east he interviewed settlers, learned their attitude toward slavery and made the first survey of the underground railroad across Iowa. Dr. Howe was one of Brown’s most faithful supporters.

The Oberlin abolition spirit was in truth transplanted to the prairies of Iowa and Tabor from the first lived up to its reputation as a community dangerous to the slave interests. The first passage of slaves through the village to freedom, as recorded by Mr. Todd, was in July 1856, the month following Dr. Howe’s visit.

A Mormon elder, his wife, daughter and six slaves arrived the afternoon of Independence day in carriage and covered wagon. The wagon was parked on Main street, near the corner of Elm. The slaves were as much “property” as the wagon itself; they were not seeking freedom and no effort was made to conceal them as no reason existed for doing so. But, stirred with the spirit of their heroic New England ancestry, the people of Tabor thought the Fourth of July a very fitting occasion to do a bit of freeing on their own account.

The slaves were approached cautiously and it was learned that five of them were eager to escape. One woman refused to leave her master. The five were met late that night, near the old hotel, when the Mormon and his family were asleep, and hurriedly rushed east in a light wagon. About day break they reached and crossed the Nishnabotna river, where the slaves were hidden in the bushes. At night again they were taken to the home of C. W. Tolles, on Silver creek and then in an old wagon to a Quaker settlement, near Des Moines. The Mormon elder made a general nuisance of himself when he discovered his loss but met with little sympathy. The blacks all escaped to Canada.

It was into this red hot abolitionist camp that John Brown first came in the fall of 1856 and made the acquaintance of Gaston, Jones, the Rev. Mr. Todd and others. He had just left Kansas and was pursued by United States troops, as reported, though he had seen nothing of them. He and his sons had with them a large stock of war material and one fugitive slave, who traveled inside the wagon, well covered up. Brown was traveling as a land surveyor, a pose he maintained, until assured the Tabor people were of his own mind on the slavery question.

The slave disappears from history at this point though it is presumed he made his way to freedom safely. Brown and his sons were taken into the Tabor homes and speedily became popular with the wary and cautious men of the village. The community consisted of about twenty-five houses and the war materials were distributed among them. Mr. Todd had a brass cannon in his hay mow and another in the wagon shed; muskets, clothing, small arms, powder and ball were stored in corn cribs and cellars, under beds and in dark hall ways. Twenty boxes of Sharp’s rifles, ten to the box, were hidden in Mr. Todd’s cellar and

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there remained for a year, when they were taken to Springdale, thence to Ashtabula, O., and finally part of them were used at the Harper’s Ferry raid.

Brown's longest stay in Tabor was from Aug. 7 to Nov. 1, 1857, when he was awaiting the outcome of the free state elections in Kansas. Part of this time was spent in practice at arms, in drilling and in target practice. When he finally left for the seat of trouble in Kansas he bore the hearty good will and good wishes of all the people of Tabor. This was the supposed temper of the people when Brown, with his fugitive slaves drove into the public square that winter morning in February, 1859.

This distinction which Tabor made between aiding the antislavery cause through the underground railroad or by any other means which fell within the abolitionist's moral code and the wanton taking of property and human life, has been the subject of historical controversy from that day to this. The forcible freeing of the slaves, the Taborites saw as a legitimate blow to slavery and, true to their tradition, immediately took steps to care for the fugitives.

An old cook stove was set up in the village schoolhouse; bedding and cooking utensils were loaned by several families, food was provided and the Negroes made as comfortable as possible. The physical and mental strain of the last six weeks had not fallen as heavily on the blacks as on their leader; still they were suffering from exposure, irregular and scanty meals and the terror of capture that kept them constantly on the edge of hysteria.

Brown seemed to feel keenly the attitude of his old friends, Jonas Jones alone among the leaders, being as hearty in his welcome as of old. Brown was, as Mr. Todd records, in feeble health and still suffering from intermittent attacks of ague and fever. The day was Saturday. Brown accepted the hospitality of Jones's home, as he had on previous visits, and that night had a long talk with his host on future plans, in which Harper's Ferry was mentioned though not by name.

In the historical society archives in Des Moines is a scrap of faded paper, bearing these words in John Brown's handwriting:

"John Brown respectfully requests the church at Tabor to offer public thanksgiving to almighty God in behalf of himself, & company: & of their rescued captives, in particular of his gracious preservation of their lives, & health; & his signal deliverance out of the hand of the wicked, hitherto, 'Oh give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever'."

On the Sabbath morning as Mr. Todd was entering the pulpit this paper was handed to him. Mr. Todd read it but, at a loss just what to do, gave it to the Rev. R. D. King, who was assisting at the morning service. The latter advised Mr. Todd not to make the prayer in their behalf. "Inasmuch as it is said they have destroyed human life and stolen horses. I should want to take the charge under examination before I made a public prayer." Mr. Todd hesitated a moment and then said:

"A petition is before us, but perhaps under the circumstances it is better not to take public action. If any persons wish to help privately, it is their privilege to do so." However, the people of Tabor were not prepared to disavow John Brown's acts nor to disown the man until he had been given a chance to speak in his own behalf and a public meeting to that end was announced from the pulpit for the following night.

The church auditorium was well filled when the meeting was called to order. It was Brown's intention to go freely and candidly unto the details of the foray into Missouri, which resulted in the unfortunate killing of Cruise, but he was only fairly launched in the story when there entered the

church a Dr. Brown, a medical specialist of St. Joseph, who was in the village on professional business but who was a well known proslavery man and himself the owner of slaves. Brown noted his entrance and refused to proceed with his talk until the slave holder left the room.

Someone remarked that it was a public meeting and that nothing should be said which anyone might not hear. Brown seeing himself overruled, left without further words. As to whether Stevens and Gill left with Brown, authorities differ. Kagi certainly remained.

It was then proposed that Brown's recent actions be either indorsed or condemned and a long debate followed. This was interrupted when a resolution, in Kagi's handwriting, was handed up to be read, prepared probably, immediately after Brown's departure. It was in those words:

"Whereas, John brown and his associates have been guilty of robbery and murder in the state of Missouri,

"Resolved. That we, the citizens of Tabor, repudiate his conduct and theirs, and will hereupon take them into custody, and hold them to await the action of the Missouri authorities."

The people present evidently did not see the irony of Kagi's resolution, for its adoption would at once repudiate all their previous acts in Brown's behalf and that merely on so far, unsubstantiated rumor, for Brown himself, had left the meeting and had not been heard in his own defense. But the resolution was laid aside and after further debate, the following was adopted, though not unanimously:

"Resolved. That while we sympathize with the oppressed, & will do all that we conscientiously can to help them in their efforts for freedom, nevertheless, we have no Sympathy with those who go to Slave States, to entice away slaves, & take property or life when necessary to that end."

Though Brown felt himself an ill treated and forsaken man, historians are agreed that the people of Tabor were justified in this stand. The village was small and unprotected and almost within walking distance of slavery's northern line. It was open to attack and destruction by the radical slavery men of Missouri and the luke warm partisans across the Missouri river. In fact such threats had been made. No outside help might be expected and fear and the law of self preservation dictated that resolution, while the heart of the people still abided with John Brown and the abolition cause.

If the real mind of Tabor on the slavery question is sought, one need only consult the records of the civil war. This little village, in proportion to its size and man power, gave more men to the union army than any other community in America.

Brown remained in Tabor until Feb. 11, for rest to men and horses, was essential. He felt himself an outcast, however, and took no part in town affairs. Early on the morning of that day Brown bid a final farewell to the village, for his reputed return in September, less than two months before Harper's ferry, seems impossible, though vouched for by prof. J. E. Todd, son of the pioneer minister and himself a resident of Tabor at the time.

Brown was not unmindful of the dangers of the trip now ahead of him. His objective was Des Moines, distant by air line, 120 miles, but considerably farther over the route he proposed to take. Slavery sentiment was not equally divided in southwestern Iowa, the free state men being somewhat in the majority. The other side, however, was well represented and considerably more active. Ninety

per cent, it has been estimated, of slaves escaping from western Missouri, were smuggled through this section of Iowa.

Finding the abolition sentiment in the state on the increase, proslavery men had made a show of settlement in Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Cass, Adair and other counties to the southwest of Des Moines. They made little or no pretense of farming but conducted taverns of doubtful repute and acted as spies for the state of Missouri, and no doubt were in the pay of that state.

Brown and the white men with him were wanted in Missouri for murder and by the federal government for violation of the fugitive slaw law. Big rewards were out. Handbills, describing the stolen Negroes, had been distributed along the route Brown was expected to take in his dahs for Canada and at this time were posted in Des Moines and as far east, at least, as Grinnell. Brown's own picture, without the familiar beard, with a full personal description and a much fuller detail of the crimes with which he was charged, had been widely distributed.

In the face of these risks, greater because they were vague and uncertain, Brown and his party left Tabor. The temperature was below freezing but the

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weather modified after the third day, which made traveling more comfortable though more difficult as the roads became sodden and miry. With warmth and good food the Negroes had recovered their usual spirits and much of the time walked by the side of the wagon but at times of possible danger took shelter in the wagon. The Negroes, both men and women, had been given rifles and were told to shoot to kill, if commanded. Brown had determined to see his black charges safely in Canada and there is little doubt there would have been more blood shed if he had met opposition.

Brown wore the same cotton suit in which he left Garnett, Kan. Donations of clothing at Tabor he had turned over to the more needy, keeping nothing for himself. Ill as he was, the old man walked the greater part of the way to Des Moines, though at times he sat on the driver's seat and held the black infant—the little John Brown, now six weeks or more old. In all his abolition activities this was the first and only time Brown personally conducted an underground railroad expedition. In fact, before this time he had taken part in the freeing of but one slave, as mentioned above.

Unfortunately the day by day story of John Brown's winter trip across the prairies from Tabor to Des Moines is unknown to history. He, himself, has left no record and even the untiring researches of F. B. Sanborn, his chief biographer, has failed to bring the light any letters written in this period or any trustworthy data upon which a true account may be founded. Gill's notes cover the time but give nothing in detail. Numerous persons have taken advantage of this lack of positive knowledge to clutter up the records with a mass of rubbish. One story of the trip, published in a magazine, had the audacity to route the party through Butler county to Des Moines.

Two things we know with certainty: that he left Tabor Feb. 11 and that he arrived in the suburbs of Des Moines the night of the 17th, that he came from the west and camped that night at or very near the present site of the pumping station. He entered Des Moines early the morning of the eighteenth.

In the days when the underground railroad flourished in Iowa the stations were known by the names of the occupants of the property. Some of these were tavern keepers, some lived on isolated

farms, others were new settlers, whose land had been purchased for them in return for their anti-slavery activities. Many names were given their phonetic spelling and others were in cipher or in words suggestive of the real names. One station, south of Nebraska City, was known as the ‘slaughter house.’ The operator was a man named Bone.

We learn from Gill’s diary that, on Feb. 12, Brown and the party stopped for the night at “Toole’s; the 13th at Lewis Mills’ house; the 14th at Porter’s tavern at Grove City; at Dalmanutha on the 15th; Aurora on the 16th, where he stopped with a Mr. Murray, and made his last halt before reaching Des Moines at J. J. Jordan’s, before daylight on the 17th.” Toole’s may mean C. W. Tolles, a famous abolitionist, who died in 1923.

Not one of these names appears on the modern map of Iowa any more than one may find there the home of Josiah Busnell Grinnell, or of Mr. Todd, or of Maxson and Painter, of Springdale, two notable characters who will enter the story later. Nor do the postal guides of the United States, now or heretofore, name any such places.

It is unsafe to draw upon the fiction which has been penned regarding the journey to Des Moines but, throwing out what is impossible and discounting what is improbable, it appears that the party crossed the Nishnabotna river, north of red Oak, followed generally the course of that river on the east side to the neighborhood of the present site of Griswold; then struck northeastward to the long depression, east of Stuart, now occupied by the Rock island right of way, more or less, to the Raccoon river and so to Des Moines.

It may be said that no period of Brown’s public career is more obscure than that between Feb. 1 and 18, 1859. As Brown becomes more and more a permanent figure in world history, some patient searcher for the truth, with time and means at his disposal, may yet arise to give us the true story of that “lost week” on the prairies of Iowa.

To Be Continued Next Sunday.

Part 3

The RUN To DES MOINES On the UNDERGROUND RAILWAY – March 6, 1927

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

Amendment XIII of the constitution, suggested by Emerson as Brown’s most fitting epitaph.

ALTHOUGH John Brown could easily have entered Des Moines the night of Feb. 17, he thought it advisable to camp quietly in the outskirts until he and Kagi did a little scouting to learn the temper of the people and whether it were better to enter boldly or make a detour to the south and back to the main traveled road to Grinnell. Nothing occurred that night to disturb their peaceful rest.

Des Moines at this time was a city of 5,000 population, the largest community on the 1,100 mile route to Detroit, except Chicago. The capital had been removed recently from Iowa City and with this, new life had come into the frontier metropolis. Settlers were passing through daily—

farmers for the newly opened lands of Nebraska, gold seekers for California, who feared to take the shorter Santa Fe through Missouri, hundreds seeking crazy money in Iowa and speculation and promotion of various kinds.

A covered wagon attracted little attention but with the inrush of new peoples came also officers of the law. A United States deputy marshal was assigned to Des Moines and the slavery forces maintained an espionage system that might mean danger to the slaves and trouble for Brown and his followers.

Called on Teesdale.

Leaving the camp in charge of Stevens with instructions to use his best judgement if molested, Brown and Kagi entered the city of Des Moines about 9 o'clock the morning of Friday, Feb. 13, 1859. They had no definite plans beyond seeking advice and aid in getting food and safe passage eastward. Kagi, it will be remembered, among other things had been a newspaper man. He had, in fact contributed frequently to the New York papers, the Tribune in particular and many of his articles on the Kansas situation had been reprinted for wider publicity.

It was therefore logical that Kagi should first call on John Teesdale, editor of the Iowa Citizen, the name of which was changed shortly after to the Iowa State Register. Kagi had met Teesdale before and knew him for an active abolitionist and Brown found, on presentation, that he too had met the Des Moines editor back in Ohio some years before. The Citizen was printed in the then new Exchange block, on Walnut street, near the river. All of the business district of the time was close to the river and extended from the site of old Fort Des Moines to the vicinity of Court avenue.

John Teesdale was one of the forceful characters of early Iowa but a man whose personality was so little known, even to his contemporaries, that what has been written of him and his activities is hazy and indefinite.

He was born in England in 1816 and therefore was 43 years old when Brown called on him for assistance. He worked for a time on Virginia newspapers and in that states acquired an untamable hatred of slavery. Then he moved to Ohio, was seven years in charge of the Ohio Standard and five years editor of the Ohio State Journal. In 1848 he bought the Akron Beacon and in this place learned the secrets of underground railroad methods.

Ohio was the general headquarters, if a railroad term may be used, of the underground system. Slaves by hundreds crossed the Ohio river from Kentucky and from Ripley on the north shore were smuggled through Akron or Columbus to Toledo and Detroit.

Moved Capital in 1857.

Teesdale came west to Iowa City in 1857 and when the state capital was removed late that year to Des Moines he moved with it and brought the Citizen, which had been founded the year before and was fairly prosperous. The new editor, however, was not certain of this prosperity continuing, but hopeful, as the following editorial, announcing change of the ownership would indicate:

“The first No. of the first Tri-Weekly paper ever issued is before the reader. . . . The Tri-Weekly Citizen is not yet a permanent institution but the liberal subscription extended to it at home gives promise that it will become and indispensable visitor.”

Mr. Teesdale at once threw himself and his newspaper into the two vital issues of the day: the formation and success of the republican party and the antislavery cause. The first, he considered, inevitably meant that slavery would fall of its own weight, if opposed by a united north. He also took steps to strengthen the underground railroad across Iowa; he made Des Moines one of the chief stations and often personally aided the black men to elude the slave catchers from the south.

Teesdale changed the name of the Citizen to the Iowa State Register and his name appears at the head of the editorial page until May, 1861, when he was appointed postmaster in Des Moines by President Lincoln and sold his interest to Frank W. Palmer, almost as rabid an abolitionist as himself and fully as ardent a republican. These two and the Clarksons are the men who have left the most indelible imprint on the early history of Iowa journalism.

Editor Teesdale was a powerful writer. He had both irony and humor at his command and used them frequently to press home a truth. In his first paper, Teesdale published market quotations showing a decline in the price of Negroes:

“A-No. 1 field hand, black, 22 years old, \$620: woman, [?]ont and healthy, good cook, \$475; No. 1 brown fancy woman. 26 years old, good seamstress, \$530; man and wife, 40 and 30, man slightly unsound, \$670 for the pair. Little niggers from 5 to 7 years, so slow they are generally sold in lots or by the dozen.”

Mr. Teesdale’s ironical comment was: “these are less than half the prices current six months ago and the actual prospects of the democratic party do not justify the hope of any favorable reaction in the market.

“All is lost if buck Negroes sink to \$500 each and if the ‘little niggers’ are subjected to the indignity of being bought and sold by the dozen.”

In an editorial argument against the extension of slavery, in the same issue he says:

“Slavery has impoverished Virginia; blighted the Carolinas; stupefied Mississippi and Louisiana, ruffianized Missouri and checked the growth of every other province of slave land.”

Beard Proved Disguise.

In February, 1858, three years before the civil war, Mr. Teesdale, with the true vision of the prophet declared: “The masses of the North are beginning to see eye to eye and to act with something of the unity of purpose that characterizes the South. Men who never before comprehended the truth now see that the great struggle is between FREEDOM and SLAVERY and that its issue is to decide which shall have the supremacy of the American continent.”

Teesdale had not seen John Brown since the latter began his feverish struggles for the freedom of Kansas but had kept editorial tab on his movements. That he did not recognize Brown instantly when he entered the Citizen office was due to the old abolitionist’s long, white beard, his disguise since he had entered Kansas the previous spring as Shubel Morgan, but, satisfied that it was old Osawatomie in person, Teesdale made the two men welcome.

Brown wished to leave the same afternoon. He had a strong aversion to traveling on Sunday unless beset by actual danger and he hoped to reach Grinnell in time to rest on the Sabbath. The chief difficulty, Brown said, was in taking the public ferry over the river and even if there was no danger in

so doing he had nothing with which to pay the ferry fee. Brown was now at the lowest ebb of his finances. He did not expect money for there was a scarcity of cash in the new community but there had been a banner harvest the season before and the storehouses were filled with food for man and beast.

The ferries of that day were operated by Aleck Scott, the same William Alexander Scott who later donated the site for the state capital and who today lies buried near the east entrance of the state house, with a fitting monument to mark the spot and record his generosity to the state.

Smith's Ferry.

Scott claimed a perpetual monopoly of the ferrying business through a grant from Chief Keokuk, a stand he long maintained against a hostile country board and village council which felt some revenue should accrue to the city and county from the business. Scott had ferries both over the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, the former operating from the foot of Court avenue. It is recorded that the business was profitable during seasons of high water but at other times most people walked across to the great indignation of Mr. Scott.

The charges were fixed by the county board and this probably is the germ from which developed the state's assumption of the right to fix the rates of transportation companies. The ferry rates were: Footman, 5 cents, horseman, 12½ cents; wagon and span of horses, 37½ cents.

Brown, Teesdale and Kagi walked freely about the streets of Des Moines and no doubt were on the downtown highways that the city's thousands now walk daily—Grand, Court, Walnut, Locust—they bore the same names then. Des Moines in 1859 was bounded on the east by Water street, a thoroughfare long since converted to public uses and on which the city library now faces; on the west by Eighth street, where a heavy hard wood forest impeded rapid development, although settlers were pushing into it; on the north by Locust street, though grand avenue, then known as Keokuk street, was used, and on the south by Elm street.

The principal meeting place for abolitionists at the time was the old Demoine house at the southeast corner of First and walnut, where the postoffice now stands. This was a good hiding place for runaway Negroes and sheltered numerous blacks in the late fifties, as the records of the time attest. When built it was believed the Rock Island would enter the city close by and the property was considered the most valuable business corner in the city.

It was decided that Brown and Kagi should return to their camp across the Raccoon river, conceal the Negroes by piling the camping materials at the rear end of the wagon; then return to Des Moines, Teesdale agreeing to pay the ferry fees. It was also stipulated that the party should pass through the city unarmed. It was well known that Aleck Scott refused to ferry armed men and several times he had been justified by preventing would be rioters from reaching their proposed place of trouble.

Crossed Raccoon River.

How Brown and the slaves crossed the Raccoon river is not known but that he did cross is certain. A quantity of provisions had been collected and when the party showed up were hastily packed in the wagon. Brown was in a hurry to get among his old friends at Springdale, recruit his forces for the foray into Virginia, which by this time was not only fully matured in his mind but had

become an obsession with him. He actually believed that this bold stroke within the borders of the leading slave state would rally the negroes to his standard and that the blacks with arms and some training could work out their own salvation. Any unnecessary delay, therefore, irritated him.

Teesdale, as he had promised, paid the ferriage across the Des Moines river, bid Brown and his aids good-by and good luck and the little caravan was launched again on the Iowa prairies. This was about 4 o'clock in the after-

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noon. They had been in Des Moines less than a day. The Rock Island right of way had then been surveyed within a few miles of the present outskirts of the city. This was a main traveled road even before John Brown's time in the west. It was one of the many Mormon trails in Iowa; it was the route of the California gold seeker and the main highway of the settler and land speculator.

Though Teesdale was a good newspaper man, as early files of the Citizen and Iowa State Register show and John Brown's coming and going was a good "story," the discreet editor made no mention of it, nor does he refer to Brown again, except casually, until after Harper's ferry, though he continued to print news from Kansas and to fire his powerful broadsides against slavery.

Teesdale wrote to Brown after his departure from Des Moines and asked for old Osawatomie's own reasons and defense for his Missouri raid. Until this time Brown had said nothing in his own behalf. He expected to do so at Tabor but the presence of a slave holder at the meeting led him to stop in the middle of his talk. In answer to Mr. Teesdale, Brown sent the following letter:

On to Grinnell.

"First it has been my deliberate judgement: since 1855 that was the most ready and effectual way to retrieve Kansas would be to meddle directly with the peculiar institution. Next, we had no means of moving the rescued captives without taking a portion of their lawfully acquired earnings. All we took has been held sacred to that object and will be."

Brown's good friends in the east still had no statement from him and many of the grossly exaggerated reports, regarding the Cruise murder, were believed, in the absence of contradictory evidence. He has left some notes on the subject, jotted down at a time he expected to make a full explanation and defense before his partisans in Massachusetts, which he captioned, "Vindication of the Invasion." He states:

"The Denver truce was broken; and (1) It was in accordance with my settled policy; (2) It was intended as a discriminating blow at slavery; (3) It was calculated to lessen the value of slaves; (4) It was (over and above all other motives) right." The Denver truce mentioned was an agreement between Brown and Governor Denver, of Kansas during the period of greatest terror and lawlessness on the border, that the state should use its full police power in maintaining peace and protecting the lives and property of free state settlers.

From Des Moines to Grinnell is fifty five miles. Brown's usual rate of traveling was from twenty to twenty-five miles a day, varying with the condition of roads, need of supplies, etc. But one stop is recorded by Gill, at "Dickerson's" on the 19th. Shortly before noon of Feb. 20, the party came within sight of the village of Grinnell. Here caution again was necessary for Brown did not know what proslavery nets had been spread to await his coming. The wagon was drawn into the protection

of a grove, which at that time extended from Sugar creek almost to the village. Dinner was prepared, arms and ammunition were examined. Stevens was again put in charge of the blacks. Then all awaited John Brown's next move.

(To be continued next Sunday.)

Part 4

HOW GRINNELL'S "LIBERTY ROOM" GOT ITS NAME – March 13, 1927

John Brown and Fugitives Sheltered and Fed in Home of J.B. Grinnell Who Arranged the Unusual "Shipment of Stock" from West Liberty to Chicago.

"I never should have drawn my sword in defense of America had I known that I was helping to found a nation of slaves." –Lafayette.

A PRICE OF \$3,000 ON HIS HEAD

JOHN BROWN, the radical anti-slavery leader, crossed Iowa in the dead of winter, 1859, bringing with him twelve fugitive slaves to be transported by "underground railway" to freedom in Canada. Brown himself was wanted by state and federal authorities and there was a price of \$3,000 on his head. Previous installments of this account have described the party's start and adventures at Tabor, Ia., and Des Moines. Episodes at Springdale will be reviewed next Sunday.

IT has been noted that Brown and his caravan halted in a grove, a short distance west and south from the outskirts of the village of Grinnell. It was not yet noon of a brilliant winter day. The first duty was to establish pickets, which was done with military precision; the Negroes, who were armed, were cautioned to remain quiet and under cover and these precautions were justified. The leader had been warned that pro-slavery agents would await his arrival in Grinnell, working under direction of Sam Workman (dem.), Buchanan postmaster at Iowa City and United States marshal for the district.

Descriptions of the stolen slaves had been scattered broadcast over Iowa and the rewards for Brown's capture, dead or alive, now totaled more than \$3,000. The cold reception at Tabor, where he had every reason to expect a warm and friendly welcome, had warned Brown that the same attitude might be taken by other communities through which it was necessary to pass and where distorted and exaggerated reports of the Missouri raid and the killing of Cruise had preceded him.

With his customary courage and contempt for danger John Brown, accompanied by Kagi, left his party in the shelter of the grove and proceeded directly to the village. He boldly walked the streets and, though his coming was expected, he was not recognized. And here, all unknown to the old warrior, there was awaiting him in this little prairie village a welcome and friendship that proved of inestimable value in his present enterprise.

Called on J.B. Grinnell

It was here that he met and won the respect and help of one of the most forceful characters which the west has ever developed—a man whose "life record," as the Iowa State Register truly said at the time of his death, "would be a history of Iowa"—Josiah Bushnell Grinnell. To merely enumerate with intelligence the activities of this great pioneer would require the space of a separate

story. Founder of two cities, organizer and first president of a great college, prohibitionist and foe to slavery in a generation and a state where neither went unchallenged, director and promoter of railroads, founder of banks, member of the national war congress; farmer, lawyer, preacher—these are but a few. The light of his brilliant mind and his clear and far seeing vision is still reflected in many of the best laws on the statute books of Iowa.

Mr. Grinnell was just the man John Brown needed at this critical stage of his fortunes. The Grinnell home faced the city park, then newly planted with young saplings, which the years have matured into mighty shade trees. The meeting was characteristic of both men. Brown has left no detailed record of his reception and stay in the village but Grinnell in his “Reminiscences of Forty years” has given in his free and modest style an account of the old abolitionist’s sojourn in Poweshiek county.

Brown rang the door bell of the Grinnell home and the owner answered in person. Assured that it was Grinnell himself, Brown introduced himself as an old friend of Mrs. Grinnell’s father, of Springfield, Mass., and was invited in. But after a few moments the thought of his own status as a fugitive with a price on his head brought Brown suddenly to his feet.

“I am not here for a social visit,” he said. “I am that awful Brown, of whom you have heard—Capt. John Brown of Kansas.”

Grinnell gave him to understand that he knew the details of the Missouri raid and knew the details of the Missouri raid and knew that he was “taking a shipment of wool east.” Brown then stated his mission: white men and himself and horses, which must have food and shelter; it was Saturday and it was his rule not to travel on Sunday when it could be avoided. He needed, too, a place to stack his arms safely. “What do you advise?”

The “Liberty Room.”

Mr. Grinnell threw open the door of his parlor, from that day known as the “liberty room,” and his reply was prompt and unequivocal:

“This is at your service and you can occupy the stalls at the barn, not taken. Our hotel will be as safe as any place for a part of your company and there is no occasion to wait until night for you have too much of an outfit for concealment.”

It was true enough that concealment was impossible. The news of Brown’s arrival had by this time spread through the village and scores were flocking to the grove to see the outfit. Brown went to Mrs. Reid’s hotel, and found accommodations for the horses and the Negro women. When he returned to the grove to announce the arrangements he found a crowd about the impromptu camp. The slaves he had cautioned to keep under cover, he found were quite proud to be the center of interest and were chanting to the tune of an old folk song:

“O, old massa don’t cry for me,
For I’s a goin’ to Canada, where colored men is free.”

The caravan then moved to the Reid hotel, which became at once the mecca for the curious of Grinnell and the countryside as the news spread that “old John Brown” had arrived. Mr. Grinnell says

that there were two covered wagons and numerous horses. This is the first mention, by one competent to speak, of more than one wagon and team.

The disposal of the slaves was not a difficult task. The women were cared for at the hotel, being confined in a back and upper room. Bedding and food were supplied them and after they had been cautioned to be quiet, with the alternate penalty of a return to slavery, boxes and old furniture were piled in front of the door, blocking the passage, and they were left to themselves for the night.

Even in his later years Mr. Grinnell was reticent in talking about the underground railroad operations in the village and the men who were actively connected with them. "It is only the truth," he says, "that Grinnell had been a station on the underground railway, but the departures had been in the night and the adventures not generally known. Certainly the event had found no local publicity, attended with cost if not personal peril."

Hid Fugitives in Barn.

Yet there is evidence to support the statement that Grinnell himself took charge of the black men and hid them in the wool loft of his own barn. He admits that Brown and Kagi were guests in the house and to an abolitionist of Grinnell's temper it would seem little, if any, more criminal to hide the stolen "property" itself than the thieves who stole it. The ardent abolitionist of prewar days regarded slavery as monstrous and criminal and any means short of murder, justifiable that aimed to undermine it.

Iowa at that time, though a free soil state, was not wholly of free soil mind. Nearly all the public offices were held by proslavery democrats, mostly Buchanan appointees. Most of them were unofficial spies, who reported violations of the fugitive slave law, searched railroad trains for escaping blacks and even accosted and harassed caravans of settlers passing over the Iowa trail to Kansas and Nebraska. Slaves were even owned and worked openly in the southern tier of counties without molestation.

Grinnell records a conversation he had with Brown in the wool loft, over the quality and value of fleeces, which may be allegorical, for Brown is reported to have said at the time: "There is no discounting my Canada and English trade in fleecy locks now, though disaster is predicted."

Speaking of Wendell Phillip's visit to the village, Mr. Grinnell referred to the liberty room as "where the old hero stacked his arms and his company of fugitives slept." It is certain, then, that the slaves were under the personal protection of Grinnell, either in the house or the barn, though collateral evidence favors the latter.

Rifles, swords, pistols and ammunition were stored in the liberty room and this parlor became from that time on one of the most famous spots of Iowa. Mr. Grinnell, later entertained there many noted persons, among them Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher and Wendell Phillips, all friends and supporters of John Brown in his Kansas struggles. Phillips made the long trip to North Elba, N.Y., to deliver the funeral oration at the burial of old "Osawatimie" and he and Grinnell talked over details of Brown's career long after the civil war had settled the issues for which he gave his life.

Curious and insistent neighbors called at the Grinnell home that night to meet the liberator and invite him to address the people of the village. "Grinnell suggested that he tell his story of Kansas

and “strengthen the backbone of our weak people—good men but cautious.” Brown consented and several hundred persons gathered to hear his tale of border warfare and the part he had taken.

Brown’s Defense.

He argued in his own behalf that the taking of life was in self-defense. “Kansas,” he said, “is the home of bandits. I went there for peaceful settlement and to save a great state from slavery. Those that went there to forge fetters became murderers and deserved to die. I am not a man of blood but when God sends me on an errand I don’t wait for my enemies to choose the battle ground and if I ordered men to be shot it was because they had planned murder. There is no law on the border.”

Brown was interrupted frequently with questions. Announcing that some of his surplus horses would be offered for sale Monday, someone asked with Iowa canniness:

“What title can you give?”

“The best,” was Brown’s answer, “the affidavit that they were taken by black men from land they had cleared and tilled, taken in part payment for labor which is kept back.”

Of the Negroes he was leading in liberty he said: “I have never counseled violence. Twelve was the number rescued and led out from Missouri, a kind and grateful but ignorant company. They were trained for defense and would have been obedient to command.”

This was John Brown’s dream—that the blacks could be armed and trained as the instruments of their own freedom. It was not until near the end of that year when he was pacing in dreary solitude his cell in Virginia, waiting for the hangman’s call that the realization came to him that it was the white man and not the black who, in bitter civil war, must purge America from the curse of slavery.

Sunday night Brown spoke again to a crowded audience in the Congregational church, at which time he uttered the frequently quoted words: “Slavery is a crime and a real lover of his race and country will put a wall of fire around it. Some will dare to die yet as so many have done on the border. You have a college started and I hear your prayers and this spirit will save the country. Slavery can not endure a college or a prayer that goes above the roof.”

Grinnell Receives Warning.

Altogether Brown was well received at this meeting. A money collection was taken for “the cause” and food promised for the next stage of the journey. There were many present, however, to whom the Missouri raid, the murder of Cruise and the theft of slaves were almost as heinous crimes as slavery itself. These counseled Grinnell to tread warily and not bring down on the village the reprisals so often threatened for those who gave aid to Brown and his fugitives.

This attitude was emphasized the same night when Mr. Grinnell received a message from Sam Workman, the United States marshal and postmaster at Iowa City, stating that armed men were coming to take Brown and adding: “You can see that it will give your town a bad name to have a fight there: then all who aid are liable and there will be an arrest or blood. Get the old devil away to save trouble for he will be taken dead or alive.” The news had reached Iowa City, sixty-five miles away, and returned to Grinnell, all within thirty-six hours.

Grinnell was too clear headed not to realize the possibilities of trouble for himself and the village he founded. Workman was a personal friend and promoter for the Rock Island railroad, soon

to enter Grinnell and his continued friendship was a valuable asset. Nevertheless he handed the message to the “old devil” and made no reply to the marshal.

Brown, holding in contempt, as usual, the bravery of a volunteer posse, spurred solely by the hope of reward, announced that he would avoid trouble if possible but meet it if no other way offered. “They will run away when they see me,” he said.

Brown actually passed through Iowa City and on to Springdale. The following is from Reed’s history of Johnson country:

“It immediately became street talk in Iowa City that Brown, with a large party of fugitive slaves, was in the vicinity: and, as a reward of \$3,000 had been offered by the authorities of Missouri for the arrest of the Negroes, the disinterested advocates of the rigid enforcement of the fugitive slave law began to discuss the propriety of collecting a mob and marching on Pedee and capturing Brown and his party. Sam workman, then postmaster at Iowa City, was the captain of the gang organized for this purpose, but Brown, having returned a reply breathing quiet defiance to Workman’s threat of capturing him, the postmaster, after consulting his friend Captain Kelly, an Irish gentleman of great eminence—that is to say, 6 feet 7 inches tall—deferred the undertaking.”

Grinnell did, however, get into real trouble later, through his friendship and interest in Brown. After this latter’s capture at Harper’s ferry, scores of letters were found among his belongings from prominent abolitionists. Some of these were from Grinnell. After the Harper’s ferry raid Senator Mason of Virginia, author of the fugitive slave law, was named head of a committee to make a thorough investigation of the affair.

These letters, to Mason’s mind, seemed to point to a deep political conspiracy to free the slaves. Grinnell was summoned to appear before this committee and a writ of extradition was issued and placed in the hands of a United States marshal for presentation to Governor Kirkwood of Iowa.

A “Cargo of Stock.”

Grinnell heard of it and was promptly advised by friends to go to Canada or keep in hiding but ignoring this advice started at once for Washington, passing the marshal unknowingly in Pittsburgh. He called on Senator Grimes and through him on Senator Mason. Annoying delays resulted and Grinnell waited around the capital until finally Grimes threatened to lay the matter before the senate unless Grinnell were given a hearing or dismissed. Senator Mason then remarked dryly that Grinnell was too willing a witness and could go home, but as he did not come under escort of the marshal there were no fees due him and he might also pay his own fare back, which he did.

Probably the greatest service Grinnell did for Brown was to arrange shipment of the “cargo of stock” from West Liberty to Chicago. The western terminus of train service at that time was at Iowa City, though the right of way had been surveyed as far as Des Moines and graded to a point of some thirty miles east of Grinnell.

Mr. Grinnell was on terms of intimacy with the early officials of the Rock island, among them H. M. Hoxie, manager, and J. F. Tracy, superintendent. The plan to obtain a stock car for the fugitives was first started when Grinnell won the co-operation of William Penn Clarke of Iowa City, one of the busiest and most courageous abolitionists in the state. Although it was a stock car that was

used and supposed to be stock that was shipped, Superintendent Tracy was not deceived, as the following account by Mr. Grinnell will show:

“I had meanwhile gone to Chicago as a wool shipper and from the late John F. Tracy, superintendent, engaged a stock car for the fugitives from West Liberty to Chicago, at \$50. The kind of freight was not named and the democratic manager, (superintendent) while suspicious, was kept in ignorance. When too late the permission was withdrawn, for the outfit had filled the car and Brown was so fully aware of the value of caution that there was only a secret unloading in Chicago. It was in vain that I offered the freight money, Mr. Tracy saying: ‘I would not accept it for the \$10,000 since we might be held for the value of every one of the niggers’.”

Marshal workman’s “get-the-old-devil-away” message was handed to Brown as he came down to breakfast Monday morning. He saw at once that further stay might compromise his benefactor and the good people of Grinnell and prepared to resume his journey.

Though they had known each other personally not more than forty-eight hours, there had developed between the grizzled old warrior of the Kansas border and the 38-year-old pioneer of the Iowa prairies a real and sincere friendship and a mutual good will that each cherished—Brown but for a few months, as fate decreed, Grinnell through a long, busy and useful life. Writing in his old age and suffering under a painful ailment, Grinnell penned this impression of old Osawatomie at their first meeting thirty years before:

“He stood very erect for a man nearing sixty years and wore a full, long beard, lips compressed, the eye a keen light gray, deep set and mild, only flashing moments of excited action or when crossed in debate. Charles Sumner’s opinion is mine, that, after seeing his bust, there is nothing the sun shines upon so like Michael Angelo’s Moses. There were no spurs on his boots and he was only clad in a plain, well worn suit, with nothing to suggest border warfare save a wide rimmed hat and half concealed pistol.”

The old weather stained covered wagons were brought from their hiding place of two days, the boxes well filled with new straw and covered with blankets which had undergone a thorough cleansing and airing. Kagi, Gill and Stevens, bristling with small arms and carrying sharp’s rifles, the proslavery gift of the congregation of Henry Ward Beecher’s church, stood guard. The horses were brought from their stalls, well fed and curried and hitched to the wagons.

Next the arms and ammunition were brought from the liberty room of the Grinnell home and stored away, all except such as were necessary to arm the slaves. Then came the food supplies—contributions in plenty from church and store and individual. The crowd pressed closer as the Negro women were hurried from Mrs. Reid’s hotel and Brown, himself, helped them to such places of comfort as the conveyances afforded. The black men were then brought from their place of concealment, armed and hastily stowed away.

Bound for Springdale.

Lastly Brown mounted to the seat. The little, black John Brown, the child born neither to slavery nor to freedom in the early days of the “flight from Egypt,” was handed up to him, the mother being still too ill to care for him. The little outcast nestled close in his arms, Brown raised his hat in parting salute and the tiny caravan was set in motion, bound for the Quaker settlement of Springdale in Cedar county.

Brown's appreciation of the cordial reception at Grinnell was summarized in a letter received by Mr. Grinnell, while his party was resting in comparative security at Springdale:

1. Whole party and teams kept for two days free of cost.
2. Sundry articles of clothing given to the captives.
3. Bread, meal, cakes, pies, etc., prepared for our journey.
4. Full houses for two nights in succession, at which meetings Brown and Kagi spoke and were loudly cheered and fully indorsed.

Three Congregational clergymen attended the meeting on Sabbath evening (notice of which was given from the pulpit). All of them took part in justifying our course and in urging contributions in our behalf. There was no dissenting speaker at either meeting. Mr. Grinnell spoke at length and has since labored to procure us a free and safe conveyance to Chicago, and effected it.

Contributions in cash amounting to \$26.50. Last but not least, public thanksgiving to almighty God offered up by Mr. Grinnell in behalf of the whole company for his great mercy and protecting care, with prayers for a continuance of these blessings, etc. Our reception among the Quakers here has been most cordial. Yours truly, John Brown. (To be continued next Sunday.)

Part 5

How John Brown Routed Boasting Iowa City Orator – March 20, 1927

Offered His Pistol to Speaker who Declared He Would Kill John Brown on Sight, Saying "Here's Your Chance!"

"Now if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done." –John Brown before the jury which convicted him.

LEAVING Grinnell John Brown knew that no hostile posse could approach him from the west but he found evidence of Marshal Workman's activity at the first place he stopped, where an old farmer told him he was neither for nor against slavery but was raising corn and stock. He melted far enough, however, to tell Brown to be careful.

As he had to pass around or through Iowa City to get to Springdale, Brown decided to go through the town, as the detour road was almost impassable. He reached Iowa City the morning of Feb. 25 and passed through and on to Springdale, which he reached the same afternoon. Brown's boast: "They will run when they see me," seemed verified for neither Workman nor the volunteer mob of man-hunters reported under his command was to be seen.

No stop was made in Iowa City at this time, though later Brown came from Springdale to meet William Penn Clarke and then occurred an incident which all historians have seen fit to chronicle.

A champion of slavery, supposed to have been Marshal Workman himself, was addressing a crowd on a street corner, denouncing Brown as a murderer, an outlaw, one who never dared to

show himself in a fair fight but robbed and killed under cover of night. "If I could get sight of him I would shoot him on the spot; I would never give him a chance to steal any more slaves."

Here's Your Chance.

At this point a quiet, soft-spoken old gentleman stepped forward and taking two pistols from beneath his coat, handed one to the speaker. "You talk very brave, my friend," he said, "and as you will never have a better opportunity to shoot Old Brown than right here and now, you can have a chance." The orator left hastily and Brown went about his business unmolested.

Iowa City has one particularly interesting relic of Brown's last visit to Johnson and Cedar counties, a little cannon, mounted for many years in the library of the University of Iowa. In a letter from Springdale to Dr. Jesse Bowen, dated March 3, 1859, Brown says:

"I left with you a little cannon & carriage. Could you or anyone induce the inhabitants of your city to make me up something for it; & buy it either to keep as an old relic; or for the sake of helping me a little? I am certainly quite needy; and have moreover quite a family to look after. There are those who would sooner see me with a good halter than anything else for my services. Will you please write me frankly to John H. Painter, Esqr or by bearer whether you think anything can be done for me with the gun; or otherwise?"

What was given to Brown is not known but the cannon is still in Iowa City. The incident shows how closely pressed for money Brown was at most times.

In Cedar county, some four miles east of west Branch and about the same distance from Cedar river is the village of Springdale. It was founded in the late forties by Quaker immigrants from New England, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana and is today, with its less than 200 inhabitants, very much the same village it was in the time of John brown. One still hears in its homes the soft "thee" and "thou" of Quaker speech.

The railroad passed it by but history had surrounded it with a glamour and romance which will last as long as human rights, liberty and freedom are questions for discussion. Springdale is a quiet, restful, sternly religious little community; its people are hospitable, courteous and kind. The village was completely cut off from the world for years and it was not until the age of the automobile that it had good roads, for the trunk highway from Iowa City to Tipton now runs through its one and only street.

Entertained at Maxson's.

Among the first settlers of Springdale were John H. Painter, Dr. H. C. Gill, Ann Coppoc and William Maxson, all of whom, directly or indirectly, played important parts in John Brown's life. Painter was a man of means and of shrewd common sense and he not only aided him financially but gave him sound advice. It was dr. Gill's son, George Gill, who was Brown's sole companion on much of the trip through Kansas, Nebraska and across Iowa. Mrs. Coppoc's two sons, Edwin and Barclay, were with Brown at Harper's Ferry, and the former was hanged for his part in that tragedy. It was at the home of Maxson that Brown and his men were entertained and on his land that the Virginia recruits were drilled.

Maxson was not a Quaker but he and all the others of the village were stanch abolitionists. It is of the Friends' creed not to bear arms in anger and Brown was told on his first visit: "Thou art

welcome to tarry among us, but we have no use for thy guns.” Trained to abhor firearms these people must find some outlet for their ardent anti-slavery spirit. So it was that Springdale became an active station on the underground railroad and the Quakers its vigorous and ready agents.

Legislative records of the day show that Springdale was particularly incensed when the statute was enacted, which allowed white citizens of Iowa to adopt Negroes, the effect of which was to permit slavery within the state. In the Daily Iowa State Register, February 21, 1860, is this news item, from the pen of John Teesdale, editor:

“Mr. W. L. Curtis, who had some trouble about two young colored girls in Johnson county, has adopted them, the articles of indenture by which they were bound to him having been canceled.”

Brown first arrived in Springdale soon after Christmas in 1857 with the men who had taken part with him in the Kansas fighting and with two wagon loads of ammunition and supplies. He remained until Jan. 15, when he left for the east but in that time he won over his true and trusted friends.

In Springdale today there is an old building, now used for the storage of machinery, which was the village school house at the time of Brown’s first visit. It was in this building that the famous “mock legislature” was held, to help pass the long winter evenings.

Emmor Rood, owner of the property on which the schoolhouse stood, was elected governor. The first bill passed was one granting the elective franchise to women. The fugitive slave law was repealed; in fact all measures tending to uphold slavery were scratched from the statute books of the “State of Springdale.” One resolution passed stated that “John Brown is more justly entitled to the sympathy and honor of this nation than George Washington.”

Drill Ground is Weedy.

The Maxson farm house, two and one-half miles north and east of Springdale, is one of the most interesting landmarks in the state of Iowa. Maxson was a militant abolitionist, if need be, and he gave his house freely to entertain Brown and his men. The house is constructed of cement and native gravel and at one time was surrounded by a picket fence. To the east was a broad field and it was here that drill exercises were held daily in the winter of 1857-8.

The house was built in 1839 and during its years of occupancy was well kept up. It is now crumbling to decay. Some years ago it was partially wrecked by a windstorm and never repaired. It is still standing in part but the old drill ground is grass-grown and weedy and the building bears little semblance to the trim, prosperous looking farm house of Mr. Maxson’s lifetime. A move was started to have the state board of conservation take over the property as a permanent memorial to some of Iowa’s most interesting history but nothing was done and it is believed now the old house is past reclamation.

When Brown, Kagi, Stevens and Gill, with the fugitive slaves, entered Springdale they were not disappointed in the expected welcome. Smiling faces and hearty handshakes greeted them on all sides and the villagers noted that the white men apparently carried no arms, for Brown, in courtesy to the sentiment of Springdale, had ordered that no outward show be made, though all carried small arms hidden in their clothing.

The Negroes were distributed in part among the Quaker families. Several went with Brown to the Maxson farm, where the blacks were placed in the cellar, long famous locally as the safest place in Cedar county to hide a runaway slave.

News of Brown's arrival at Springdale was back in Iowa City the same night and rumors came to the village that Sam Workman, the marshal and Buchanan postmaster at that place, had announced his determination to recapture the slaves and arrest Brown. The Springdale people knew that Brown would fight to the last to protect the fugitives and avoid arrest.

Brown's Sword in Des Moines.

Drill arrangements were perfected without delay and practice with wooden swords was held both in the village and at the Maxson farm. The sword used by Brown is now in a glass case in the state historical exhibit at Des Moines, where all may see it. The Quakers rallied to the support of Brown and might even have taken up fire arms themselves in his behalf. That they could smother the qualms of conscience when they felt the prod of rank injustice was proved a few months later when they guarded the Coppoc home to protect Barclay Coppoc and prevent his extradition to Virginia, a story that will be told later.

As the rumors of Workman's activity became more persistent Brown unwisely determined to go to Iowa City personally and learn the exact situation. He and Kagi drove to the village, fifteen miles distant, and spent the night there. That the pro-slavery gang were no fairer fighters than they charged Brown with being was shown that night when the two men were seated in the rear a restaurant.

Two armed braves came to the front door and addressing Baumer, the proprietor, demanded the "damned nigger thief from Kansas," whom they intended to hang at once, immediately and without delay. Baumer made some plausible excuse and the men went away, the restaurant keeper following them. He returned and reported to Brown that a street meeting was even then discussing how the old abolitionist could be taken without risk to the captors. The terror of Brown's name, it seems, had spread into eastern Iowa.

A watch was then placed on Dr. Jesse Bowen's barn, where Brown's team was quartered. Brown and Kagi were hidden for the night and early next morning were taken to Springdale by a circuitous route, Brown's own team remaining in the Bowen stable for the time. Had they taken the main road they would have encountered trouble, for spies had reported their presence in Iowa City and a dozen or more armed men were hidden at a spot near the main highway, awaiting their return to Springdale.

Arranged Transportation.

It was evident that the Springdale sojourn could not be for long, and one of the first things demanding attention was the certainty of rail transportation from West Liberty to Chicago. Brown did not know that Grinnell, working with William Penn Clarke of Iowa City, already had arranged the matter, so he sent Kagi and Stevens to Iowa City to confer with Clarke. The two men were disguised as hunters and walked the fifteen miles leisurely. They returned when they found that a stock car had been promised by the Rock Island officials.

Drilling with wooden swords was continued with Gill in charge. This young man who had braved fire in Kansas and the perils of the “flight from Egypt,” evidently saw his chance for some fun. The one street of Springdale was muddy with the spring thaw and miry puddles every few yards. Gill told his recruits to drop when the enemy fired. When the deeper and muddier places were reached Gill would give his order and the green men would drop and stay, half submerged, till he was able, from laughter, to tell them to get up.

But altogether it was a serious situation. Brown was to take with him some of the best and bravest young men of Springdale. He had confided his Virginia plans and the wise old Quakers advised against it. But the younger men, full of youth and enthusiasm were eager to join his fortunes. The Coppoc boys did not leave with brown but went on east later and met him and the others in Pennsylvania.

One of the men Brown conferred with at Springdale was Skillman Alger, a democrat. His home was at West Liberty, seven miles distant, and he called to see in what way he could aid Brown’s plans. Alger was one of the volunteers who pushed the stock car down the siding at West Liberty, as appears later. An insight into the character of the man may be gleaned from the following true anecdote:

Alger, as a democrat, was an open pro-slavery man. One night a fugitive slave called at his house for help. “You black rascal,” Alger said, standing astride his doorway, “you ought to know better than to ask me to help you; you ought to be sent back to slavery, but if you won’t tell, come in, it’s too cold out there.”

The Negro slept on a cot in the kitchen and that night, fearing the cold was too much for the southern Negro Alger came down stairs and covered him with an old overcoat, still muttering, “you black rascal, you ought to be sent back where you belong.” Even while he was pushing the car at West Liberty to help Brown’s twelve blacks to freedom, Alger kept on denouncing the abolitionists in lurid terms.

Sold Horses.

Brown still had one way to raise money but it must be done cautiously—that was the sale of horses, wagon and equipment which he had brought with him from Kansas, part of the loot from the Missouri plantations. Now that the rest of the trip was to be by rail he had no further use for this outfit. The good people of Springdale bought up all that Brown offered for sale, though they had little money and none to waste. Nor did they examine too closely into the title to the property. Narcissa Smith, a resident of Springdale at that time, writing some years later, said:

“The wagon was one made especially for his use by the Massachusetts Aid society and sent to him at Iowa City in care of Dr. Bowen, the bill of lading for which is now in the historical society at that place. Moses Butler bought it of John Brown and soon after sold it to Gilbert Smith, for seventy-five dollars in gold. It remained in use on the Smith farm for twenty years and was known as the John brown wagon. At a general sale in 1882 H. S. Fairall of the Iowa City Republican, bought the wagon and it was retained in the family thereafter.”

The time for parting came in the afternoon of March 9. Brown and his party had then been in Springdale twelve days and were thoroughly rested and well, except Brown himself, who had a

few days before had written to his family that “all is yet well with me except that I am not very strong. I have something of then ague yet hanging about me.”

Brown went on horseback from house to house to bid his friends a last farewell. Neither he nor they knew it was the last parting and that within nine months he would pay the penalty of his fight for Negro freedom, on the gallows of a slave state. In his four years’ battling against the forces of slavery no people had extended him such sympathy and encouragement as the people of Springdale.

The old wagon, now no longer his, was brought out and the old team hitched to it. The Negroes were brought from the Maxson cellar and the houses where they had been quartered, again armed and tucked out of sight. And so they moved slowly to West Liberty seven miles south, where the slaves were hidden in the old Kieth grist mill to remain until morning, while Brown and his white friends sought shelter among the safe abolitionists of the village.

To Be Continued.

Part 6

From West Liberty, Ia., to Freedom! – March 27, 1927

John Brown and Rescued Slaves Protected in Chicago By Allen Pinkerton, Famous Detective: Two Coppoc Brothers of Springdale Meet Death Through Devotion to Abolitionist Cause.

“I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had, as I now think, vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done.” –John Brown’s last message on the day of his execution.

MARCH 10, 1859, was a memorable day in the little frontier railroad village of West liberty, in Muscatine county. Though every precaution for secrecy had been made, it was generally known to the villagers that John Brown and his rescued slaves would leave that morning for Chicago and they stood about in groups, waiting with the eyes of the curious for what might happen.

The stock car, which had been obtained by Mr. Grinnell and William Penn Clarke of Iowa City, had been brought in the day before and shunted to a side track. Shortly before the through Chicago passenger train was due from Iowa City a few men who had been let into the secret—one of them Skillman Algar—put their backs to the empty stock car and pushed it down the siding, where it could be quickly coupled to the Chicago train.

A plentiful supply of straw then appeared from a mysterious somewhere and was loaded into the car. Brown himself, attended to this duty. He tested the ends and sides of the car to learn what resistance it might offer in the event of attack. Kagi and Stevens, the old standbys of the overland trip, came up, fully armed with rifles and revolvers and stood guard. It was Brown’s intention if the marshal came on the train from Iowa City to offer any resistance that might be required. Nothing now, at this last stand should halt his plans.

Slaves Boarded Car.

Satisfied that the car and bedding were ready for the trip, Brown next brought his “twelve head of stock” from the Kieth mill. The women and children were handed up to him and assigned their places: then followed the men of the party. Food and water were stored in one end: rifles and ammunition in the other. Through almost daily practice the negroes had become very fair shots and Brown felt confident could give a fair account of themselves if attacked.

Just as the last details of preparation were completed the shrill whistle for down brakes was heard and the passenger train swung into view around a bend of the road. A few moments later and it had stopped opposite the sliding. Several men went through the coaches to find if Marshal Workman were aboard. He was not. The engine was then hastily uncoupled and backed on the siding. The stock car was pulled back to the main track and hitched between the engine and the mail division of the first coach. Brown, Kagi, Stevens and the others who were soon to figure in the bloody affair of Harper’s Ferry took seats in the coach. Whistle and bell announced all was ready, brakes were released and the train sped on its eastern way, leaving little groups of astounded natives with a subject for talk for many a year to come.

Gill had been forced, by inflammatory rheumatism, to remain in Springdale. He had been the historian of the journey since the raid into Missouri and his valuable notes still form the tissue of any narrative of that period of John Brown’s life. It has been seen how in every village or city of importance where Brown and his party had stopped, some broad minded, courageous man, often more than one, had stepped forward, when the more timid hesitated, and had given timely aid, in defiance of proslavery threats and the severe penalties of the fugitive slave law.

In Tabor it was Jonas Jones who offered his house and hospitality, when the ultra-conservative element refused to indorse his acts, and the Rev. John Todd who publicly supported Brown. In Des Moines he had the help of John Teesdale, editor of The Register. Josiah Bushnell Grinnell, defiant alike of proslavery law and the advice of his own townspeople, did all in his power to help the Kansas outlaw. William Penn Clarke was active in his behalf at West liberty, a community divided closely on the slavery question and dominated to a large degree by appointees of the democratic president, Buchanan. Painter and Maxson were the big men of Springdale.

Appealed to Pinkerton.

So in Chicago another big man came forward to assist—Allan Pinkerton. It was a strange anomaly. Pinkerton through all his mature years had been the foe of every kind of crime. The law was his guide in all things and it mattered not to him whether the law was good or bad. He was nearing the zenith of his career as a detective and was known throughout the country as a shrewd, able and honest man.

But it must be said in seeking reasons for Pinkerton’s willingness to aid Brown, that he was a Scotsman and a lover of liberty. He had immigrated to America to avoid a political uprising that threatened the liberties of Scotland. He brought his love of freedom with him to America and became an abolitionist and a worker in the cause at the risk of his professional future. Slavery was the sum total of all crimes in his mind.

It was natural therefore that he should act promptly and with courage when Brown, Kagi and Stevens, followed by the twelve rescued blacks, called at his south side home at 4:30, the following morning March 11.

The trip from West Liberty was made without incident worthy of record. There were numerous stops and at each, either Brown or Stevens, sometimes both, would go forward, look at the locks on the stock car, speak softly to the slaves and admonish them to remain quiet when the train halted and be back in their seats before the warning whistle blew. There was little danger of Chicago being forewarned of Brown's arriv[??] Grinnell's and Clarke's plans for secrecy included the telegraph and they had been assured no message, referring to the departure from West Liberty, would be sent through that night.

It was held quite improper to run a car load of stock into the passenger station, another precaution of Mr. Grinnell's, and it was shunted to a sidetrack some half mile from the terminal. Chicago at that time had a considerable Negro population and unless they ran directly into federal marshals, Brown anticipated little trouble for himself and the party. Armed men in the streets of Chicago might, however, attract unwelcome attention, so the arms and ammunition were left with the train and the party walked boldly into what is now the loop district.

A Day in Chicago.

It was Brown's purpose to quarter his charges at the Briggs house, a hostelry still standing and doing business as it was in that day, Brown had been there before in conference with Theodore Parker, the noted Boston divine, and later with Frederick Douglass. At another time, he had talked over Kansas affairs there with Horace White, editor of the Chicago Tribune, so he had reason to expect, if not a hearty welcome, at least the privilege of shelter for his dusky crew. It is said that a light colored darkey was doing desk duty in the absence of the clerk and when Brown asked for accommodation, he promptly answered:

“No sah, no sah, we'll don't keep no niggers at dis hotel.”

It was then he sought out Pinkerton, whom he knew personally. The detective was delighted that the party had been turned away from the Briggs house. He knew it would be the first place searched if the authorities got active. Pinkerton knew all about the Missouri raid, the slaying of Cruise and the theft of the horses and traveling equipment. In fact he had one of the descriptive circulars, offering reward for Brown's capture in a pocket of his clothing at the time.

Pinkerton wrote a note to a Negro friend, John Jones, living a few squares distant, telling him to give Brown protection, food and anything he needed and to await his further orders. Kagi accompanied his chief but returned and he and Stevens and several of the slaves were fed and quartered in Pinkerton's own house. The others were distributed to safe hiding places in the neighborhood.

Pinkerton then went to the Jones home and learned from Brown that he was on the way to Canada and wanted a clearance through Chicago as soon as possible, food for the trip and such money as could be hastily raised. The detective's advice was to wait until late in the afternoon, following a meeting of the lawyers of Cook county, at which he thought he could raise a modest sum.

This meeting was held and Pinkerton obtained nearly \$600 to aid Brown and the fugitive slaves. Here we have the unusual spectacle of a group of men whose profession is grounded in the law and the constitution, working through a man whose life had been spent in running down violators of the law, contributing from their personal funds to help an outlaw, with a price on his head, escape the penalties of his crime. This was the spirit that finally freed the slaves forever. These men, lawyers and detective, were northern men and a battle for freedom was as surely waged in the meeting room of the bar association that day, as later were fought on the fields of Gettysburg and Antietam.

On to Canada.

Before this meeting Pinkerton made a personal call on the general superintendent of the Michigan Central railroad, Col. C. G. Hammond, for whom one of the prosperous cities of northern Indiana is named. Colonel Hammond did not ask embarrassing questions. He knew Pinkerton; that was sufficient.

The railroad chief gave orders that a strong stock car be set on a siding, about a mile from the center of the city and that this car be picked up by the Detroit train, leaving at 4:45 that afternoon. To make sure there would be no hitch he had provisions and water loaded into a dray and accompanied the driver to the siding. There he personally supervised the storing of the provisions and saw to it that new bedding was ready. While he was still there the Negroes were brought, singly or in small groups, from their hiding places, put in the stock car and the doors closed and sealed.

* * *

Again we see the old man, walking with slow and weary step, along the old river front of Detroit; we see him as he helps the Negroes he has watched and protected for eighty-two dreary days of march and hardship, aboard the Windsor ferry, little John Brown, his namesake, asleep in his mother's arms; we see his hand and voice raised in benediction and prayer and lastly we see him watching, watching as the tiny red light of the ferry boat fades and is lost to view in the mist and darkness.

Brown's stormy and tragic career now nears its end. Harper's Ferry is no part of this story but the adventures of two Iowa boys who took part in that wild endeavor are of interest as showing both the calmness and fortitude with which a Quaker will meet his death and how the raging soul of the fighting man may, under just provocation, break through the bans of religion and the training of centuries.

Edwin and Barclay Coppoc were the sons of a widowed Quakeress, one of the first settlers of Springdale. Barclay, the younger had gone to Kansas for his health and there had come in contact with Brown and the free state element. When Brown came to the village in the spring of fifty-nine both boys were eager to enlist in his company, then being recruited for the harper's Ferry attack but were dissuaded by their mother.

The Coppoc Brothers.

In July Brown wrote requesting the boys to join him in southern Pennsylvania, which they did, giving their mother to understand they were going to Ohio. Edwin Coppoc, Brown and

Stevens were taken prisoners after the raid, tried and sentenced to hang. Barclay Coppoc, Brown's son, Owen, John Cook, who joined Brown's company at Springdale and Charles Tidd escaped.

A special effort was made to effect Edwin's escape from the Charlestown jail but he refused to leave on the night planned because Cook wished to meet some friends for the last time on the following day and he would not desert his comrade. The next night both men attempted the escape. They reached the prison walls and were about to jump to liberty when a guard shot at them and threatened to use the bayonet and both returned to jail. Twelve hours later they were executed. How Cook was hanged when it is stated above that he escaped, will be seen. Edwin Coppoc died bravely, sustained by the knowledge of a blameless life and the faith of his Quaker training.

In the Atlantic Monthly of March, 1877, is a story by Owen Brown of the adventures of the four who escaped capture after Harper's Ferry. Owen, Tidd and Barclay Coppoc wandered for thirty-six days through the wilds of Maryland and Pennsylvania in sleet, rain and snow, lightly clothed, without shelter, not daring to approach a farm house or enter a village. Their food was dried field corn, left from the previous harvest, bits of decaying fruit, raw chicken, now and then.

Cook, ill and suffering more than the others from exposure and lack of food, against the advice and pleading of his companions, went to a farm house and a few hours later was captured by professional slave hunters, seeking the blood money offered for the fugitive's arrest.

At the last the three parted company and Barclay Coppoc took a train for Springdale, where he arrived Dec. 17, emaciated almost beyond recognition, unable to walk or even speak. It was then that the fighting spirit of the Quakers rose supreme to the trial. It was decided Barclay must be protected at all hazards and Springdale to a man, armed itself. Guards were set about his mother's house, signals were agreed upon to summon the armed village if arrest were threatened.

Sent Mounted Messenger.

January 23 an agent of the state of Virginia called on Governor Kirkwood with a requisition for Barclay Coppoc's surrender on the charge of treason. The Iowa legislature of that year had an active democratic minority and proslavery views were openly expressed, so if Barclay were to be warned it must be done promptly and secretly. J. B. Grinnell, always present in time of need, it seemed, David Hunt and other antislavery men of the legislature decided to send a man overland to Springdale with the warning. After much search for a horseman who could stick to the saddle in near zero weather over snow blocked roads they selected a wiry young man named Williams.

He was given money and credentials to agents of the underground railroad between Des Moines and Springdale and two days later, Williams and his foam covered horse, both near collapse from exhaustion, but true to their trust, entered Springdale and the message was delivered to J. H. Painter. It was undersigned, though the writing was familiar, and read: "There is an application for young Coppoc from the governor of Virginia and the governor here will be compelled to surrender him. If he is in your neighborhood tell him to make his escape from the United States."

But Barclay refused to go and a few days later word came from Des Moines that Governor Kirkwood had refused the requisition as technically defective. It may have been defective, though the general opinion of the time was that the requisition was good in form and fact. Had the Virginia agent caused Barclay to be arrested and held for the Virginia authorities, as he might have done, the young

man undoubtedly would have been hanged. Instead, he returned home but appeared again a month later with a second requisition in proper form and accompanied by copies of two indictments. This requisition was granted by Governor Kirkwood and placed in the hands of the sheriff of Cedar county for service.

The sheriff received the papers at Tipton. Next morning he went through the street of Springdale—there was only one—asking in a loud voice for Barclay Coppoc, “wanted in Virginia for high crimes and misdemeanors.” Whether the sheriff desired the young man’s escape or feared the armed and determined Quakers, is not known.

Barclay now listened to the advice of friends. In disguise and accompanied by one of the Maxson boys he went to Detroit and into Canada but shortly afterward left there for Ashtabula, O. He never was captured but enlisted at Lincoln’s first call for volunteers. He was given a commission as lieutenant in the Fourth Kansas regiment but a few months later met death in a bridge accident on the Platte river.

His name is on the heroes’ monument at Tipton, erected in honor of those who fell in the union cause.

“Old Osawatomie” is buried at the foot of a rugged boulder, on the old Brown farm, near the one time Negro settlement of north Elba, N. Y. Though in the heart of the Adirondacks and difficult of access the spot is becoming more and more each year a shrine to those who now see in John Brown, not a fanatic and murderous ruffian but one who in his own way and according to his own standards of right, has done much to advance the world in its progress toward personal and racial freedom.

It is inevitable that the lives of Lincoln and Brown should be compared for in them are many parallels. Both were born to poverty and both had their early lessons from the same books, the Pilgrim’s Progress, Lives of the Saints and the bible. Each was intensely and vitally religious. Brown became a member of the Congregational church; Lincoln never affiliated with any sect but both were profound students of the bible.

On the night of the day that John Brown died, Dec. 2, 1859, Lincoln addressed a political gathering at Troy, Kan., in which he said: “Old John Brown has been executed for treason against a state. We cannot object even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed and treason. It could avail him nothing that he might think himself right.” Yet within seventeen months Lincoln was calling for men to do in the larger way precisely what John Brown had attempted in the lesser. We close with the words of Villaro:

“And so, wherever there is battling against injustice and oppression, the Charlestown gallows that became a cross, will help men to live and die. The story of John Brown will ever confront the spirit of despotism, when men are struggling to throw off the shackles of social or political or physical slavery. His own country, while admitting his mistakes without undue palliation or excuse, will forever acknowledge the divine that was in him by the side of what was human and faulty and blind and wrong. It will cherish the memory of the prisoner of Charlestown in 1859 as at once a sacred, a solemn and an inspiring American heritage.”

The End.