

Racine Underground Railroad Freedom Heritage Trail Signs

Sign #1 (freestanding sign): Racine Heritage Museum - One block south of Monument Square at 701 Main Street

Racine Heritage Museum

Racine Heritage Museum, custodian of the history of Racine County, earned designation by the National Parks Service as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom facility in 2001. The museum maintains core exhibits on Racine County's participation in the Underground Railroad, the Civil War and the history of African-Americans in Racine County. The museum's archives and local history research center has informational materials available for public use.

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Sign #2 (plaque on monument): Joshua Glover - Main Street between Fifth and Sixth streets

Joshua Glover

On March 11, 1854, the largest crowd that had ever assembled here met to protest the capture of Joshua Glover, a fugitive slave who had lived and worked in Racine for two years. A committee of 100 then took a boat to Milwaukee where Glover had been jailed. They aided in his rescue and subsequent journey on the Underground Railroad, and eventually by boat to Canada, where he lived in freedom until his death. This marker commemorates Glover and the citizens of Racine who, at their peril, aided one of their own out of the bondage of slavery.

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Designated June 7, 2003

Sign #3 (freestanding sign): First Presbyterian Church – Northwest quadrant of Church's front yard

First Presbyterian Church

In the years before the Civil War, this surviving landmark church, dedicated in May 1851, required, as did several other churches throughout Racine and adjoining counties, that prospective members swear that they had never owned slaves. Anti-slavery sermons were regularly delivered from its pulpit. Items found in the crawl space under the sanctuary, some dating from the Underground Railroad era, are on exhibit at the Racine Heritage Museum.

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Sign #4 (freestanding sign): Site of Cartwright Blacksmith Shop – On Sixth Street at 6th & Villa, on north side of the street

Site of Cartwright's Blacksmith Shop

As a 12-year-old, Justinian Cartwright, born to a freed slave in Kentucky, had served as a waiting boy to Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. About 1848, in search for freedom in a free state, he moved his family to Racine and opened a blacksmith shop, in which his sons also worked. Described as “the first mechanic at work in the morning,” Cartwright’s success enabled him to replace his wooden shop in 1854 with a brick building that has long since been razed. Cartwright died in 1862 of complications following an attack on his home by four anti-black assailants.

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Sign #5 (plaque on wall) Utley and Berch Site - Wisconsin Avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets

William Utley and Jesse Berch

Although their residences no longer stand, abolitionists William L. Utley and Jesse Berch lived in this area before the Civil War. During the war, Utley became colonel of the Twenty-second Wisconsin Infantry, a regiment dominated by Racine County men, and Berch became one of Utley’s sergeants.

While posted in Kentucky, Utley and his men made national headlines in 1862 as “The Abolition Regiment” when they repeatedly defied even their own Union superiors by refusing to return to their masters, “escaped slaves” who had sought sanctuary in their encampment. The controversy ultimately involved President Lincoln, whose strategy at that time included keeping slavery legal in Kentucky and other border states.

During the political ruckus, Utley ordered Berch to deliver a female runaway to Underground Railroad legend Levi Coffin in nearby Cincinnati. After being disguised as a soldier and delivered safely to Coffin, the woman was put on a train headed for the freedom of Racine.

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Sign #6 (freestanding sign): Site of Clement's Newspaper Office - Southeast corner of Fourth and Main Streets

Site of Clement's Newspaper Office

As word of Joshua Glover's Friday night capture spread through Racine, Charles Clement, editor of the Racine Advocate, telegraphed fellow abolitionist editor Sherman Booth in Milwaukee to let him know Glover and his captors were headed there. Clement also included a brief notice about Glover in Saturday morning's Advocate. More complete accounts of the arrest and subsequent events appeared in the following edition, with the main headline announcing:

HIGH-HANDED OUTRAGE!

ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP A CITIZEN OF RACINE BY SLAVE GATHERERS!

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Sign #7 (freestanding sign): Armour Livery Stable Site - North side of Fourth Street, east of Main Street, next to Lake Avenue Parking Deck

Site of Armour's Livery Stable

Around dusk on March 10, 1854, Joshua Glover's former master appeared at Marvin Armour's livery door. He brought with him a St. Louis police officer, two deputy U.S. marshals and four others. The posse set out from the livery with two wagons headed for Glover's cabin at the sawmill. After being captured, Glover was put, beaten and bloodied, on the floor of one of the wagons. Required to file federal paperwork in Milwaukee—and fearing that Glover might be forcibly liberated if he were kept overnight in Racine's flimsy hail—some of his captors took Glover to Milwaukee's sturdier jail and sent the other wagon back to Armour's livery. As the returning wagon arrived, its occupants were confronted by a crowd of Racine abolitionists.

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Sign #8 (plaque on monument-TWO SIDED): Dutton and Raymond Warehouse Site - South Side of Root River, east of Main Street Bridge. NOTE: these plaques are already in place and do not need to be updated.

Racine's Underground Railroad Maritime Link

In the mid-1800s, fugitive slaves traveled to Racine, hid in local sanctuaries, and embarked on the maritime connection of the Underground Railroad. Ships of abolition-friendly Great Lakes captains took them to Canadian ports and their freedom. The best-known fugitive was Joshua Glover, who found safety in the Racine Harbor warehouse of Ahas P. Dutton in early April 1854. Dutton himself conducted more than one hundred fugitives over twenty years. This marker commemorates those fugitive slaves who are known, and those whose stories remain forever untold.

Designated June 10, 2005 NPS

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Sign #9 (freestanding sign): Home of Rev. Kinney – In front of 826 State Street in furniture zone to the west of the entrance and west of the light pole

Site of Rev. Kinney's Home

When Joshua Glover was first brought from Waukesha to Racine a day or two after being freed from the Milwaukee jail, he was taken to the home of Rev. Martin P. Kinney, which once stood at Liberty and Marquette streets. Kinney, a known abolitionist who had given an anti-slavery lecture in Racine the night Glover was captured, was the pastor of the Congregational Church, about three blocks away at 826 State Street. Occupied today by St. George Orthodox Church, the church building was then being rebuilt after a disastrous fire. Because the Lake Michigan shipping season had not yet begun, Glover was taken from Kinney's to the Burlington and Spring Prairie area where he was hidden for "about a month" until a ship was available to take him to Canada.

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Sign #10 (freestanding sign): Site of Colored Union Baptist Church – In front of 1120 Grant Street, adjacent to St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church

Site of Colored Union Baptist Church

In a building that is today but a memory, this pioneering congregation, which had established Wisconsin's first African-American church in 1857 (when Racine County's "colored" population totaled about sixty), had to curtail and 1860 fund drive to remodel its building after several of its members fled when word came that "slave-catchers" were in the neighborhood.

The church, known today as St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, was organized at a meeting in the home (since razed) of Charles Ware. The members purchased a frame schoolhouse and moved it to a lot, donated by Ware. That site serves today as a church parking lot. The building was later sold and a larger meetinghouse (since removed) was erected.

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