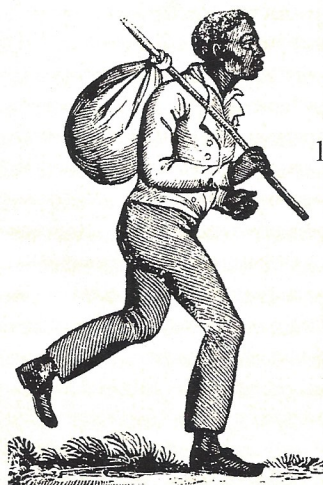
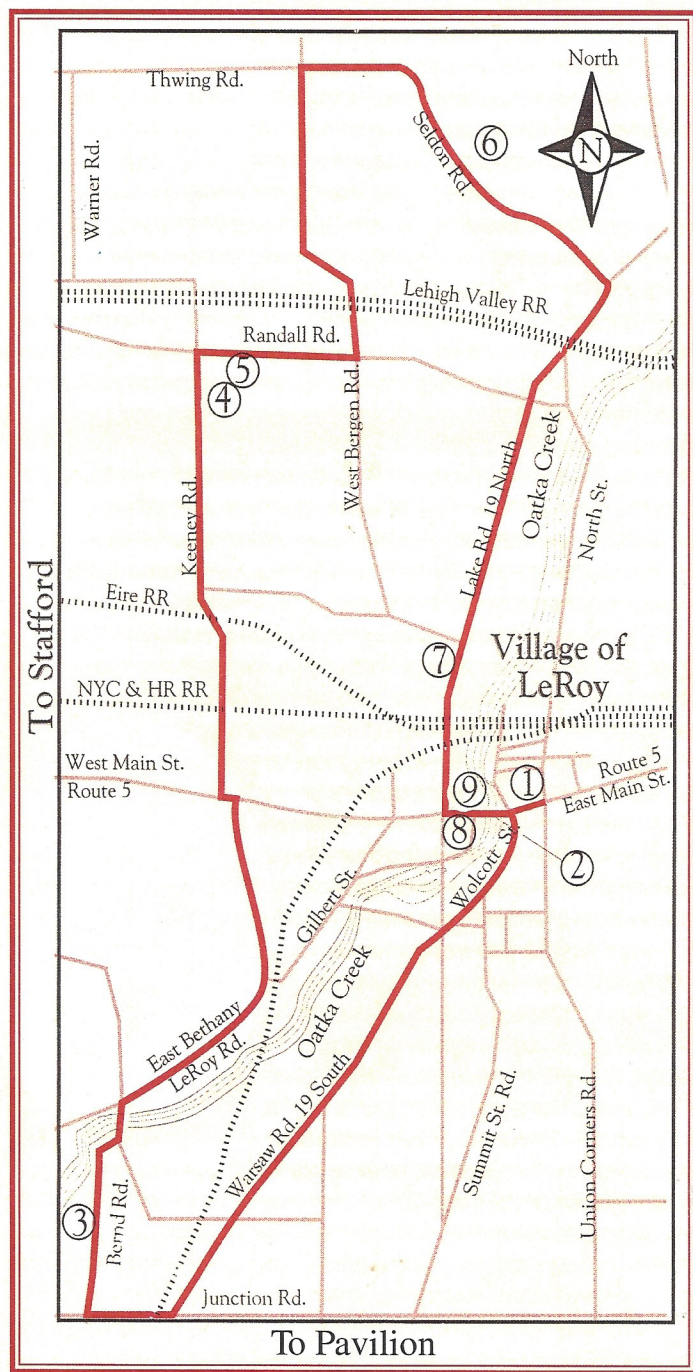


# THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN LeROY



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“Follow the North Star”  
The North Star was the guiding  
light for the Underground Railroad



that was mentioned by George Tomlinson: "At that time the track of the Underground Railroad ran past my father's house in Jug City. It came from Pavilion to South LeRoy, past Jacob Gallup's to the LeRoy and East Bethany Road." As you travel north from the Gallup house you will notice that the creek comes closer to the road. At certain times of the year, it was low enough to cross here and avoid the bridge at Jug City. George Tomlinson lived on the other side of the creek, so the crossing was probably made south of the bridge.

*Turn left at the end of Bernd Road and cross the creek. Turn right on the East Bethany-LeRoy Road and continue to Route 5.*

This part of the route was also mentioned by George Tomlinson who stated: "Thence toward the Village of LeRoy to a crossroad that led to the Batavia Road, starting in the west line of Martin Coe's farm and coming out on the main road in the neighborhood of Keeney's and Chester Wait's." This route follows almost exactly the present day East Bethany-LeRoy Road.

*You will have to turn left on Route 5 and take an immediate right onto Keeney Road continue north on Keeney Road.*

**THE KEENEY ROAD** A historic marker is located near the site of where the Underground Railroad crossed the old State Road (now Route 5). There were few families living on Keeney Road in the 1850s and as you travel north about 2 miles, you will notice very few old homes.

*As you approach the corner of Keeney Road and the Randall Road, you will notice a small cemetery on the right side of the road.*

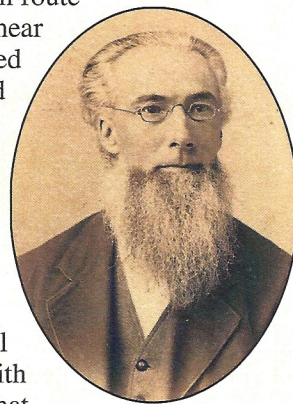
**LANGWORTHY CEMETERY (4)** Slavery was legal in New York until 1827. Some early settlers brought slaves with them to the frontier. One of those men was David Kneeland who settled northwest of LeRoy, near Randall and Keeney Road. Kneeland came from Connecticut and was "subject to fits of temper." One day Kneeland and his slave were bringing in hay and putting it into the barn. A rainstorm was coming and Kneeland was in a hurry. "Though the colored man was doing all that was possible for any man, Kneeland said something that the black man answered." Kneeland struck the black man in the head, and by nighttime, the slave was dead. The Langworthys, who were neighbors, heard the argument and the screams of the unfortunate black slave. Later, Kneeland came to the Langworthys and asked if they could help bury the body of the slave on the north side of the wall of the cemetery. It appears that the north wall of the cemetery, near the creek, has washed away, but as you pause to look at this serene setting, think of a poor black slave, whose name we shall never know, and remember that he lies in an unmarked grave. David Kneeland was never prosecuted for the murder. In the front row of graves, to the right of the steps, you will notice the gravestone of Elijah Huftelen, the man who recorded many of the stories of the Underground Railroad.

*Continue to the intersection of Keeney and Randall Road and turn right. Stop in front of the stone house on the right.*

**MACDONALD'S STATION ON THE UNDERGROUND (5)** Somewhere in this vicinity lived LeRoy's Underground Railroad Stationmaster, Daniel MacDonald. He did not remain in this area long, but while he was here, he enlisted the help of a young boy, Elijah Huftelen, who lived in this stone house. The written accounts of Elijah Huftelen are the most detailed records of the LeRoy route. MacDonald was described as a tall Scotsman, six feet tall with piercing black eyes and boundless energy. He set up a small medicine business and used it as a front for his real mission, helping runaway slaves escape to Canada. He was called "the medicine man." Young Huftelen took care of MacDonald's horses and noticed that the horses were used only at night. MacDonald never owned any gray or white horses.

One day Huftelen saw MacDonald talking with four Negroes and they all got into a large wagon and took off. MacDonald did not return for two days but before he left, he confided in young Huftelen, that he was indeed helping the Negroes to escape. From this place, the route traveled to Morganville, past Horse-shoe Lake to Elba and then to the Niagara River and Canada.

In 1856, the secrecy of the Covington route was jeopardized by an incident near Elba. After that, MacDonald decided to move west to Bowmansville and take young Huftelen with him to help with his undercover work. Later, Huftelen returned to LeRoy and continued to live in this stone house, raising lilies and writing articles for the *LeRoy Gazette*.



**Elijah Huftelen**

Continue down the road. You will pass a large brick house on the left with two front doors. Legends persist that this house was part of the Underground Railroad. The discovery of an underground room added to the credibility of the story, but there are no written records that confirm the legends.

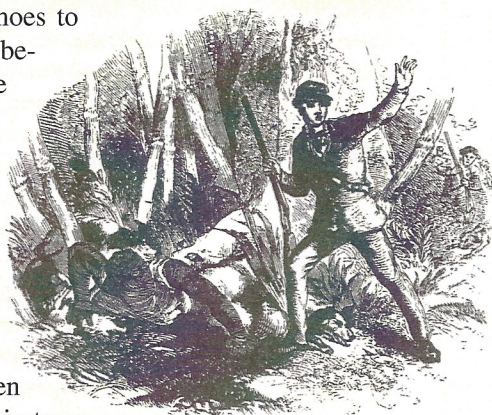
*At the corner of Randall Road and the West Bergen Road, turn left and proceed to the Selden Road. Turn right and continue east about 2 miles. Just past the gravel pit on the left is the Selden Homestead.*

**SELDEN HOMESTEAD (6)** One day in the late 1850's Richard Lord Selden was working near his barn when a frightened Negro came up to him and asked if Selden would direct him north. Selden was not involved with the Underground Railroad but he pointed toward a swamp that led to Griswold Road. The man headed off in that direction. Within minutes two U. S. Marshals drove up to the Selden barn and asked if Selden has seen a fugitive slave. Selden admitted that he had seen the slave. The Marshals ordered him into their wagon and took off down a dead end road. They all got out and began to run after the fleeing man, but Selden ran faster and caught up with the slave, over a hill and out of sight of the lawmen. He told the Negro to follow a brook into the swamp until he reached a large pool and to wait for him until dark.

Then Selden ran back to the Marshals and pointed them in another direction. He never saw them again. That night he took



food, clothes and shoes to the man cowering beside the pool in the swamp, and then drove him to Elba to make connections with the stationmaster.



But the story continues. After the war, Richard Selden was on a business trip to Baltimore. While having dinner in a restaurant, a black waiter approached him and asked if Selden recognized him. "No," he didn't. The waiter proceeded to tell Selden that he was the slave that he had rescued twenty years before. He had reached safety in Canada, and when war broke out, he joined a black regiment. The unit was surrendered to the Confederates who proceeded to mercilessly slaughter the black soldiers. He was one of only fourteen to survive. This story was recounted in the 1970s by Richard Selden's grandson.

*Continue on the Selden Road to Route 19 south and turn right. Immediately past the large Village of LeRoy sign, pause by the first house on the right.*

**J.R. ANDERSON HOUSE (7)** One night in 1858 three escaped slaves, unable to find their way on the Underground Railroad, found themselves in the middle of LeRoy. Huftelen writes: "The people were sorry for them but dare not feed or give them lodgings, being church members and law abiding citizens. (The 1850 Escaped Slave law punished people who fed or helped fugitive slaves with fines of \$1000 and imprisonment.) At last they found a colored individual, an ex-slave who had been emancipated by the act of 1827. They knew they were off the route but nobody could tell them, for it was one of the best, if not the very best guarded routes in the whole system. However, the ex-slave was in the employ of our venerable townsmen, J. R. Anderson, and told them that he thought Mr. Anderson would help them. He led them to the house where they were provided with a good breakfast, after which the sleigh was brought 'round. Those who knew Mr. Anderson in those far away years will remember that he had a vast amount of energy in his manner and the men were nervous about trusting themselves with him. But he said: "Pile in boys, all hell can't get you now.' " They were taken to Bergen and then to Rochester where they made contact with Frederick Douglass.

*Continue into LeRoy and turn left at the intersection of Route 19 and Route 5.*

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (8)** In August 1835, the Presbyterian Church was the site of an anti-slavery meeting, but abolition was not popular with many people. At that time there were four avowed abolitionists in LeRoy: Seth Gates, Samuel Grannis, Deacon Comstock and Judge Brewster. They organized the meeting at the Presbyterian Church and advertised that an escaped slave would address the crowd. Dr. Reed, a physician from Rochester, and the Rev. A.A. Phelps of Massachusetts addressed the crowd. The room was filled to capacity. A large crowd gathered outside and began

to shout obscenities. Windows were smashed and wood and stones were hurled at the speaker's platform. Judge Hascall tried to break up the crowd and was stoned for his efforts. The windows in the home of Seth Gates were smashed and his wife and children had to take refuge in an inner room.

*Continue down Main Street. On the left, at the edge of the bridge is the Post Office.*

**THE DOCK (9)** On the site of the present post office there was a large building known as the "Dock." It housed stores and various other shops. In 1878, Samuel Grannis, a former resident of LeRoy, told the *LeRoy Gazette* that he had been a station agent on the Underground Railroad and he kept his "office" in the old stone building then owned by Elijah Gray. Grannis also stated that "Fred" Douglass was a passenger on the Grannis Railroad in 1850. Frederick Douglass did not escape to freedom through Western New York, and the date does not coincide with the documented events, but it is possible that Douglass was helping runaway slaves and stayed at the Grannis "office". However, this is a typical example of the vague evidence that exists.

Probably, there are many stories of the Underground Railroad that have gone unrecorded – names have been forgotten and events untold, yet the story of the Underground Railroad remains an epic of American heroism. Of the many gospel songs, these words have special meaning:

*I looked over Jordan, and what did I see  
Coming for to carry me home!  
A band of angels coming after me  
Coming for to carry me home.*

*If you get there before I do,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
Tell all of my friends I'm coming too,  
Coming for to carry me home.*



This building known as "The Dock" was razed for the Post Office. Samuel Grannis wrote that this building was his "office" on the Underground Railroad.