

## STORIES of New Jersey

of abolition societies in 1796. One of them was Joseph Bloomfield, who became president of the convention. As Governor of New Jersey in 1804, Bloomfield signed the hard-fought act which provided that every child thereafter born of a slave was free, but must remain as servant of the mother's master until 25 if a boy, 21 if a girl.

Soon waves of fugitive slaves were flowing over the borders of New Jersey and other northern states. The southern slaveholders fought the abolition societies; they had Congress pass the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, which punished anyone giving aid to fleeing Negroes, and sent spies and slave-catchers north to capture escaped slaves. Up from Chesapeake Bay, from the banks of the Susquehanna, across from the slave state of Delaware and from all along the Pennsylvania border came "trains" of fugitives, thousands of them, seeking transportation on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey.

There were three principal underground routes in this State. Each route had a number, and the stations were called by letters of the alphabet. The most important route followed the Delaware River for 18 miles from Camden to Burlington, known as Station A. At this stop horses were changed and the journey continued on through Bordentown to Princeton; another change of horses and then off to New Brunswick. The Salem Route was the second most popular system. Starting at Salem, it stopped at Woodbury, Mount Laurel and Bordentown, where it joined the Camden Route. The third system, known as the Greenwich Route, began at Greenwich and had stations at Swedesboro, Mount Holly and Burlington, merging there with the Camden Route.

At Camden the Quakers had a station in an old farmhouse now used as a clubhouse. Slaves who could not endure the hardships of flight are buried in Camden. A short distance east of Bordentown there were stations at Crosswicks and in the Imlay Mansion at Allentown. Occasionally, fugitives were taken from Allentown to Toms River, where they were put aboard boats going north.

Less traveled routes of the Underground continued from Pennsylvania through Trenton or Phillipsburg and New Brunswick or Somerville to Elizabeth and Staten Island. Sometimes they were switched north through Morristown and suburban Newark to Jersey City. There was also a route in Morris County that led through Dover and the mountains to Newburgh, New York. The runaways were sometimes hidden in boxes and transported in covered wagons. The Brotherton House at Pleasant Hill near Dover was a station on this road.

In Warren County the community called Quaker Settlement was a station on the route which followed the banks of the Walkill River through Sussex County into New York State.

New Brunswick was one of the most dangerous spots on the Underground Railroad because southern agents in search of fugitives had their headquarters there. All along the treacherous route between New Brunswick and Jersey City spies and agents of the Railroad watched for strangers and law officers. They were prepared to send swift warnings that would switch the "trains" with their passengers and conductors to other branches of the Railroad.

At the Raritan River bridge, just east of New Brunswick, "trains" were sometimes stopped by slave-catchers. To guard against this, one of the most daring of the Underground operators, Cornelius Cornell, took up the position of lookout man. At his warning the slaves were transferred to skiffs below the bridge or led by a side road to Perth Amboy.

During the 1850's, the Eagleswood Academy at Perth Amboy was an important Underground station and the meeting place of prominent abolitionists as well as advocates of women's suffrage. Situated on the Raritan River, the school was a natural hideout for fugitives who could be put on barges during the night and carried to Canada and freedom. Living at the Academy were the secret agents of