

The Underground

Railroad

in Canada

ONTARIO

QUEBEC



by Teegan



Laura Smith Haviland was one of the few known Canadians who helped African-Americans escape from slavery in the U.S., to be free in Canada. She was born in Ontario and was a station master on the Underground Railroad; but what was the Underground Railroad, and why is so little known about the people involved?



It wasn't actually a railroad, or underground. They called it "underground" because it was a secret organization, and "railroad" because of their railway code words.



The Underground Railroad was a system of routes, helpers, and safe houses designed to assist people escaping from slavery.



It was only in the later decades of its running that they changed their route to Canada, because none of the U.S. was safe anymore.



Slave patrollers were like slave police. They worked for the government, and their job was to capture escaped slaves.

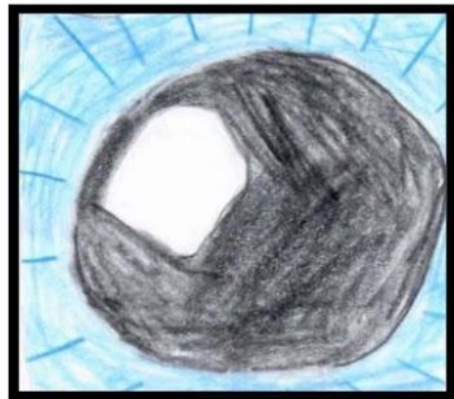
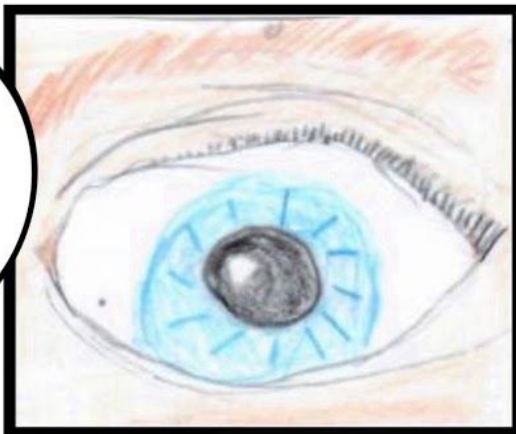


**KNOCK
KNOCK**

The reason we don't know of many people who were involved is because people rarely wrote down their story for fear of being discovered.



I am looking for some escaped slaves. I'd like to have a look around.



Hmmm...

Slave patrollers would look in station masters' houses for passengers they might be hiding in their station. Passengers (the people who were slaves) would hide in the stations.



The station masters would sometimes have signals to show the passengers that it was safe to come to their station. Often they would light a lamp or some sort of light in a window.



She's lit the lamp! Let's go across.

Many people had to cross over large bodies of water, such as the Great Lakes, or large rivers to get into Canada. Most went into Ontario or Quebec.

Many freedom seekers settled in communities such as Buxton, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Chatham, and Brantford.





Sometimes slave patrollers would try to cross into Canada to capture former slaves.



THUMP



Passengers mostly traveled by night, and rested in the day time.



Stop!

Many slaves were caught and faced harsh punishments, but between 1850 and 1860 alone, close to 20,000 people made it to Canada!

According to the Fugitive Slave acts, any escaped slaves in any of the states can be brought back to their plantation by force. Any person caught helping them will be charged.

Changes in the Fugitive Slave acts in the 1850s meant more freedom seekers came to Canada.

But we're in Canada now. We just crossed the border.



Approximately 30,000 to 40,000 African-American freedom seekers escaped to Canada.



Black settlers in Canada and their descendants built communities and helped make Canada what it is today.

Many African-Americans returned to help with the Underground Railroad after they made it to freedom. We don't know of all of the people who helped, but we know they risked their lives.



Even after they made it to Canada, many people still faced racism and discrimination. In 1982 The Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrined equal rights into the Canadian Constitution. Today many Canadians still struggle to overcome racism.