

Montgomery County
Underground Railroad
Sites
Part II

Just a bit of background...

Knights of the Golden Circle

- Became the most powerful secret and subversive organization in the history of the United States with members in every state and territory before the end of the Civil War.

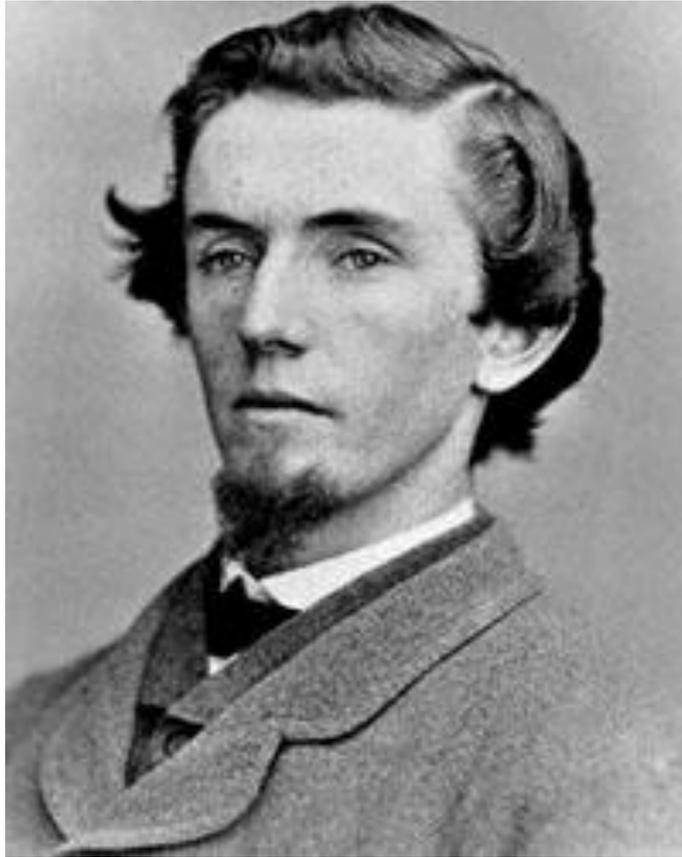


'Little Egypt'

The Golden Circle



“Famous” Knights of the Golden Circle



John Surratt



William Quantrill

Knights of the Golden Circle

- The primary goal was to create a prosperous, slave-holding Southern Empire. The economy would be fueled by cotton, sugar, tobacco, rice, coffee, indigo, and mining and would employ slave labor.
- Their planned invasion of Mexico failed, so they started preparing for war with the North, creating groups to
 - provide for the army's needs
 - "defend from misrepresentation during our absence"
 - become postmasters, physicians, ministers, and teachers
 - advise and forward money, arms, ammunition, and other necessary provisions
 - send recruits as rapidly as possible.

Knights of the Golden Circle

- The K.G.C. played the major role in the Northwest Conspiracy. The Confederate plan was to use the great numbers of Knights in the Northern states to foster a revolution that would spread across Indiana, Illinois, New York, Ohio, and any other state in the North where it was feasible.
- Throughout the Civil War, one of the KGC's most important roles came in its infiltration of Union forces.
- After the Civil War was over, the KGC continued to work rebuild a prosperous South, for many decades after the Civil War.

Yountsville



Abijah O'Neall

- Moved to Indiana from Ohio in 1833
- Came from a family that owned slaves (but not happy about it) in South Carolina
- Built house in 1848 near Yountsville
- Hid slaves on the farm, often in the barn or the barn's cellar.
- Never specifically told his wife Eleanor he had slaves- just that he “needed a basket of food”.
- Was known for sterling honesty, hospitality and unwavering patriotism.

Abijah O'Neall

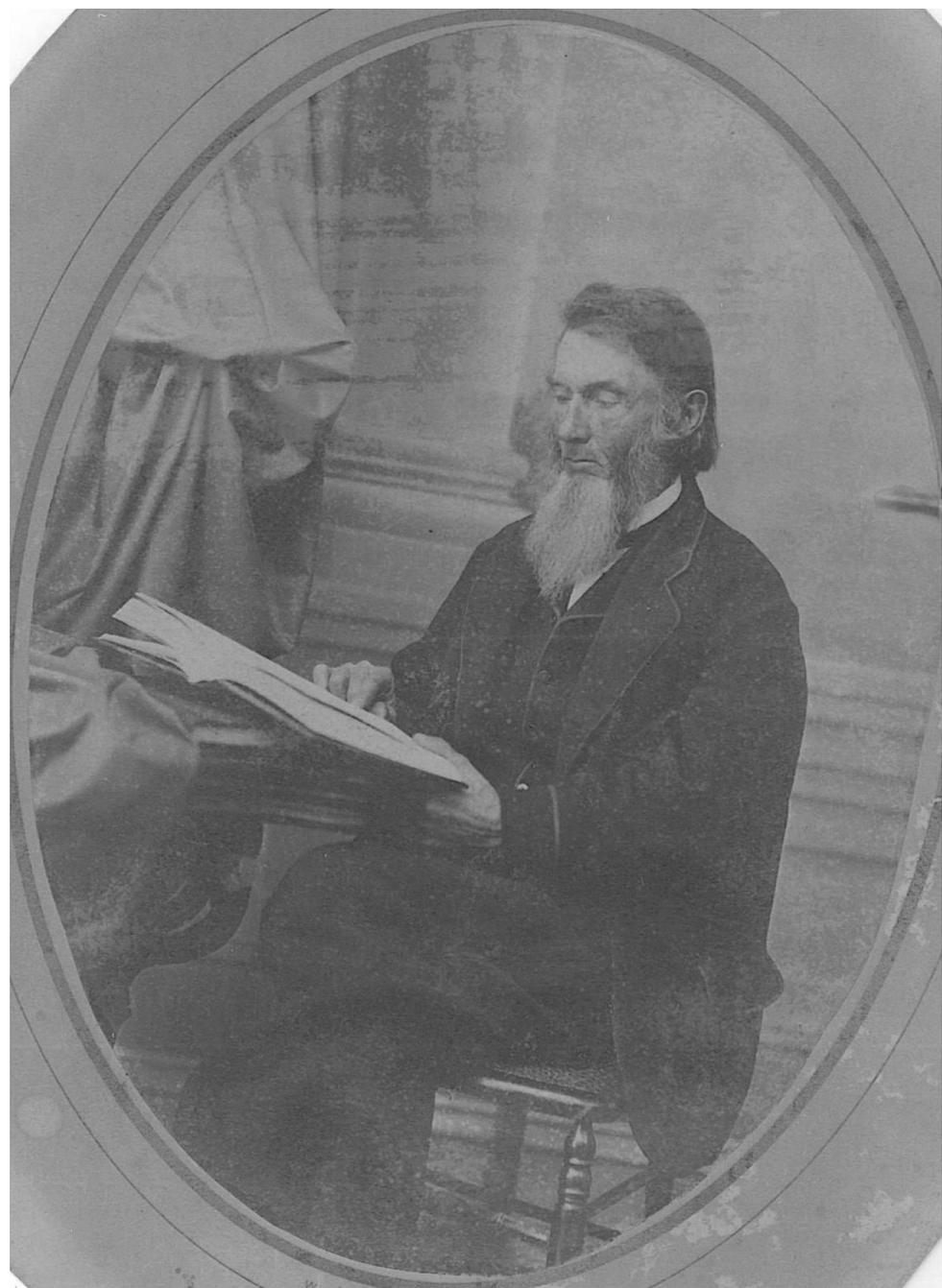
- Held meetings at Yountsville and Alamo and “rallied the citizens to the cause of the Union”
- Wife Eleanor Hall O'Neall was Abijah's constant companion when he rode throughout the county and was ready every night to fire a gun in case the household was attacked.
- It appears their property was under constant threat from those who didn't agree with their choices
- Had 8 children most of whom worked with and knew about the activities
- Sons went into the army to fight in the Civil War

Abijah O'Neall

- The story goes that, during the draft resistance at Jackville, (allegedly due to Knights of the Golden Circle-KGC) the violence got so bad, there was a guard appointed to his home.
- During this time span, several Union recruiting officers had disappeared never to be seen again.
- O'Neall set out to break up several castles of the KGC whose goal was to increase the power of the Southern slave-holding upper class to such a degree that it would never disappear
- He was good friends with Gov. Morton who sent several detectives to work with Abijah to rid the area of "the problem". The main plot they broke up was the plot to burn all the war widows' barns in the township

Abijah O'Neall

- Abijah was also a surveyor, millinery, county commissioner, state legislator, farmer, store owner and sold water rights to Sugar Creek to the Younts
- Don and Bonnie Mills purchased during a sheriff's sale and extensively renovated the home.





Alamo



Ripley Township

- Wesley Roundtree was a farmer in Alamo
- He was born in 1825 in Ohio and moved to Ripley Township in 1827
- He eventually owned 280 acres of land
- He married Florence, daughter of Dr. Ira Brown, also of Alamo

Alamo

- Town was laid out in 1837 on his land. Streets were named for heroes and a city square was developed
- Land was supposed to sell quickly and for a great deal of money. However, that didn't happen, and the land was eventually auctioned off to the highest bidder.

The Escape Route from Alamo

- Line existed from Parke County to Joab Elliott's cabin which was built in 1839. The cabin had a large garret
- Also on the line were Thomas Elmore, William Gilkey and Dr. Brown.
- Gilkey had large sorrel horse that was used as main transportation method. He allegedly kept 6 runaways in his cornfield for over 1 week which led to quite an escape

The Escape Route from Alamo

- Thomas Elmore learned that the pro-slavers knew of the “cornfield runaways”, so he and Dr. Brown hitched horses to Gilkey’s wagon and headed for Fisher Doherty’s.
- However, Elmore had forgotten the password, Doherty wasn’t home, Mrs. Doherty refused to let them in her home.
- Elmore panicked and took the slaves to Speed Cabin. Rather than wake the household, he propped a ladder up against the house, the runaways climbed through a small hole in the garret of the Speed Cabin, and waited until they could be moved.
- Apparently the Speeds learned of their surprise guests the next morning

William Gilkey

- Had LOTS of real estate - over 300 acres on the NE side of Alamo
- His family had lots in neighboring sections. His father-in-law also owned land.
- He purchased his first land in 1827 in Sec 24 of Ripley (near Yountsville - his family had a Mill there). Later he purchased land near Alamo- not far from the "rest" of the Alamo
- Abolitionists
- He married Margaret Roundtree, which if you remember Wesley Roundtree (Margaret's brother) married Dr. Brown's daughter.

Reson H. Bolser

- Born in Hamilton County, Ohio, in September 1815.
- Also spelled Reason Balsler and Rezin Balsler
- His obituary read “he was the last one of the noble quartette of managers of that famous thoroughfare, formerly known as the underground railroad. He was one of four brave and noble spirits who risked all for the benefit of suffering humanity in the shape of the Southern slave, and many were the fugitives of sable color who have had occasion to bless the name of Reson H. Bolser”.
- He was also the first man who observed Memorial Day in Ripley township.
- 16 July 1885 he and his wife, Avarilla, celebrated their golden wedding. They had at least 5 children

Alfred's Sad Story Near Alamo

- The story goes that an escaping negro, Alfred, was seen in the woods east of Alamo by Ira Compton who was hunting.
- Sugar Creek was swollen due to recent rains.
- Compton pretended that he was going to capture the runaway, who plunged into the stream above a large drift and swam to the middle of the creek catching to a snag.
- Compton frightened him with his gun causing him to let go of the snag and he was drowned. He was quietly buried on the banks of Sugar Creek

Joab Elliot

- Born 1807
- Survived 1811-1812 earthquakes
- Orphaned as a child in 1821
- After the death of his parents, Joab lived with his brother in Ohio, but in 1828, he made Montgomery County, his permanent home and bought eighty acres, in Sec 23 of Ripley Township.
- Built and lived in log cabin next door to Hiram Powell
- No biological children, but adopted eight children
- Learned to speak Native American languages
- Associated with Chief John Green

Joab Elliot

- From Quaker background
- Brought runaways to Crawfordsville in conjunction with William Gilkey, Hiram Powell and possibly Dr. Ira Brown and/or the Elmores
- Married wife Susan in 1829; she died 1876
- Left Alamo to run a grocery business in Cville around 1857 and lived south of the Odd Fellows Cemetery

Joab Elliot

- The following photo of Elliot's home was in the book of James B. Elmore's called, Twenty-Five Years in Jackville.
- The book tells of the railroad line running from Parke County by way of Alamo to this station.
- The line then ran to Yountsville to the Abijah O'Neal home, then ran to Crawfordsville in the care of John Speed and Fisher Doherty, who sent them on.



Hiram Powell

- Hiram and Sabra Powell were deeded 160 acres of property about 1 mile north of Alamo on October 27, 1828.
- Was a math teacher
- 2 separate upstairs and spiral stairs. Was a link between the two through the attic (which has since partially collapsed)
- The home also had a tunnel that led from the front closet to the outside area (forest)
- Had the chimney on his home painted black as a sign of refuge and safety

Hiram Powell

- Supposedly there was a third passageway in the hidden section which connected with the cellar.
- In the 1829-1837 time frame, Hiram Powell bought 5 different tracts of land presumably to hide slaves.

Powell Home/ Dunlop Family

- Worked with Joab Elliott who lived next door before the Elliots moved to Crawfordsville.
- 1857, Hiram Powell had a ward, William Smith, aged 26 years who was labeled an "air idiot, was of colored descent and is unknown how he came to live with the Powells.
- Cecil Dunlap was recent owner and put home on auction in November of 2013. It did not sell then and was been horribly vandalized for copper wire.
- As of June 2014 it was purchased and being renovated

















Matthias Elmore

- Native of Waynesville Ohio. Settled in Ripley township of MC in 1830s. He and his brother farmed and bought land west of Alamo.
- Received poor formal education, so he educated himself.
- Very political; carpenter by trade
- Helped build First Methodist Episcopal Church
- Married three times, had 13 total children, but only 5 survived
- Family members were known conductors
- Matthias Elmore's family stayed on his land for at least 100 more years

James Elmore

- James was the son of Matthias
- James B Elmore in his 25 Years to Jackville reports in Chapter 6 a veritable Who's Who of the underground Railroad in the Alamo area. He specifically mentions a route from Bloomingdale, a Quaker settlement in Parke County, up to Alamo to be sheltered on the Elliot Farm

James Elmore's Birth Home



James Elmore's Home



Rev Sol. McKinney

- Was pro-slavery
- Left Montgomery County, the Alamo area and went to Texas to preach a pro-slavery sermon
- Apparently wasn't pro-slavery enough, and was jailed, whipped, robbed and run out of town.
- Event made national news

Binford/Garfield



Binford (now Garfield)

- Renamed Garfield after Pres. James Garfield stopped there to talk
- Dr. Joseph Emmons was from there.
- He became an ophthalmologist
- Was Quaker
- Idell Ellingwood painted home before it was demolished

Dr. Joseph Emmons

- Was an active member of the Friend's Church
- Married to Mary
- Eldest child, Alden, became jeweler
- Moved to Garfield (Binford) area in 1846; left in 1874
- Also did farming, and doctoring making many trips throughout the county "sharing his messages" and probably moving runaways
- Just north and east of his former residence that once stood on the south side of St Rd 47, was a Friends Meeting House

Darlington



The Cox Family

- William Cox was born in North Carolina in 1782; family were staunch Quakers
- His parents were Joseph and Dinah Cox, who had 9 children. William was the oldest
- William married Keziah Rhodes in 1804; had 5 kids, all born in North Carolina
- One of their sons, Elijah, was sent to Indiana about 1828 to search for land in an area without slavery

The Cox Family

- Elijah and his wife, Nancy Brown, had 7 kids and originally settled near Garfield
- By 1833, William had purchased 160 acres of land from Elijah's wife's parents in the Darlington area
- Elijah and Nancy's 3rd son, Esias was born 1837 and married Jennie Lee
- Esias, Al Booher, and Capt Eb McClaskey allegedly helped operate the Underground Railroad in the Darlington area

The Cox Family

- Esias (et al) would take the freedom seeker from his station at Garfield to Thorntown
- He always travelled in a closed carriage at night and would be back before daybreak. Esias and Jennie eventually moved to Darlington



This home was built by Benjamin Cox, one of the first settlers in this area, in 1840. The Cox family were Quakers, and this house served as a stopping point for the Underground Railroad. Now owned and recently remodeled by the Walker family, this residence is located a quarter mile west of town on CR 500N. (photo courtesy of Wesley Tribbett)



This is a photo of the carding mill built by Benjamin Cox. Located west of town, it was a successful enterprise for several years in the mid-1800's until waterpower became insufficient.

Darlington Friends Church (Quaker)

- This next photo is the church in 1888 near the west side of the Greenlawn Cemetery
- It appears that this congregation started making its way west after 1800 to find homes away from slavery and the Southern slaveholding states
- Established itself in 1823; became farmers, milliners, carpenters, cabinet makers, and surveyors
- Land was purchased from William and Hannah Cox
- Formally organized about 1839
- 1903 a brick church was built in town



FRIENDS CHURCH DAR, IND.

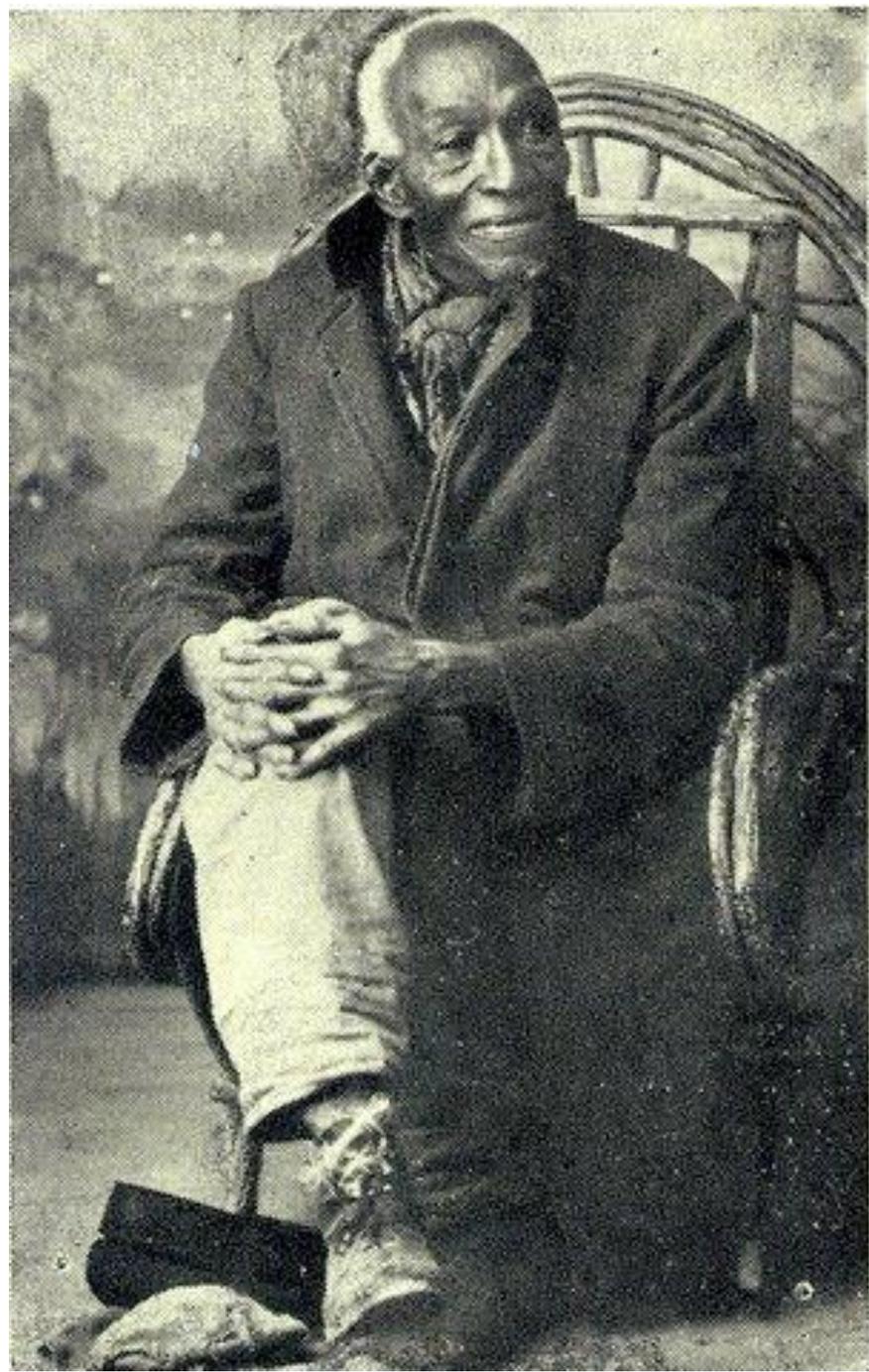
Gravelly Run Friends Church

- Was located on CR150N near CR550E.
- First church was log structure which was built in 1842
- Building in next picture was built in 1880; picture itself was from 1942 when the members had gathered for the Centennial Celebration



Charles Derrickson

- Very popular- known to everyone as Uncle Charlie
- Sang and danced
- Worked all his life to get his wife free and to Indiana- and he succeeded
- Cut wood for railroads to earn money
- He and wife lived to be over 100 years old
- He lived on a small farm outside of town but he would hitch up "old Dobbin" nearly every day and come into Thorntown.



Charles Derrickson

- He was born into slavery on the plantation of a Mr. Derrickson, in Nicolas Co., KY. He bought his freedom by faithfully working and came to this part of the country in the late 1840's. He appeared in Darlington one day in 1850.
- The Quakers took him in, fed and clothed him, and found him work with farmers
- Before coming here he had fallen in love with a slave girl named Tillie Stout Thomas, who lived on a nearby plantation Nickolas County, KY. Her owner was demanding \$450 for her sale.

Charles Derrickson

- Alf Burk, Crawfordsville, became interested in Charles' story and advanced Charley \$450 with which to buy her freedom.
- Eventually a deal was struck and Tillie was delivered to the railroad station at Madison, Indiana. Charley sent Tilley travelling money to Indianapolis, where they were officially married sometime in 1838-1839
- They came to Darlington where he worked on the farm of William Cox to repay the \$450 loan. This he finally accomplished by chopping and hauling wood to be used as fuel by the Big Four railroad, to run the locomotive engines.

Charles Derrickson's Tillie

- Tillie was born December 26, 1816 to slave parents, Benjamin and Allie Stout, but by custom, ended up with the name of her first owner by the last name of Thomas
- Married 60 years before she died March 26, 1906
- He died November 7, 1912 at about 106 years old at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Levi Hall
- In his obituary, listed 12 living children (they had 16 total)
- 4 white men were pall bearers

Charles Derrickson Claim to Fame

- In 1905, John James, Pennel Bickner and Charley were in the woods near Darlington (for reasons unknown). John tried to kill Charley- for reasons unknown. However, it was Bickner who was killed during the “incident”.
- James was found guilty of the murder of Bickner, shooting Derrickson, and given a life sentence in Michigan City Prison
- Charley said at that time that the only reason James did not kill him when he shot at him at close range with a shot gun was because the "Good Lord saved me".
- His testimony proved to be the “richest intellectual feast ever provided in the Montgomery County Courthouse”

Charles Derrickson

- By 1878 he owned land in Sugar Creek Township
- Said to be a real Calypson singer
- Charley used to pat his cane and sing along.
According to all accounts, it was more rhythm than melody

Charles Derrickson

- According to legend, Kenneth Bradshaw, Montgomery County resident, he (Bradshaw) wrote an “orchestration” of Charley’s singing and dancing and gave it to Bill Robinson, the greatest tap dancer that ever lived.
- According to Bradshaw, Robinson then originated his famous stairway dance to that tune and he and little Shirley Temple did the dance up the steps of the mansion in “The Little Colonel”



Charles Derrickson

- He was always surrounded by a group of youths to whom he sang the songs of the old days in Kentucky
- It was a familiar sight here to see him walk down the middle of Main St., singing a hymn, his dog following closely behind, as witnessed by 2 or 3 generations of Darlington and Thorntown citizens.

Charles Derrickson

- He was a preacher in his day and he is one of the best entertainers because of his naive way of putting things.
- A Quaker woman taught him how to read the Bible when he was 40 years old.

Thorntown Colored Cemetery



Thorntown's Colored Cemetery

- On the west side of County Road 825 West, a ½ mile north of State Road 47, and about a city block south of where the highway turns west and on to the Old Mill Run Park entrance.
- When the Civil War ended in early 1865, Lebanon and Thorntown attracted a number of freedmen
- One reason was the Friends (Quakers). Thorntown once had a Friends Church, and a second church still stands at Sugar Plain which continues today
- Within a year or two, a considerable number of black families had settled in Thorntown and the surrounding area. Their original goals were to build a church, a school and a cemetery.

Thorntown's Colored Cemetery

- The church was built on land purchased from a Quaker family named Baker. It was razed in the early 1902s and the congregation absorbed elsewhere
- It is unknown if the school was built- it is assumed that the children were all integrated
- The cemetery was organized sometime in early 1869
- In addition a Negro Masonic Lodge once existed in Thorntown- the Washington Lodge, F.&A.M. (Colored) organized in 1868.

Thorntown's Colored Cemetery

- On June 15, 1869, Elias C. Barker, and his wife, Hannah sold the land to the trustees of the Colored Cemetery, for \$25.00 " ...for burying ground for the colored people of Thorntown and vicinity."
- Only four small weathered-granite stones still stand in the cemetery, which is now bordered by crops and a road.
- A few cement bases where monuments once stood can be seen, but what became of the markers is not known. There are a number of sunken spots indicating that there were several burials in the plot, possibly as many as twenty-five or thirty.

Thorntown's Colored Cemetery

- It is also assumed that two Negro veterans of the Civil War are buried in the plot in now unmarked graves. Elias C. Barker was always quoted as saying that his father, the late Perry M. Barker, was given two small American flags by the once existent G.A.R. Post at Thorntown, to be placed in the cemetery on Memorial Day.
- The large colony of Negroes living in Thorntown and the surrounding community completely disappeared- allegedly the township is without a single black resident.

Thorntown's Colored Cemetery



Thorntown's Colored Cemetery



Thorntown's Colored Cemetery

