



Episode 10, Quaker Map, New York City, Pennsylvania and Ohio

Gwen Wright: Our next story traces a map that may have led slaves to freedom. The horrors of slavery forced those in bondage to make the ultimate choice – to remain in shackles or to risk their lives by escaping. By the late 1700s, as more northern states passed emancipation laws, rewards for the return of fleeing slaves became a standard feature in American newspapers. Under the constant threat of capture, the terrified escapees will eventually find a possible source of help, a secret network of individuals who in the 1800s come to be known as the Underground Railroad. Almost 200 years later, Anne Zarella from Bradley Beach, New Jersey, has a strange map she suspects may be related to this clandestine escape network. I'm Gwendolyn Wright and I'm meeting with Anne to take a look at what she found.

Anne: And here's the map.

Gwen: Thank you. Well, I see here's the Ohio River in Southern Ohio. Now, how did you come to find this map?

Anne: Well, my husband and I went to a garage sale in 1997. We bought the map for \$45. It wasn't until I got it home and really looked at it that I noticed that it was unusual.

Gwen: Now where did you get the idea that this map was connected to the underground railroad?

Gwen: Anne's done a little research and has discovered that the area of her map, Southern Ohio, was a hotbed of underground railroad activity in the middle of the 19th century. She's also noticed a series of odd markings on her map.

Anne: There are all these dotted lines, but none of them have a name. And, I began to wonder what kind of map it would be where you didn't name the roads that...so you wouldn't be traveling on roads. You'd be traveling in some secret way.

Gwen: Well, let's look at the key. "Those marked thus are meetings of friends...."

Anne: Yes. And, I'm assuming that these were Quaker settlements.

Gwen: Well, the Quakers called themselves Friends and these must be their meeting houses.

Anne: Right. Where they worshipped.

Gwen: You know there were a number of them, in fact, in this area.



Anne: Yes. And, of course, the Quakers were related to the underground railroad. They helped the escaped slaves.

Gwen: Now, tell me exactly what you'd like for me to find out, Anne?

Anne: I would like to know if the map is authentic. If it really was used for the underground railroad. If some conductor on the underground railroad actually carried the map. I can see it was carried by someone.

Gwen: Well, it'll be an interesting quest for me to see what I can find out. May I take it with me?

Anne: Please do.

Gwen: Anne certainly has an intriguing map, but I'm not sure about her theory. I suspect not many roads in these rural areas had names back then. And it seems unlikely that a slave could have used a map like this. Most couldn't read. Anne thinks an underground railroad conductor, someone assisting escaping slaves may have carried it. That's possible, but it seems a bit far fetched. If he or she were caught, an entire network of safe places and people who tried to help would be destroyed. Here's the area we're looking at. Ohio, the Ohio River, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. But there's no date or signature, so it's hard to know who made Anne's map or when. We have very little material evidence from the underground railroad today. So if this map is what Anne thinks it is, it could be quite a significant find. I have a hunch that the Quaker symbols on the map may be crucial to unlocking its meaning. So I'm e-mailing a scanned copy to Quaker historian, Christopher Densmore. In the meantime, I'm meeting with Professor Blaine Hudson, who specializes in the history of the underground railroad. Very nice to meet you.

Blaine Hudson: How are you? Very nice to meet you as well.

Gwen: He says the flight North for slave escapees was a terrifying odyssey.

Blaine: Gwen, if you could imagine walking from, let's say the northern part of Alabama or Georgia to Detroit, perhaps in the dead of winter. That's a long way to go. Usually slaves had to be physically strong. They had to be courageous. So these were exceptional people. And those, of course, who caught would be subjected to gruesome punishments. They'd probably be sold farther south. You knew that if you got caught, nothing good was going to happen.

Gwen: Blaine reads from the testimony of Henry Bibb, who made a run for freedom in the winter of 1837.



Blaine: "I traveled on until I had arrived at the place where I was directed to call on an abolitionist. But I made no stop. So great were my fears of being pursued by the pro-slavery hunting dogs of the South, I prosecuted my journey vigorously for nearly 48 hours without food or rest, not knowing what moment I might be captured. Pelted by the snowstorms and not a house in which I could enter to shelter me from the storm."

Gwen: That's a very powerful description of both fear and bravery. You said that Henry Bibb was writing this about an escape in 1837. What are more or less the dates for the underground railroad?

Gwen: Blaine explains how the underground railroad got its name from the parallel development of the American railroad system. People assisting slaves were conductors. Safe houses were called stations.

Blaine: The cotton kingdom, the increasing concentration of slaves in the Deep South begins to stimulate a much heavier flow of fugitives. We estimate, for example, probably between 1810-1860, maybe about 130-140,000 people escaped. Before that, maybe another 100,000 or more.

Gwen: Even after the 1830s, however, not all escaping slaves had the help of an organized network.

Blaine: The fact of the matter, based on the evidence that we see now, is that probably just one in three received some kind of assistance. The rest depended largely on their own courage and sometimes their own luck to escape from slavery.

Gwen: Let me show you this map. And, I'd like to know if you can tell me whether there was underground railroad activity in this area?

Blaine: Hmm. This is a fascinating map. Now, of course, in Virginia you've got a very heavy slave population. You've got the mountains through which a number of fugitive slaves escaped. And then, of course, you've got the Ohio River, you know, which is the great border between slavery and freedom in this part of the country. That was a critical area for fugitive slaves to traverse.

Gwen: The symbols indicating meeting houses catch his eye too.

Blaine: Of all the religious denominations in North America, certainly, the Quakers were the most consistently opposed to slavery and most open to actually aiding fugitive slaves. Now this didn't mean every Quaker was going to be a friend of the fugitive. But, where you find Quakers, certainly in this border area, you typically will find some underground railroad activity.

Gwen: Do you think this map, or a map like this, could have been part of the underground railroad?



Blaine: There's no known instance of a map. The nature of the underground railroad was such that people didn't use maps, per se. Information passed from person to person. African Americans often got it from what they called a "slave grapevine". But, writing things down and marking things on a map when this was all illegal would not have been very wise.

Gwen: And it could be dangerous, in fact.

Blaine: That's right. So from that standpoint, if this is actually a map of an underground railroad network, it would be very unique.

Gwen: I'm meeting map dealer Paul Cohen in New York City to find out if our map is authentic and when it was drawn.

Paul Cohen: Here's a map from 1808. It was done of Yellowstone Park, and it has a very similar look to the map we have here. The writing is the same, the way the rivers are featured are the same. And it's even folded in a similar way.

Gwen: Paul believes Anne's map is authentic and thinks he can date it with a high degree of accuracy. Ohio is named as the state, which didn't happen until 1803. And, while the town of Zanesville became the capital in 1810, on our map it's little more than a village.

Paul: I think that Zanesville would have been given much more prominence on this map if it had been the state capital. So I think we can date this map between 1803 and 1810.

Gwen: This was certainly a period when many escaping slaves were crossing into Ohio. But Paul is skeptical our map has much at all to do with slavery.

Gwen: Do you see any evidence that this map might have been part of the underground railroad?

Paul: Well, whenever I look at a map, I wonder what the purpose was for the mapmaker. And he has stated his purpose right on the first line of the legend. It's to show the location of the Meetings of Friends. I don't see anything on this map to indicate that it was used for runaway slaves; other than the fact that the Quakers were sympathetic to their cause.

Gwen: Our investigation seems to have hit something of a dead end. But an e-mail from the Quaker historian, Christopher Densmore, suggests our document may have a mysterious twin. "Gwen, your map looks somewhat like this one, another manuscript map that we have here in our Quaker collection." So Chris



Densmore has sent me a map. Let's see. This map looks remarkably similar. The handwriting is different, but the style is the same. It's off the same region and it shows Quaker Meeting Houses.

Gwen: Oh, wait. There seems to be a name here. Horton Howard.

Gwen: Someone named Horton Howard appears to have drawn the map. I wonder what I can find out about him. Oh, here's something about a Horton Howard. Let's see. Howard lived in Short Creek, which I think is on the map. Yes, there it is. And he seems to have helped organize the first Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends in 1813. But there's nothing about any maps. Well, there is a collection of his letters. I'll print those out and see what I can find. Here's a letter from October 30, 1818, in which Howard says that their yearly meeting of the Quakers is presenting a motion to Congress to abolish the slave trade. And he goes on to tell his friend, "I earnestly desire that thou may yield to the call, the loud call of this suffering people." I'm pretty certain this is not an underground railroad map. But I'm curious, why is this ardent abolitionist drawing a map that looks so much like Anne's? I meet Chris Densmore at Swarthmore College, which was founded in 1864 as a Quaker school. Now I've pretty much ruled out this having anything to do with the underground railroad. But given Horton's connection, I'd like to know more about the activity of Quakers in this area.

Christopher: Well, I think we've got quite a bit for you. So, follow me and let's see what we can show you.

Gwen: Chris explains how early Quaker opposition to slavery was rooted in the Christian ideal of doing unto others as you would have done to yourself. And he says our map is of an area where the roots of the abolitionist movement took their earliest hold.

Christopher: Here is *The Philanthropist*. This was probably the first specifically antislavery magazine to be published.

Gwen: What year did it begin?

Christopher: 1817, and it's published in Mount Pleasant, Ohio.

Gwen: Now, is that one this map. I don't recall it.

Christopher: Okay, here's Short Creek. Mount Pleasant is just a little bit north of that. Mount Pleasant is where they built the yearly Meeting House.

Gwen: Right in the center of this area.



Christopher: That's correct. That's the center of Quakerism in Ohio. And here's another publication. Benjamin Lundy from St. Clairesville, which is right here, began publishing in 1821, a publication called the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*.

Gwen: So this area becomes one of the earliest and most concentrated centers of antislavery activity in the United States. Is that right?

Christopher: Right. Right in the middle of the map. It influenced antislavery throughout the nation.

Gwen: Why was there such a concentration of antislavery activity here?

Christopher: Well, I have one more thing to show you. I have some other maps that look like yours.

Gwen: Let's see. So these are remarkably similar. They're all showing the same area and the concentration of Quaker Meeting Houses. And, here's H.H. again. Is that Horton Howard again maybe?

Christopher: That's almost undoubtedly Horton Howard.

Gwen: So what are all these maps then?

Gwen: What Chris tells me next gives me an answer for Anne and to the true meaning of her map. I asked Anne to meet me in Mount Pleasant, Ohio.

Gwen: Well, Anne, unfortunately there's no indication that your map was used for the underground railroad.

Anne: Oh, my goodness. Oh, I am disappointed.

Gwen: But you were really onto something. Come inside, I'll show you. Anne, this is the Mount Pleasant Meeting House, built on a site right in the center of your map. Right there. It was built in 1814, several years after we think your map was made. And there's something very significant that your map shows us. I tell Anne that Chris Densmore's collection of maps had told a story about a religious exodus from the South.

Christopher: This wasn't a map that led slaves North; it was a map that led Quakers North.

Gwen: In the late 1700s, slavery was becoming more entrenched in the plantation economy. And many Quakers abandoned the South, believing slavery an evil they could not live alongside. They came north to Ohio and needed maps as they settled in the area.



Christopher: Quakers were involved in a migration of their own. And this would have been very useful for a Friend in North Carolina to know where Quakers were, because they wanted to move to someplace where they could attend meeting and where they would be among fellow Quakers.

Anne: Oh, my goodness. Well, I'm proud. I am delighted. I thought it was old. I didn't think it was that old.

Gwen: By migrating north, the Quakers who used her map had taken a powerful stand against slavery. And by writing and speaking out against its injustices, this community helped light a moral beacon that would guide the nation. Just imagine this room filled with women and men deliberating among themselves and many of them going on to take direct action to advance their common goal of greater equality for all people.

Anne: Well, I realize it's just a small part, but I'm happy that it does take a part of the movement. I think that's very impressive.