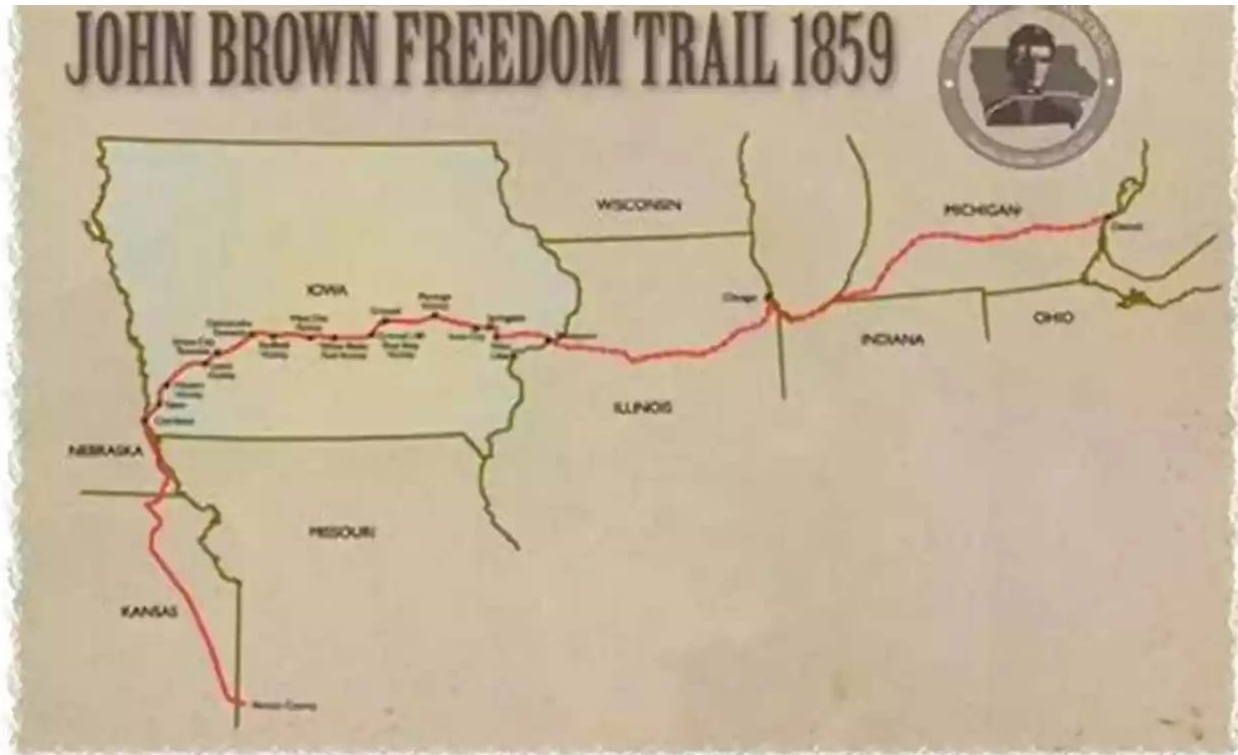


# The Untold Heroism of the Iowa Underground Railroad



After conducting a raid into Missouri on December 20, 1858, John Brown, with twelve men, women, and children freed from slavery, plus ten of his own men (including three Iowans), crossed into Iowa on February 4, 1859 to begin a fateful final journey across Iowa during February and March.

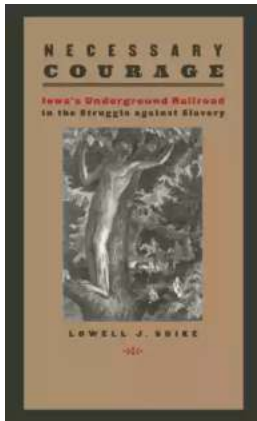
Brown was no stranger to the territory, having traveled in Iowa many times before. This time was different, with some Iowa residents taking a dim view of his recent exploit. In spite of this, supportive sympathizers aided the party as it proceeded.

Ten months later Brown was dead, having been captured and hung after the former Kansas fighter and his band attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia on October 16, 1859. The brash action ignited great controversy and became a catalyst leading to Civil War.

*Discover the captivating and little-known story of Iowa's pivotal role in the Underground Railroad.*

**The Underground Railroad: A Glimmer of Hope**

In the shadows of America's darkest history, there were heroes who risked everything to fight for freedom and justice. The Underground Railroad, a clandestine network of safe houses and secret routes, provided a lifeline to enslaved individuals seeking emancipation. While often associated with eastern states and the South, the Midwest, particularly Iowa, played a crucial yet often overlooked role in this daring and dangerous operation.



## **Necessary Courage: Iowa's Underground Railroad in the Struggle against Slavery (Iowa and the Midwest Experience)** by Lowell J. Soike (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 11400 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 344 pages



### **The Midwest's Rise as a Key Player**

The Midwest became a pivotal area along the Underground Railroad due to its proximity to the slave-holding states. Iowa, in particular, served as a beacon of hope for enslaved individuals looking for liberation. Located on the western edge of the slave states, Iowa offered a glimmer of freedom, acting as a gateway to the North for those daring enough to embark on this treacherous journey.

### **The Iowa Underground Railroad: Aweb of Resistance**

The Iowa Underground Railroad was a web of secret routes, safe houses, and dedicated individuals working tirelessly to help enslaved people find their way to

freedom. These courageous individuals risked their own safety and security to aid those escaping the shackles of slavery. Conductors, also known as abolitionists, managed a complex network, ensuring safe passage, food, clothing, and shelter for the freedom seekers.

Key figures such as Alexander Clark, William Penn Clarke, and Susan E. Clark played pivotal roles in establishing and maintaining the Iowa Underground Railroad. Their unwavering dedication to the cause helped countless individuals find their way to freedom.

### **Under the Cover of Darkness: The Routes through Iowa**

The routes through Iowa were perilous, requiring careful planning and coordination. The Mississippi River acted as a natural barrier for fugitives attempting to cross from slave states, but Iowa's strategic position made it an ideal crossing point.

Once on Iowa soil, freedom seekers relied on a network of stations or safe houses strategically located throughout the state. These safe houses, scattered in plain sight, offered hiding places for fugitives, providing them with shelter and provisions, before guiding them further northwards to the ultimate destination, Canada.

### **The Impact of the Iowa Underground Railroad**

The Iowa Underground Railroad had a profound impact on both the individuals it helped and the overall movement towards abolition. By providing a safe passage and a renewed sense of hope, countless lives were forever changed. Families were reunited, and a generation of individuals raised with freedom and dignity instead of chains and oppression.

Moreover, Iowa's vital role in the Underground Railroad resulted in a significant political shift within the state. The movement helped shape public opinion, further galvanizing anti-slavery sentiment and leading Iowa to become the first state in the Midwest to prohibit racial discrimination in schools.

## **A Legacy Worth Remembering**

The Iowa Underground Railroad serves as a testament to the indomitable human spirit in the face of injustice. It stands as a reminder that ordinary individuals, driven by a common belief in equality and human rights, can create extraordinary change. The legacy of Iowa's Underground Railroad is one of bravery, compassion, and resilience, and it deserves to be remembered and celebrated.

So, let us honor the unsung heroes of the Iowa Underground Railroad – the courageous men and women who risked everything to bring freedom to those trapped in bondage. Their legacy lives on, a beacon of hope and inspiration for future generations in their continued struggle for justice and equality.

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*Disclaimer: Images used in this article are for illustrative purposes only and do not necessarily represent the specific locations associated with the Iowa Underground Railroad.*

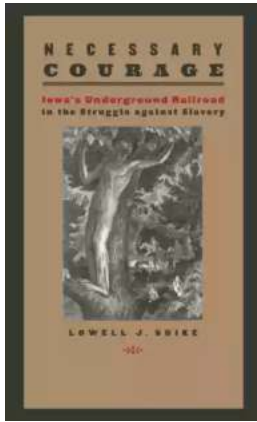
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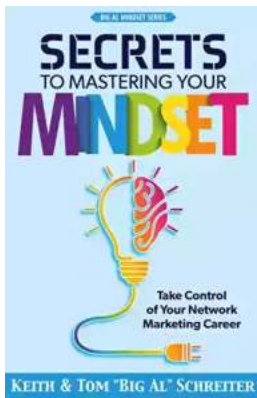


During the 1850s and early 1860s, Iowa, the westernmost free state bordering a slave state, stood as a bulwark of antislavery sentiment while the decades-long struggle over slavery shifted westward. On its southern border lay Missouri, the northernmost slaveholding state. To its west was the Kansas-Nebraska Territory, where proslavery and antislavery militias battled. Missouri slaves fled to Iowa seeking freedom, finding opponents of slavery who risked their lives and livelihoods to help them, as well as bounty hunters who forced them back into bondage. When opponents of slavery streamed west across the state's broad prairies to prevent slaveholders from dominating Kansas, Iowans fed, housed, and armed the antislavery settlers. Not a few young Iowa men also took up arms.

In *Necessary Courage*, historian Lowell J. Soike details long-forgotten stories of determined runaways and the courageous Iowans who acted as conductors on this most dangerous of railroads—the underground railroad. Alexander Clark, an African American businessman in Muscatine, hid a young fugitive in his house to protect him from slavecatchers while he fought for his freedom in the courts. While keeping antislavery newspapers fully apprised of the battle against human bondage in western Iowa, Elvira Gaston Platt drove a wagon full of fugitives to the next safe house under the noses of her proslavery neighbors. John Brown,

fleeing across Iowa with a price on his head for the murders of proslavery Kansas settlers, relied on Iowans like Josiah Grinnell and William Penn Clarke to keep him, his men, and the twelve Missouri slaves they had liberated hidden from the authorities. Several young Iowans went on to fight alongside Brown at Harpers Ferry. These stories and many more are told here.

A suspenseful and often heartbreaking tale of desperation, courage, cunning, and betrayal, this book reveals the critical role that Iowans played in the struggle against slavery and the coming of the Civil War.



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