Community Life

Farmington Observer

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CHAT ROOM

Nora Dolan

Seniors enjoy busy itinerary on Irish holiday

The City of Farmington Hills department of special services, senior adult division and touring company, Seniors Unlimited, offered an eight day trip to Ireland that was enjoyed by 38 area seniors last month.

I was honored to escort this lively group via British Airways, which treated us royally, non-stop to London. We boarded a green (of course) Aer. Lingus jet bound for Cork where we were met and welcomed by tour directors Dorothy and Bill McColeman and our coach driver, Liam Murray.

A jam packed itinerary included the Rock of Cashel, Waterford glass factory (now we know why it's so expensive), old style Irish pub, complete with creamy Irish coffee, Guinness, Murphy's and traditional music.

Cork, Cobh Heritage Center, Tipperary, Limerick, Bunratty castle, an optional trip to Dublin, Blarney castle, lovely Kinsale, Killarney and the Muckross house and gardens were included on our "to do" list.

Liam Murray, our driver, entertained us from morning until night with humorous observations on every subject known to man. We listened attentively to his melodius Irish brogue and counted ourselves lucky to have someone so personable at the

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Underground Railroad had local stops

■ Farmington's Quaker community helped fleeing slaves escape to Canada.

Vintage

BY RUTH MOEHLMAN
SPECIAL WRITER

The Underground Railroad came through Farmington from about 1836 to just after the Civil War in 1865.

In the early to mid 1800s, on the Michigan frontier, a Quaker settlement was established that became Farmington. Arthur Power, a Quaker, widower and patriarch of a large Farmington, New York family, wanted good farm land for his large family. He established a whole community.

The Quakers were good businessmen as well as being concerned with major social issues of the day. One of those issues was slavery which the Quakers felt was morally unjust.

The settlers set up local government, churches and schools. They also established mills, blacksmith shops and stores.

Education was very important to the settlers. Nathan Power, Arthur's oldest son, was a farmer in summer and a schoolteacher in winter. He was also an activist. He became vice president of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society and president of the Oakland County Anti-Slavery group.

The Anti-Slavery Society worked through political means to eliminate slavery. They also helped slaves to escape to freedom. This activity was illegal in the South and became nationally illegal after 1850.

Most slaves lived out their lives in bondage. Some were freed by generous masters. Others earned their freedom when they had a skill such as a carpenter or a blacksmith. They were "rented out" and in return granted a share of the profits to buy their freedom.

The motivation to escape was usually because of some cruelty on the part of

STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

Rail stop: *Over a century ago, this house on the west side of Farmington Road north of Eight Mile was a stop on the Underground Railroad, harboring fugitive slaves making their way to freedom.*

slave owners. Some impending punishment, fear of being sold into a hostile situation or the breaking up of families by sale of some member could cause slaves to take extreme measures.

Before the expansion of the American territory into the west in the late 1830s, slaves could escape by going westward. When this route was closed, reaching a free state was enough.

Abolitionists aided escaping slaves

by setting up a network of safe havens 15 to 20 miles apart. The anti slave participants used railroad terminology to communicate with each other. The safe havens were called stations, the people offering sanctuary were conductors, the escapees passengers and the railroad cars farm wagons or carriages. Usually the escaping slaves were pursued by law enforcement or sometimes by slave hunters.

The term underground was said to have originated when some escaping slaves walked up on the banks of a river in Ohio and a person standing nearby is reputed to have commented that they appeared to have come from an underground railroad.

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 dictated the return of slaves to their master

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