

# Underground Railroad from page B1

ters. It also imposed heavy fines on people helping the slaves escape. Slaves were considered property and helping them escape was stealing.

After 1850 the Underground Railroad became a risky secret operation for all involved. Participants even hid their activities from their children.

"The destination was Canada where slavery had been outlawed and the government refused to return any people seeking refuge. There were three routes crossing Michigan to two points in Canada — Port Huron to Sarnia or Detroit to Windsor. One route came through Farmington where Nathan

Power was chief conductor. His position as a schoolteacher and his popularity in the community gained a great deal of cooperation locally. Almost the entire population of Farmington was sympathetic.

Various speakers like Sojourner Truth came to Farmington where they elaborated on the evils of slavery. Most churches took anti-slavery positions.

Serving with Nathan Power were his brothers Ira and Abram, brothers-in-law Ethan Lapham, George Wilber, Abram Moore and Elisha Roberts. All were Quakers. John Thayer, a Methodist, was a part of the group.

Nathan Power and his second wife, Patience, lived in the Old Quaker meeting house across the road from the Oakwood Cemetery on Grand River. This was the station. So was the home of Ethan Lapham on the west side of Farmington Road north of Eight Mile. This house is still standing.

A house owned by Abram Power next to the Baptist church on Shiawassee had a shed in the yard where escapees were given food and shelter. Other homes in Farmington included the home of Chauncey Green on Nine Mile and the Philbrick Tavern on Power and Eleven Mile.

Palmer Sherman offered sanctuary on his property located where the Longacre House is today. There was no underground tunnel there, however. Conductors like Nathan Power or his brother Abram would take a load of hay or other product to Detroit. They would stay at the hotel owned by Seymour Finney, a station for passengers before the trip to Canada.

No one suspected the farm wagons driven by distinguished Quaker gentlemen. Under the hay or produce were the escaping slaves. It wasn't until the early 20th Century that documentation was done recording activities of the

Quaker community and the underground railroad.

After the Civil War when slavery was abolished, the attention of the community turned to women's suffrage and Prohibition.

For further reading on the Underground Railroad see, "If the Walls Could Talk, Heritage Homes of Farmington" by Ruth Mochlman, "Tracing the Underground Railroad," a pamphlet by Jean Fox, and the research paper by Lillian Drake Avery which was printed in "The Watercolors of Lillian Drake Avery," by Jean Fox.

# Chat room from page B1

wheel of our comfortable couch. Liam cautioned us frequently against buying an inferior or faux Irish Aran sweater.

We enjoyed returning to our hotel, the Blarney Park, each evening and eagerly awaited a gourmet dinner which was art-

fully presented and pleasing to all palates. We quickly forgot about fat content and cholesterol counts as we consumed cream, whole milk, butter and the like, thoroughly enjoying the freshest flavors of Ireland.

Downtime was spent strolling

the streets of Blarney, a quaint little village where church bells sounded in the distance and charge cards heated up at the conveniently placed Blarney Woolen Mills.

Special highlights included a personal tour of Margaret and Paddy Fenton's Molanna Dairy Farm which the Fentons have owned for generations. Paddy entertained us with a walk around his farm and introductions to his charming 87-year-old mother and his handsome young son who brought us up to date on everyday farm life.

Paddy recited several poems for us and although 39 of us were crowded into his tiny parlor, it was as if all breathing ceased as we respectfully allowed him center stage. We

applauded his heartfelt presentation and I remember swallowing hard and being misty eyed and in awe of his deep humility and sincerity.

Paddy's wife, Margaret, laid out steamy hot coffee, tea, delicious scones plus and spread with homemade currant jam and cream and a special bread that had been laced with Guinness.

Back at the Blarney Hotel, we were treated to a special Irish feast and then were entertained by a lovely Irish girl performing solos and little Irish children performed their version of Riverdance.

The young at heart group included many veteran world travelers, couples, and singles, all of whom got along well and



Ireland: Farmington area seniors on their trip. Nora Dolan is program planner for the senior adult division, Farmington Hills. For information on other travel destinations scheduled through the senior center, call 473-1830.

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