

# Early Railroad Stopped in Area

Farmington was once a stop on the underground railroad which transmitted run-away slaves north to Canada and a life of freedom.

A search of the old files of the Farmington Enterprise turned up a front page story in the May 30, 1924, issue on the underground railroad in Oakland County.

The story comes from a paper written by a Mrs. Lillian Drake Avery for presentation at the June 3, 1915, meeting of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society.

An editor's note relates that Mrs. Avery was born and educated in the Village of Farmington and prior to her marriage.

## Past Honors

**Spencer Heeney**  
July 14, 1938 - In a gathering featured by attendance of more than 60 electors as compared with only four or five at annual meetings in the past several years, Spencer J. Heeney was re-elected to the Farmington No. 5 School Board by a large majority.

age in 1886 taught in the schools of the Village. After that time she lived in Pontiac.

Mrs. Avery relates: "It would not be surprising in the present generation, but it is unexpected to find that many of the people who lived as neighbors and even the families of the peculiar institution never heard of such a thing. One man who was interviewed expressed considerable astonishment that a railroad could have been run underground in Oakland County and he did not know anything about it. Whence was that railroad anyhow?"

"The lack of knowledge on the part of the community, that you would expect to know, only shows how secretly the men of that day worked. They not only kept their own counsel at the time, but even when the danger of paying heavy fines for harbouring the runaway slaves was past, and the black man free, did they, except in rare instances, open their lips to tell the part they had taken in spiriting the slaves away from their masters."

In all of Nathan Power's journey

the underground railroad is never mentioned. The only notice of the Civil war is an entry on Aug. 8, 1865, in which he says:

"As a day set apart by this and adjoining towns to welcome the soldiers' home from the terrible four years war. They met in the Stephen Lapham Maple Grove. 3,000 people were supposed to be present. Good order prevailed throughout the meeting. On the part of the returning soldiers the welcome was responded to by Colonel Lee of Lansing. An address of over an hour was listened to by the vast concourse of people from General Mexico who advocated Negro Suffrage."

"So ends our terrible war in April, 1865 which has abolished slavery in our entire country. It was done in a way the South chose and will to have it in an attempt to strengthen it. We feel that more has passed during the four years gone by than usually transpires in 200 years. Russia liberated 23 million of serfs in 1861 which had a powerful influence against slavery the world over. The bell is in motion to restore to man his inalienable rights everywhere. Twenty-three young men have been lost in this war

from our town."

In her paper, however, Mrs. Avery relates that: "The principal station in Oakland County was located at Farmington and the conductor was Nathan Power or 'Uncle Nathan' as he was universally called. Associated with him were his brothers Ira and Abram Power, Ethan Lapham, George Wilber, Abram Moore and Eliza Roberts, all Quakers and all closely connected by marriage. In only a few instances have others than the Quakers been found helping the fugitives to freedom."

In another portion of her paper Mrs. Avery states: "John Power, son of Abram Power, remembers that in the old red shed that stood back of their house he sometimes got a glimpse of a black man. He would see his mother coming from that direction with a plate and as no animals were ever kept there he would ask her what she had been feeding. Her evasive answers, the secret confessions of his father and Uncle Ira and the coming of a load of hay or grain and the disappearance of the occupant of the shed, were mysteries that were not solved except in the light of later years."

## Area Group 'Four Tunes' To Perform For Festival

The four boys graduated from Farmington Senior High School in June 1966. They were all members of the fine sixteen voice singing group, The Falconaires, directed by Mr. Feuch, which in 1963 won acclaim for Farmington in a national contest. All have been active participants in the Farmington High School Choir and Boys Glee Club and in the school's various drama groups. All took part in the musical, "Shangri-La", written by Brian Dates and directed by Lee Peel.

All four played in last year's musical "Once Upon a Mattress", also in each of the annual music concerts since their junior high school days. Their activities in the Falconaires led them to form the Four Tunes. Self-directed, doing their own planning and adapting arrangements for themselves, the group was awarded first prize in the Student Council sponsored talent show in April at Farmington High School.



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