

Research Memo from Fullersburg Historic Foundation about the Underground Railroad

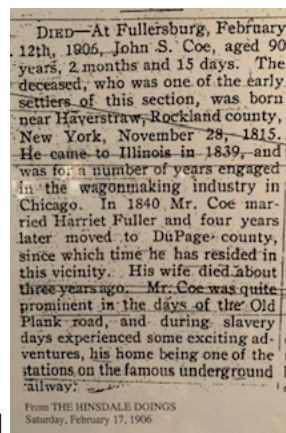
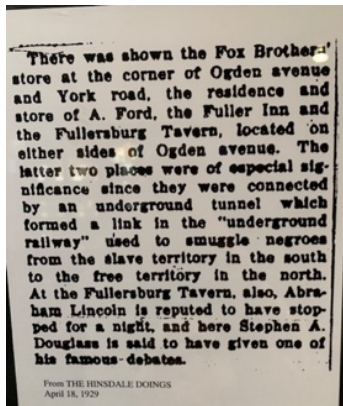
Attached are two short articles that appeared in the local Hinsdale newspaper, and they shed light on the people of Fullersburg who assisted the fugitive slaves as well as the structures that were used for this purpose. Abolitionist John Coe was a prominent blacksmith in Fullersburg, and “during slavery days experienced some exciting adventures, his home being one of the destinations on the famous underground railroad.” (See 2/17/1906 Hinsdale Doings article, below.) John was married to Harriet Fuller, the sister of Benjamin Fuller, founder of Fullersburg. Benjamin built the Fullersburg Tavern (which was renamed as the Deutches Hotel and then the Grand Pacific Hotel) near the intersection of present-day York Road and Ogden Avenue. Across from this hotel on the old plank road that became Ogden was the Castle Inn (also referred to as the Fuller Inn), and an underground tunnel between the two structures served as a “station” for freedom seekers. (See attached Hinsdale Doings article dated 4/18/1929.)

Along this subject, local author Hugh Dugan writes in *Village on the County Line* (1949), “It is a fact that Fullersburg was one of these points of slave refuge and transfer, and John S. Coe was the man, or at least he was one of those who served as station master. Activities that are conducted in secret usually go unchronicled... .” Dugan continues by quoting a 1923 *Chicago Daily News* article entitled “A Refuge in the Days of Slavery” that refers to the local taverns, houses and mill that sheltered freedom seekers before and during the Civil War, describing the way the mill stream appeared and how a wagon sounded crossing the bridge at that point. (See *Village on the County Line*, pp. 62, 63; the book’s online address is identified on fullersburg.org in the section entitled Sources/Suggested Reading.)

Dugan also writes about Heman Fox, a well-known local merchant and Civil War veteran, “When Mr. Heman Fox was a boy, he saw two sleigh loads of negro slaves pass his father’s house at Ogden and Lincoln one day before the war. The cargo was covered to resemble a load of live stock.” The Fox home was completed at 32. W. Ogden in 1850, the year that the Fugitive Slave Act became law. It should be noted that the Fullersburg Tavern had pens for livestock for the use of guests who were transporting their cattle to Chicago; the secret tunnel below the tavern that connected to the Fuller Inn (Castle Inn) as a station on the Underground Railroad could have been related to the situation that Heman Fox witnessed. Heman later became a Union soldier, and he is one of twelve Civil War veterans whose final resting place is at Historic Fullersburg Cemetery in Hinsdale, including Morell Fuller, brother of Benjamin, the founder of Fullersburg.

The Graue Mill and Museum has survived the advance of time, and numerous sources state that the mill’s basement was a station in the Underground Railroad. This structure has an interesting history that is outlined on fullersburg.org in the Sources section and in a blog entitled *Historic Timetable of Graue Mill Dam*. Frederick Graue arrived in this area in 1838; he worked at the sawmill on Salt Creek that belonged to the Torode family, but it burned around 1848. Frederick bought the mill (with a partner) in 1849, and began building a structure made of bricks made of clay on the property of Morell Fuller. He transformed the mill into a much-

needed grist mill. Frederick was also a staunch abolitionist. Sarah Mann of the Hinsdale Historical Society stated in her December 1975 interview of George Ruchty (descendant of Benjamin Fuller and author of *The Fullers of Fullersburg*) that the mill was reputed to have been a station in the Underground Railroad from 1847-56, which would have coincided with the Torode ownership of the sawmill, as well. Frederick knew Abraham Lincoln, who stopped in Fullersburg at the Grand Pacific Hotel (Fullersburg Tavern) on the way to his debate with Douglas in 1858. Frederick's son later stated in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* printed on 3/8/1931 that the "news of the President's death made him ill and he was obliged to take to his bed." Local Underground Railroad expert, historian and author Glennette Tilley Turner confirmed at an event honoring her in Wheaton on 11/13/24 that that a "preponderance of evidence" indicated that the mill was, indeed, a station on the Underground Railroad.



Both articles were displayed in the basement of the Graue Mill Museum; the photo of the mill is courtesy of Don Fuller, the great, great grandson of Benjamin Fuller and president of the Fullersburg Historic Foundation, who also leads a flag-changing ceremony every year at Historic Fullersburg Cemetery in Hinsdale, Il., where eleven local Civil War soldiers are laid to rest as well as one Confederate soldier named John Andre. Morell Fuller, brother of Benjamin, served for three years as a Union soldier and drum major in the Illinois volunteer infantry, 105th regiment. Morell fought at Resaca, Kennesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, and Atlanta, and he also accompanied Sherman on his march to the sea; a photo of his gravesite is below.



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