

# Old Fireplace Reveals Ancient Slave Hideout

Wilmington, O.—Discovery of a "false fireplace" by workmen wrecking an old house on the Wilmington-Kenia road lent renewed credence today to countless stories of days before the civil war, when thousands of Negro slaves escaped into Canada over the "underground railroad."

The "U. G." as it often was called, was neither underground nor a railroad, but it did have "depots," such as the cubicle behind the fireplace in the ancient house near here.

Origin of the underground is obscured in time's mists, but of the tales of how it won its name, that related by a former enthusiast of many years ago, Rush R. Sloane, of Sandusky, is perhaps as reliable as any.

Sloane said that in 1831 a Negro named Tice Davis ran away from Kentucky but was closely pursued by his master. When he reached the Ohio river, opposite Ripley, O., he plunged in to swim to the northern shore. The master followed in a skiff, keeping the fugitive in sight until the bank was reached.

There the Negro disappeared as if by magic. After a long, fruitless search, the master observed: "He must have gone off on an underground railroad."

Name Continued In Use Sloane said the remark created such amusement on both sides of

the river that the name stuck to all subsequent actions in helping slaves to escape.

The regular route for fleeing slaves generally was through two of Ohio's most rugged river counties, Brown and Clermont, both of which offered natural cover as well as the aid of sympathizers once a fugitive reached them. Some slaves also escaped through Hamilton county (Cincinnati) Ohio, and the Indiana border counties.

Ohio historians say that first rumors of underground railroad activities in Ohio on an organized scale followed the removal to Ripley of an itinerant minister, Rev. John Rankin, who had left Bourbon county, Kentucky, after years of denouncing slavery from the pulpit.

Rankin established a small college in his new home and was well received. Soon, however, rumor became accepted fact that his college was a "front" for regular work in aiding fugitive slaves from the South.

The Rankin home was situated on the Ohio bank, overlooking the Kentucky side, and its lighted windows became a beacon to the runaways.

One of the minister's sons, who served under General Grant in the civil war, related after his father's death story of numerous attempts by slave-owners' agents to

search the Rankin house, of frequent mob threats against the minister, and other retaliatory actions, most of which proved futile.

"All my father did in the aid of fugitives was to furnish them food and shelter," he said. "The sons, of whom there were nine, did the conveying away."

Slave Not Enticed Byron Williams, who wrote a history of Clermont county, said, "Nothing was done to entice the slaves from Kentucky, and only as they came were they sped safely on their way. True men never refused bread to the beseeching Negro, fleeing from chains and with his face toward the North star."

Despite his comment, there is evidence that sometimes the anti-slavery elements abducted Negroes from the South and forced an unwanted freedom upon them.

From the Ohio river, the underground railroad's route branched in many directions, always bearing toward the North and the Canadian border, its eventual goal.

Up through Hillsboro, the route is traced to Wilmington. Thence its course frequently carried on to Xenia, Yellow Springs, Springfield, and on to Lake Erie ports.

Some historians said that for a score of years before the war every port on the lake, from Toledo to Connecticut, was a terminus of the underground.

Real railroad terminology soon became associated with the crusaders' efforts. Thus, a man who led the Negroes on part of their journey was a "conductor." There

were "main lines," "branches" and "way stations."

Aid Started Early Some historians said aid for fugitives began as early as 1815 in this area, continuing to the time of President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation. However, it was not until the passage of the national fugitive slave act in 1850 that its work became a major activity.

Nevertheless, some pro-slavery commentators of the 1840's said there were as many as 18 or 19 frequently-traveled routes across Ohio from the big river to the lake.

Sometimes, in the later years, escaping Negroes actually rode on a railroad for parts of their journey, usually hidden in the baggage coaches by friendly trainmen, but in the main their flights were overland.

How many escaped, the exact methods used and many other details doubtless never will be fully known, for the operators of the underground kept no records, or promptly destroyed those which they did make as soon as they no longer were required.

As the fugitive passed from "station" to "station," his route was altered, so that none who had aided him could say truthfully that they knew whence he came or where he had gone.

Some estimates in the 1850's placed the number of slaves transported by the underground at 50,000 or more, but reasoning observers declared this was greatly exaggerated.

Work Voluntary Most of the work of aiding the slaves was voluntary. Contributors rarely allowed themselves to become known, and those taking more active parts were careful to preserve their anonymity, lest they, like Robert Fee, of Clermont county, be accused of kidnaping Negroes. In addition to his legal difficulties, Fee once was beaten by a Kentucky mob and his home often was surrounded by angry slave-holders and their sympathizers.

Bitterness was the rule on both sides, and verbal attacks on the underground became a commonplace event in Congress. The paradoxically systematized but almost-systemless and helter-skelter organization finally passed from existence when its aim was accomplished by the war between the states. Only in the memories of the very ancient and in such rare discoveries as Wilmington's false fireplace does the underground railroad now yield proof that it ever existed.

# BLUE MOLD NOW SERIOUS THREAT

Widespread Damage Has Been Reported From Georgia, S. C., and Border Belt

## SEED BEDS ARE HURT

Blue mold has become a serious threat to the 1937 flue-cured tobacco in North Carolina, said E. Y. Floyd, of State College.

Reports of widespread damage have been received from Georgia, South Carolina, and the border belt of this State, he said, and a number of seed beds in the old and new belts have been attacked.

Maggots, or the larvae of a small black fly, and freezes have also injured a number of seed beds in the old and new belts, Floyd added.

The best defense against blue mold, he said, is to stimulate the plants to a more rapid, thrifty growth. Small, weak plants are usually killed by blue mold.

For small plants, a top-dressing of well rotted stable manure, or chicken manure, chopped fine and spread over the seed beds will do better than nitrate of soda to stimulate growth.

Or the manure may be put in a tow sack, filled 3-4 full, and placed in a barrel of water to soak 24 hours. Then sprinkle the water over the bed with a sprinkling pot or other device that will not pack the soil.

An equal amount of plain water should be sprinkled over the bed to rinse off the plants.

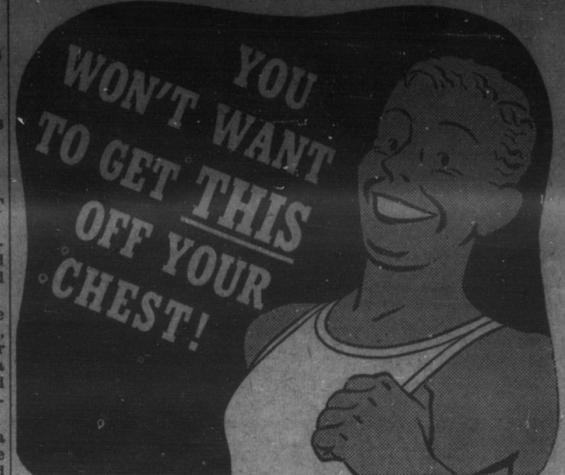
After plants are an inch or more high, three to five pounds of nitrate of soda should be applied to each 100 square yards of bed.

When small black flies, or midges, are found under the seed bed canvas, Floyd continued, maggots are usually at work in the soil, and two pounds of naphthalene flakes should be applied under the canvas to each 100 square yards of bed.

In the old belt, he added, beds that have been damaged by freezes should be reseeded.

And Still Hungry "What is a cannibal, Tommy?" "I don't know." "Well, if you ate your mother and father, what would you be?" "An orphan."

carbonate of soda. This dose can be repeated until the diarrhea is stopped.



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# TIMELY FARM QUESTIONS ANSWERED AT STATE COLLEGE

Question: What fertilizer is best to use in the home garden?  
Answer: This depends to a large extent upon the soil type and the crops being grown, but a mixture containing five percent nitrogen, seven percent phosphoric acid, and five percent potash is very satisfactory as a general purpose fertilizer for most truck crops. Leafy crops such as cabbage, lettuce, and kale will require more nitrogen than most other vegetable crops but this extra amount can be supplied in the form of side applications of readily available nitrogen fertilizers. Extension Circular No. 199 gives recommendations for fertilizer and lime applications for all vegetable crops and copies may be obtained free upon application to the Agricultural Editor, State College.

Question: Is there a practical test which can be applied to feed stuffs to tell whether or not they are injurious to baby chicks?  
Answer: A test of this kind could be carried out but it would be very expensive. At the present time such tests are not conducted by any State agency. The best way to test the feed for its toxicity or "poisonous" quality is to feed it to normal baby chicks and run a parallel test with feed of known good quality. If the chicks fed the questionable feed become sick and the others do not, your question would be answered.

Question: How can I cure my young calves of diarrhea?  
Answer: This, in all probability is caused by improper feeding such as over-feeding, feeding out of dirty pails or boxes, irregular feeding, or feeding milk too rich in fat and it is much easier to prevent than to cure. All calves showing symptoms of the trouble should be isolated and the milk feed reduced one-half. If legume hay is being fed, replace this with grass hay. A dose of from one to three tablespoonful of castor oil, mixed with a pint of fresh milk should then be given. After the action of the oil, give a teaspoonful of a mixture composed of one part salol and two parts of subnitrate of bismuth and bi-

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