



W. W. Harwood Farmstead

6356 West Michigan Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108
15th Congressional District

The absence of slavery, the nearness to Canada and presence of abolitionists, made Michigan a breeding ground for Underground Railroad activity. Underground Railroad participants used a series of routes to safely transport to Canada when they were no longer safe in Michigan. In the Southeastern county of Washtenaw, a vital Underground Railroad route linked Levi Coffin of Cincinnati, Ohio and three men in Pittsfield Township, Michigan. Neighbors William Webb Harwood, Asher Aray and Roswell Preston hid freedom seekers on their farms along the Chicago Turnpike, now US 12/ Michigan Avenue. Underground Railroad participant Levi Coffin wrote in his autobiography *Reminiscences*, that John Fairfield came to him for help with 28 or 29 escaped slaves in 1853. Coffin and others helped the group through Ohio. Fitch Reed documented their journey in Michigan. Reed, a self-reported Underground Railroad agent, wrote that the freedom seekers stayed with Asher Aray, who later carried them to Detroit. Fitch Reed wrote to Dr. Wilbur Siebert the names of the station keepers and locations: "next east was Ypsilanti. Bro's Harwood and Ray [sic], keepers." Harwood and Aray lived in Pittsfield Township, southwest of Ypsilanti. W.W. Harwood's great-granddaughter recalled being shown a place in the basement where she was told escaping slaves were hidden. The Harwood house, built in 1848, remains in the family (with farmland extending to the Harwood Cemetery). Records indicate Harwood deeded two acres of his land for a Wesleyan Methodist Society church and burial grounds in 1836. Harwood and his family are buried in Harwood Cemetery, near the Aray family, their African American neighbors. A marker placed in the cemetery describes the Underground Railroad history. The Harwood farmstead and cemetery are included in the *Journey to Freedom Tours*, listed as a program in the NPS Network to Freedom Program.



Network to Freedom-NPS Photo

\$25,000 NTF Grant—

Ann Arbor, Michigan: Harwood House Restoration

- The work in this project will begin the steps necessary to stabilize the structure and to restore the integrity of the home's exterior. Measures will be taken to restore the original wood siding and remove lead paint.

City: Ann Arbor; County: Washtenaw; State: Michigan
Alfred W. Harwood and Janice O. Harwood, Owners
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