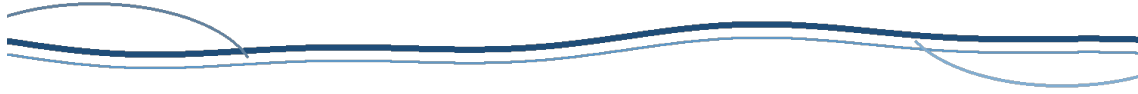


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THREE-STATE RESEARCH DOSSIER

Crockery Valley and the Underground Railroad

*The upper Ohio River, its crossings, and the transportation systems that
carried both freedom seekers and their pursuers*

Beaver County, Pennsylvania • Columbiana and Jefferson counties, Ohio • Hancock, Brooke, and Ohio
counties, West Virginia

Prepared August 21, 2026

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Research finding in one sentence

The most defensible reconstruction is not a single secret line running through Crockery Valley, but a shifting three-state borderland in which freedom seekers, free Black residents, boatmen, draymen, ferrymen, farmers, and selected white allies used the ordinary transportation system of the upper Ohio—skiffs, ferries, packets, steamboats, rafts, wagons, turnpikes, canals, and eventually railroads—while slave catchers used the same landings, hotels, boats, roads, law officers, and information networks in reverse.

Scope and use of the name “Crockery Valley”

This report uses *Crockery Valley* as the present research frame for the pottery-centered tri-state district around East Liverpool, Wellsville, Chester, Newell, and the adjacent river communities. It does not assume that the name identified an antebellum Underground Railroad organization. That distinction matters. A useful regional frame can gather evidence without being mistaken for a historical route name.

The study follows the river both upstream and downstream because the local story cannot be understood within one city or state. Beaver and New Brighton supplied one set of northern connections; Wellsville, Lisbon, Salem, and the Western Reserve supplied another; Steubenville, Martins Ferry, Mount Pleasant, and Wheeling supplied a closely documented southern branch. Pittsburgh was at once a destination, a transfer point, a place of refuge, and a market through which pursuit could be organized.

How the evidence is graded

Four labels are used throughout. They apply to individual claims, not to whole towns or whole families.

Grade	Meaning	Typical evidence
Well documented	The event or relationship is supported by a contemporary record, a near-contemporary firsthand account, or independent sources that agree on material details.	Court or newspaper report, letter, diary, organizational record, or carefully corroborated testimony.

Grade	Meaning	Typical evidence
Probable	The claim fits the documented people, geography, and transportation system and rests on a detailed retrospective account, but lacks a surviving contemporary record for the particular incident.	Named recollection collected within living memory and supported by maps, censuses, deeds, or other context.
Traditional	The claim appears in later local history, commemoration, family memory, or tourism literature but its earliest source has not yet been found or is materially distant from the event.	Twentieth-century newspaper feature, marker text, house history, or uncorroborated oral history.
Hypothesis	The claim is a question worth testing, not a conclusion. Physical proximity, a cellar, tunnel, canal, or old house is not by itself evidence of Underground Railroad use.	A proposed route, unidentified structure, map alignment, or modern recollection awaiting deeds, archaeology, or testimony.

This method follows the warning shared by modern Underground Railroad scholarship and local-history practice: secrecy explains some missing records, but it cannot be used to make every unrecorded claim true. Larry Gara demonstrated that the popular image of a centralized national railroad grew larger in postwar memory than the scattered local operations themselves. Carol Kammen showed why tunnels, root cellars, and generalized “Quaker house” traditions require ordinary historical testing rather than exemption from it. At the same time, the absence of formal station ledgers must not erase Black agency, informal aid, or brief acts of assistance that never entered institutional records. Gara, “The Underground Railroad: Legend or Reality?”; Kammen, “The Underground Railroad and Local History”.

The central finding: the Ohio was a boundary and a working road

On a legal map, the Ohio separated slaveholding Virginia from free Ohio and Pennsylvania. In practice it was also the region’s principal commercial artery. People, news, labor, produce, coal, manufactured goods, mail, and law enforcement crossed it continually. The river therefore did six different kinds of work in the history of escape.

Function	What it meant in practice	Local evidence
Jurisdictional threshold	Reaching Ohio or Pennsylvania changed state law but did not place a freedom seeker beyond federal recapture. The Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850 made the north bank dangerous ground, not Canada.	The 1851 seizure of Richard Gardner in Beaver County and removal by riverboat demonstrates that residence in a free state did not end the danger.
Direct conveyance	A skiff, ferry, raft, packet, or steamboat could carry a person across or along the river. Ice and very low water sometimes made foot crossings possible.	The 1849 Wheeling escape crossed at Martins Ferry; John Hutchins recalled ice and low-water crossings; Calvin Fairbank described using a lumber raft below Wheeling.
Commercial camouflage	Wharves and vessels produced legitimate movement, strangers, baggage, freight, and irregular schedules. A person could move as a passenger, worker, deckhand, teamster, or concealed traveler without requiring a special “Underground Railroad” vehicle.	Wellsville’s packets, boatyards, freight wagons, and later railroad created plausible cover; the documentary task is to prove particular uses rather than infer them from commerce alone.
Transfer and information node	Ferry landings, hotels, taverns, warehouses, rail depots, and riverfront streets concentrated boat schedules, travelers, rumors, employers, and guides.	Gardner was lured to a hotel near a steamboat landing; the 1849 Wheeling case turned on the alleged knowledge of ferrymen.
Surveillance and capture zone	The same openness that enabled movement also exposed travelers to ferrymen, constables, hotelkeepers, federal commissioners, enslavers, and hired pursuers.	Gardner’s seizure, the arrest of Martins Ferry ferrymen, and Robert Churchill’s documented Ohio River borderland cases show a counter-network operating on both banks.
Seasonal hazard	Flood, fog, ice, drought, current, and darkness altered where and how crossing was possible. Low water or ice could help a crossing, but could also stop packets, expose bars, or concentrate traffic at ferries.	Hutchins’s recollection and Wellsville transportation histories are consistent on seasonal constraints; particular escape claims still require case evidence.

The river was therefore neither a symbolic “River Jordan” that automatically produced freedom nor merely an obstacle. It was the first major threshold in many journeys, a flexible road for some, and an instrument of recapture for others. Matthew Salafia’s formulation of the Ohio as both boundary and artery is especially useful for this upper-valley study. [Salafia, Slavery’s Borderland dissertation record](#); [Churchill, “The Underground Railroad in the Ohio River Valley”](#).

What an upper-Ohio journey probably looked like

The popular station-to-station diagram begins too late. The first and most dangerous work was often done by the freedom seeker: leaving an enslaver, acquiring information, reaching the river, finding or taking a boat, judging current and weather, and landing without entering a hostile neighborhood. Assistance might begin south of the river, at the crossing, after landing, or only much farther north.

A defensible working sequence is:

1. **Approach the river.** Travel might follow creeks, roads, work assignments, markets, or knowledge gained from river laborers and earlier escapees.
2. **Cross or board.** The means could be an ordinary ferry, a borrowed or taken skiff, a raft, a commercial packet, a steamboat, ice, or a low-water ford. No single mode dominated every season or place.
3. **Leave the landing quickly.** Riverfronts were watched. A guide, wagon, dray, concealed box, wooded hollow, or familiar road could matter more than a cellar.
4. **Enter a local network.** Aid was usually local and relational: a Black family, church member, boatman, farmer, physician, Quaker, antislavery activist, or employer knew the next reliable person or town.
5. **Move north or east.** Covered wagons and public roads were central. Canals and railroads became useful where chronology and schedules allowed, but they supplemented rather than created the network.
6. **Change plans.** A route could close after an arrest, a suspicious neighbor, a new federal officer, flood, illness, or a heavily publicized rescue. Zigzagging was a security practice, not inefficiency.

Wilbur Siebert, writing in 1896 from hundreds of interviews and letters, observed that the Ohio could be crossed almost anywhere a boat could be found and that routes often zigzagged. His collection is indispensable, but his maps and large numerical estimates must

be checked against the testimony beneath them. Siebert, “Light on the Underground Railroad”.

Reconstructed corridors and their present evidentiary status

Corridor	Antebellum transportation logic	Best evidence now in hand	Present grade
Wheeling / Martins Ferry → Colerain / Concord → Mount Pleasant → Trenton and farther north	Ferry or small boat across the Ohio; wooded paths and farm roads; wagons between rural refuges.	Contemporary 1849 newspaper case; detailed recollection of Ellis B. Steele; named Black ferrymen and guides; National Historic Landmark documentation for Mount Pleasant.	Well documented as a corridor; individual house stories vary.
Virginia shore / Wellsville → New Lisbon → Salem → Austintown → Youngstown → Warren → Ashtabula or Fairport	Boat, ferry, ice, or low-water crossing; covered wagons and public roads; later connection to rail.	John Hutchins’s 1887 address naming the stations he knew; Salem’s abolitionist press and community; retrospective Wellsville evidence.	Well documented north of Wellsville; Wellsville’s exact crossing operations are probable at present.
Beaver / Bridgewater / New Brighton → Darlington / New Castle → western Pennsylvania and Lake Erie connections	Ohio and Beaver river landings; ferries and steamboats; wagon roads; Pennsylvania & Ohio and Beaver–Erie canal connections where dates fit.	Richard Gardner case; Robert Townsend and Dawson brothers documentation; Beaver County antislavery people named in county history and Siebert materials.	Well documented network; specific canal use remains probable or unproved .
Steubenville riverfront → Jefferson County interior / Mount Pleasant	Ferry or small boat before road bridges; roads west from the landing.	Siebert’s 1898 published photograph captioned as a crossing place; strong nearby Mount Pleasant network; abolitionist county context.	Probable , but a named antebellum Steubenville crossing case is still needed.

Corridor	Antebellum transportation logic	Best evidence now in hand	Present grade
East Liverpool / Chester / Newell / Smiths Ferry → Wellsville, Lisbon, or Beaver branches	Ferries, skiffs, river packets, landings, and roads; no antebellum highway bridge at Chester.	Geographic and commercial logic; a later fictionalized account names “Gardiner’s Ferry”; local tunnel and house traditions. No case-level contemporary evidence yet located.	Hypothesis / research zone , not a confirmed route.
Pittsburgh / Monongahela approaches → western Pennsylvania interior or eastward	Riverboats, roads, Black neighborhoods, vigilance work, and links to Philadelphia and Canada.	Modern regional synthesis, documented rescues, and western Pennsylvania networks.	Well documented regionally; outside the closest Crockery Valley core.

Corridor I: Wheeling, Martins Ferry, Colerain, and Mount Pleasant

This is the best-documented branch in the immediate upper Ohio study area because evidence survives at several levels and from both sides of the river.

The Wheeling escape of 1849

The *Daily Wheeling Gazette* reported on 4 April 1849 that seven or eight enslaved people belonging to Archibald Paull, Thomas Paull, and Samuel Mitchell escaped from Wheeling and crossed at Martins Ferry. An officer named Shallcross pursued them. Two ferrymen were arrested under Virginia law, required to post substantial bail, and later discharged when the enslavers declined to proceed or proof of knowing assistance failed. This is unusually valuable evidence. It identifies the enslavers, approximate number, point of crossing, pursuit, the legal vulnerability of transport workers, and the problem of proving intent. It also shows that an ordinary ferry—not a tunnel or special vehicle—could be the decisive infrastructure. [Ohio County Public Library transcription, “Fugitive Slaves—Arrest of Ferrymen,” 1849.](#)

The case should not be simplified into “the ferrymen were conductors.” The arrest proves suspicion and legal pressure; their discharge leaves their knowledge unresolved. What is certain is that the ferry landing connected escape, information, and prosecution.

Black ferrymen and guides in the Martins Ferry recollection

Ellis B. Steele's recollection, published in the 1903 *Centennial History of Belmont County*, supplies the human geography behind the crossing. He identified Richard Naylor and Samuel Cooper, both Black, as early operators. Naylor had himself been enslaved. They ferried people from Virginia to a first refuge behind Martins Ferry, after which travel continued by woods and secluded paths to Concord or Colerain. Named points included Joshua Steele's barn, Joseph Parker, Joshua Cope's mill, William Robison, George Clark, and Caleb Cope at Farmington. Samuel Cooper's son Henry assisted. When danger intensified, several left for Canada. Thomas Pointer, another Black man, and Tobe Hance continued aspects of the work.

Steele also described an August 1859 movement of nine people from the riverfront, with O. C. Parker and a team associated with Wesley and William Robison. By then, some travelers used public highways and asked openly for Mount Pleasant or Trenton. The account is retrospective, but it is detailed, names Black and white participants, describes changes over time, and can be compared with census, property, Quaker, and Siebert records. The corridor is therefore well documented; every picturesque detail within later retellings is not automatically so. [1903 volume at Internet Archive](#).

Joel Wood

The supplied *Evening Review* of 8 September 1887 reported that Joel Wood had celebrated his golden wedding at Martins Ferry, called him the first vice president of the antislavery society in Ohio, and stated that he helped many enslaved people go north by the Underground Railroad. This late but lifetime-era notice adds an independent newspaper lead. Wood also corresponded with Siebert in 1892. The next step is to join the clipping, the 1892 letter, and the antislavery society's original minutes or printed proceedings rather than relying on any one retrospective sentence.

Mount Pleasant was a community, not merely a cellar

The National Historic Landmark documentation for Mount Pleasant is important because it replaces a parade of isolated "stations" with a social landscape. Free Black residents, Quaker institutions, abolitionist printers and organizers, roads from the river, farms, churches, and houses reinforced one another. The nomination discusses accounts of people swimming or crossing by canoe, followed by wagon movement from the Wheeling area. It also distinguishes supported community history from popular tunnel claims. The Hamlin-Bruce House at 662 Union Street and the Underwood House at 87 Mulberry Street are associated with free Black families; the Yearly Meeting House anchors the organized Quaker and abolitionist context. [NPS Mount Pleasant Historic District nomination](#); [NPS Network to Freedom listings](#).

The distinction is substantive. A freedom seeker needed information, food, dry clothing, a reliable teamster, protection from a marshal, and a next contact. A hidden chamber might sometimes help, but a functioning community explains repeated assistance better than architecture alone.

Corridor II: Wellsville, New Lisbon, Salem, and the Western Reserve

John Hutchins's route description

John Hutchins's 1887 address is the strongest route evidence now located for the Columbiana County branch. Hutchins said he had personal knowledge reaching back to about 1836. He described an Ohio line from the river to Lake Erie and named the chain he knew: Wellsville, New Lisbon, Austintown, Youngstown, Warren, North Bloomfield, Jefferson, and Ashtabula, with a branch to Painesville or Fairport. Movement was commonly at night in covered "Quaker wagons," especially on the Salem route, with concealment by day. He also recalled crossings on ice or at low water.

This source is near-firsthand, geographically specific, and delivered before the twentieth-century commemorative boom. It does not prove that each named house in later local literature was a station. It does establish a durable northbound chain and the centrality of wagons and roads. [Ohio History Connection, John Hutchins address and transcription.](#)

Wellsville as a transport environment

Wellsville's location at a landing, road junction, and later rail terminus made it a plausible transfer point. By the early 1830s it had packet connections with Pittsburgh; boatyards, a wharf, freight teams, and river labor brought people and information together. Steam packets and ferries expanded the traffic, while low water and ice could interrupt it. The Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad reached Wellsville in 1852, which means rail could matter only during the last nine antebellum years. It should not be projected backward into the 1820s, 1830s, or 1840s.

Local histories identify Edward Devore, a Black and French river worker associated with a stone house, and Daniel F. Spires, born enslaved at Holiday Cove in what is now Weirton, as important early Black residents. Spires worked in Wellsville, purchased his freedom, operated a dray service, and married Mary Hopkins in Steubenville in 1847. Their biographies establish Black mobility, river and freight knowledge, and durable community presence. The further claim that Devore's house was a repeated station remains a tradition until its earliest testimony is recovered. [Wellsville Community Foundation history.](#)

The often repeated statement that more freedom seekers crossed at Wellsville than anywhere else should not be used as a fact without a traceable calculation. The evidence supports Wellsville as an important transfer environment and the southern end of a named line; it does not yet support a comparative numerical superlative.

Salem and Hanoverton

Salem possessed an unusually strong abolitionist setting: antislavery organizing, the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, links to free Black residents and travelers, and road connections to the Western Reserve. The supplied *Evening Review* of 9 April 1906 described preparations for Salem's centennial, called the town a headquarters of the Underground Railroad and the birthplace of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and asked descendants to submit names and character information for an Anti-Slavery Day program. The article is valuable not as a contemporary escape report but as a map to family papers, centennial submissions, and the process by which community memory was assembled.

The same 1906 column contains two unrelated but important Black-history items that must remain in the master newspaper corpus. "Colored Man's Enterprise" describes H. T. Holloway of New Orleans operating a mail-order tailoring business with Chicago offices, sixteen Black traveling salesmen, and reported annual shipments of 5,000 suits. "Rescue Mission" reports an Afro-American mission in Youngstown and names J. H. Wooldridge, D. B. Donald, W. Warrick, and Henson Butler as officers. These are distinct research subjects, not material to discard because the search began with "Underground Railroad."

Hanoverton's Dr. James Robertson and Dr. John Morgan Kuhn appear in the supplied *Evening Review* of 5 November 1902. The biographical article states that their large farm was a noted Underground Railroad station on the route to Canada. A 1908 Columbiana County history also names Robertson's home among Hanoverton locations associated with the work. Agreement between two late sources makes the association probable, not contemporary. Deeds, census schedules, medical and church papers, and the earliest pre-1900 testimony should now be sought. Later claims of an underground passage from Sloan's Brick Row to the Robertson property, or of canal-boat movement through the village, remain traditional.

The Sandy and Beaver Canal: attractive, but chronologically narrow

The Sandy and Beaver Canal is often tempting in route narratives because it joined the Ohio River near Glasgow/Smiths Ferry with the interior. Its useful commercial life was short. The canal was completed in 1848 and effectively crippled by a dam failure in 1852. A through-canal Underground Railroad system operating for decades is therefore impossible. A person could conceivably have used a boat, towpath, worker contact, or canal-side road during the

narrow operating window, but no case-level proof has yet been located. [Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Sandy and Beaver Canal](#).

Corridor III: Beaver, Bridgewater, New Brighton, and New Castle

Richard Gardner: the river system used in reverse

The seizure of Richard Gardner, also identified as Richard Woodson in later county history, is one of the most revealing local cases. Gardner had escaped enslavement in Kentucky, lived for more than two years in Beaver County, preached in a Black Methodist setting, and had a wife, children, and a house. On 14 March 1851 he was arrested on a federal warrant. The detailed 1888 Beaver County history says he was decoyed to a hotel near the steamboat landing, manacled, kept in a small boat, placed aboard the steamer *Nelson*, and carried to Pittsburgh for federal proceedings. Local supporters raised more than \$600, and he returned in April.

A contemporary telegraphic newspaper notice reporting Gardner's arrest in Bridgewater confirms the core event. The later county narrative supplies the riverfront mechanics. This was a north-to-south removal network using a hotel, federal law, a landing, a small craft, and a steamer. It is a powerful corrective to one-directional maps: the same infrastructure that could hide or speed an escape could also concentrate and deport a captured man. [1888 History of Beaver County text](#).

Robert Townsend and the Dawson brothers

The Robert Townsend House in New Brighton is listed by the National Park Service's Network to Freedom. Townsend belonged to an extended Quaker family and chaired a committee involved in rescuing the kidnapped Dawson brothers. William Henry "Lem" Dawson lived with the Townsend family for nine years. An 1852 newspaper notice about shipping "apples" to Allegheny has been interpreted within the documented family network as coded assistance. This site matters because named people, a rescue episode, residence, community response, and surviving records converge. [NPS Network to Freedom listings](#).

Beaver County histories and Siebert materials also name Abel Brown, Joshua Gilbert, members of the Rakestraw family, Milo Talbot, James Irvin, Timothy B. White, E. Ellwood, and Jonathan Morris. These names should be treated as an index to manuscripts, meeting minutes, property records, and newspapers—not as a finished list of identical "conductors." Their actions, dates, denominations, and degree of documentation differ.

Rivers, canals, and roads

Beaver sat where the Beaver River met the Ohio, making Bridgewater and New Brighton natural transfer points. Roads led toward Darlington and New Castle. The Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal connected New Castle toward Akron by 1840, and the Beaver–Erie system created a longer northwestern connection during the 1840s. Siebert believed canal towpaths and boats were sometimes used in Ohio and Pennsylvania. For this particular corridor, the canals are best treated as plausible components, not confirmed escape routes, until passenger, boat, operator, or testimony evidence is found. Geography is an investigative lead; it is not a witness.

Modern Beaver County tourism material repeats a Hookstown-to-river-to-Beaver-to-New Brighton/Darlington route and several tunnel legends. It is useful for locating traditions, but its phrases “legend has it” and similar formulations correctly signal that the claims require earlier sources. [Beaver County tourism overview](#).

Corridor IV: Steubenville and the Jefferson County interior

Siebert’s 1898 book includes a photograph captioned “A crossing place for fugitive slaves on Ohio River at Steubenville.” The image is genuine evidence that Siebert associated a specific river landscape with the history by the 1890s. It does not identify a person, date, vessel, landing owner, or escape incident. [New York Public Library digital image](#).

Steubenville is nevertheless a strong research zone. Before a rail bridge opened in 1857, crossing depended on ferries and small craft. Roads from the river reached the well-documented antislavery communities of Jefferson County, especially Mount Pleasant. Benjamin Lundy’s publishing history, the county’s Quaker institutions, free Black settlements, and the Martins Ferry–Mount Pleasant evidence make the connection plausible. But the report does not label a specific Steubenville landing a station until an antebellum case, business record, letter, or sufficiently detailed early recollection is found.

The distinction between a *crossing place* and a *managed corridor* should be maintained in the database. They are related but not interchangeable entities.

East Liverpool, Chester, Newell, Smiths Ferry, Midland, and Yellow Creek

This is the most important unresolved portion of the Crockery Valley question.

What is established

The district sat at a three-state junction. Ferries and small boats necessarily connected communities before highway bridges. The first Chester–East Liverpool bridge was not begun until 1896, so an antebellum crossing at that point would have required a ferry, skiff, other vessel, ice, or exceptionally low water—not the later bridge. River packets linked Wellsville and Pittsburgh. Glasgow at the mouth of Little Beaver Creek was the Ohio River terminus of the Sandy and Beaver Canal during its brief full operation. Pottery, coal, river trade, and later rail produced a mobile labor environment.

These facts make the district strategically plausible. They do not prove that any named house, tunnel, or ferry participated in an escape.

The Gardner / Pusey / “Gardiner’s Ferry” cluster

Later local material associates John Gardner, the Gardner-Pusey house, and a ferry landing near Chester. H. U. Johnson’s 1894 *From Dixie to Canada* uses “Gardiner’s Ferry” near East Liverpool in a story of pursuit. Gara identified Johnson’s work as semi-fictional, so its routes and logistics may preserve source leads but cannot be quoted as a literal case record. The name may point toward a real landing or family association; it may also reflect literary reshaping. Deeds, ferry licenses, tax records, newspapers, maps, and the earliest Gardner/Pusey family account are required.

The 401 Phyllis Avenue tunnel tradition

The reported tunnel from the demolished house at 401 Phyllis Avenue toward the river remains unverified. Current parcel information concerns a later house and cannot by itself identify the nineteenth-century property. Local recollection may connect the parcel with an older mansion demolished in the 1950s and possibly with the Gardner-Pusey property, but those are separate propositions:

- Was an earlier structure on the same parcel or immediately adjacent?
- Who owned it between roughly 1830 and 1861?
- Was there a tunnel, culvert, coal passage, spring conduit, cellar extension, or industrial feature?
- If a passage existed, when was it constructed?
- Is there any contemporary or near-contemporary statement linking it to a freedom seeker?

Until those questions are answered, the correct grade is **hypothesis**. The East Liverpool Historical Society’s own tunnel page records competing suggestions—industrial movement,

coal or product handling, and Underground Railroad use—without resolving them. East Liverpool Historical Society, “Myth or Fact: Tunnels”.

The research sequence should begin with deeds and historic maps, then building permits, Sanborn maps, utility and sewer plans, demolition photographs, newspaper accounts from the demolition, and oral-history interviews tied to named witnesses. Archaeology should follow property history, not substitute for it. A physical passage could be real and the Underground Railroad association still false.

Smiths Ferry, Midland, and Yellow Creek

No case-level antebellum Underground Railroad record has yet been located for these places in the sources reviewed for this report. Smiths Ferry and the mouth of Little Beaver Creek deserve priority because of the ferry/canal/road geography. Midland and Yellow Creek deserve systematic newspaper, deed, church, and Black-community research. They should be coded as **search zones** rather than stations. This preserves the questions without converting them into facts.

Transportation by mode

Ferries and skiffs

Ferries were predictable, licensed, and socially visible. They could be used openly, covertly, or without the ferryman’s full knowledge. The 1849 Martins Ferry arrests show why intent was legally crucial. Skiffs offered flexibility and fewer witnesses, but required access, skill, and favorable current. A stolen or borrowed boat could also advertise the point of departure.

Packets and steamboats

Packets and steamboats moved passengers, crews, freight, and news on schedules that could be exploited. They also delivered pursuers and allowed removal downstream or upstream. Siebert recorded that northbound steamboats on the Ohio and Mississippi were sometimes used for escape. Calvin Fairbank recalled reaching an enslaved man below Wheeling from a lumber raft in 1837. Gardner’s 1851 removal aboard the *Nelson* demonstrates the opposite use. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*.

Rafts, flatboats, and work knowledge

River labor mattered because it produced knowledge that formal route maps omit: currents, islands, bars, landings, boat ownership, night watches, and which employers or crews could be trusted. Flatboat and raft workers traveled through slave and free

jurisdictions. Edward Devore’s and Daniel Spires’s biographies are important even where direct escape assistance remains unproved because they locate Black expertise inside the transportation economy.

Wagons, drays, and public roads

After a crossing, the urgent problem was leaving the riverfront. Hutchins’s “Quaker wagons,” Steele’s teams, and Spires’s dray occupation point toward ordinary wheeled transport. Wagons could carry produce, pottery materials, freight, or concealed passengers. The National Road reached Wheeling in 1818 and linked the river to Washington, Pennsylvania, and points east. Other roads climbed from the river to Mount Pleasant, Lisbon, Salem, Darlington, and New Castle. Later recollections of specially built boxes are plausible forms of concealment but require source-by-source grading.

Canals

Canals offered slow, work-intensive transport with boats, towpaths, warehouses, locks, and mobile labor. They could provide contacts and cover, but their usefulness depended on exact completion and closure dates. The Sandy and Beaver Canal’s 1848–1852 window is narrow. The Pennsylvania & Ohio and Beaver–Erie systems operated longer, yet no local case in the reviewed evidence proves a particular canal movement. Code the infrastructure as context and any alleged incident separately.

Railroads

Real railroads joined the landscape late. The Cleveland & Pittsburgh reached Wellsville in 1852; a Steubenville rail bridge opened in 1857. Siebert later described the Cleveland & Pittsburgh line from Alliance to Cleveland as much used, but that does not prove that every traveler boarded at Wellsville. Rail offered speed and anonymity, while conductors, ticket agents, depots, and schedules also created surveillance. Every rail claim must be date-checked against the opening of the relevant segment.

The counter-network: law, violence, and local hostility

Calling Ohio and Pennsylvania “free” can obscure the danger on the north bank. Federal law authorized recapture. Commissioners, marshals, local officers, hotelkeepers, informants, ferry operators, and posses could participate. Some residents had economic and family ties across the river or opposed abolitionism. Robert H. Churchill’s study of 154 rescue episodes shows that the Ohio River borderland—roughly the first forty miles north of the river in many places—was a contested belt in which slave-catching violence could receive official and popular support. Churchill, “When the Slave Catchers Came to Town”.

This changes the map. The river was not followed by a uniform field of safety. A successful local network needed to know which justice of the peace, constable, tavern, road, ferryman, church member, or neighbor was unsafe. Rescue, legal defense, fundraising, crowd action, and misinformation were as much parts of the system as concealment.

Black agency must be put back at the center

The surviving local evidence repeatedly points to Black actors whose work was reduced or omitted in later white-centered station lists:

- **Richard Naylor**, formerly enslaved, ferried and guided people from the Wheeling side toward Martins Ferry and the interior.
- **Samuel Cooper and Henry Cooper** assisted at the crossing and first refuge.
- **Thomas Pointer** continued work near Martins Ferry after others faced danger.
- **Daniel F. Spires** moved from enslavement at Holiday Cove to purchased freedom and a Wellsville dray business, embodying the transport knowledge on which mobility depended.
- **Richard Gardner / Woodson** built a family, religious role, and property in Beaver County before federal seizure; the local campaign for him is part of the history of resistance.
- **William Henry “Lem” Dawson** survived kidnapping and lived with the Townsend family after rescue.
- **William Still** preserved records of Philadelphia’s vigilance work and made Black testimony public in 1872. His book documents an organized urban node without proving a nationally centralized railroad.

Stephen G. Hall’s study of Still explains that *The Underground Rail Road* grew from notes, letters, and interviews collected while Still chaired Philadelphia’s Vigilance Committee. Still concealed the records during the crisis and later published them, giving unusual access to freedom seekers’ names and words. The lesson for Crockery Valley is methodological: search for Black churches, occupations, family networks, legal cases, benevolent societies, and mobility—not only famous white houses. Hall, “To Render the Private Public”.

Larry Gara’s work on Quakers supplies a parallel correction. Some Friends were active; other meetings resisted or disciplined militant antislavery work. “Quaker” is therefore a religious identity, not automatic proof that a house was a station. The strongest local cases name the individual, action, date, and next relationship. Gara, “Friends and the Underground Railroad”.

Property and tunnel audit

Claim	What supports it	What is missing	Grade
Dr. James Robertson / John Morgan Kuhn farm near Hanoverton was a station	1902 newspaper biography; 1908 county history names Robertson among local operators.	Contemporary testimony, exact parcel reconstruction, earliest family or neighbor account.	Probable
Gardner-Pusey house near the Chester ferry participated	House/ferry association in later local history; geographically plausible landing.	Antebellum deed chain, ferry license, named escape, early testimony.	Traditional / hypothesis
Tunnel from 401 Phyllis Avenue to river	Modern oral report and possible memory of earlier demolished house.	Exact historic parcel, construction date/function, physical survey, witness or document linking it to escape.	Hypothesis
East Liverpool business-district tunnels were Underground Railroad passages	Surviving or remembered subsurface features and repeated local suggestion.	Engineering purpose, dates, alignment, contemporary UGRR evidence.	Hypothesis
Merrick / James Edgar property passage in New Brighton was used	A physical passage has been reported beneath the property; the broader town network is documented.	Construction date, original function, evidence of any freedom seeker using it.	Traditional / hypothesis
Mount Pleasant's community supported escape	NPS nomination, Black and Quaker community records, Siebert testimony, roads and nearby crossing evidence.	Individual building claims still require separate proof.	Well documented community
Edward Devore stone house in Wellsville was a station	Devore's life and house are locally documented; later histories make the association.	Earliest UGRR attribution and a named incident or witness.	Traditional
Sandy and Beaver Canal carried freedom seekers through Hanoverton	Canal existed and later local tradition invokes canal travel.	Case, boat, operator, date; full operation only 1848–1852.	Hypothesis

The tunnel question should remain open, but the burden of proof should be ordinary and explicit. A feature must be dated, its engineering function established, and its claimed human use independently connected. Otherwise, a dramatic structure can displace the better-documented history of ferries, wagons, free Black neighborhoods, legal defense, and ordinary homes.

What the supplied newspaper pages add

The newspaper set spans 1887–1936, so it documents both remembered participation and the later construction of public memory. None of the supplied pieces is an antebellum escape report. That does not make them useless. It changes the questions they can answer.

Issue and item	Historical value	Caution
<i>Evening Review</i> , 8 Sept. 1887, Joel Wood	Lifetime-era notice connecting a named Martins Ferry abolitionist with Underground Railroad aid; points to antislavery society records and Wood's later Siebert letter.	Brief retrospective; "many" is unquantified.
<i>Evening Review</i> , 5 Nov. 1902, Dr. John Morgan Kuhn	Names Kuhn, Dr. James Robertson, Hanoverton, and a farm described as a noted station; supplies family and professional relationships.	Published decades after the activity; exact farm and source of statement need tracing.
<i>Evening Review</i> , 9 Apr. 1906, Salem centennial	Shows how Salem solicited descendants' evidence and framed the <i>Anti-Slavery Bugle</i> and Underground Railroad in civic memory.	Centennial commemoration, not an incident report.
<i>Evening Review</i> , 13 Feb. 1930, "The Usual Result"	Demonstrates a Prohibition-era analogy between Underground Railroad operators and bootleggers who defied an unpopular law.	Editorial memory; no local route evidence.
<i>Evening Review</i> , 14 June 1930, Stoner House	Documents national heritage storytelling about a surviving Westerville building and alleged tunnel.	Associated Press feature; not local to Crockery Valley and repeats disputed tunnel/numerical traditions.

Issue and item	Historical value	Caution
<i>Evening Review</i> , 17 Apr. 1936, "Ohio Oddities"	Preserves the Ripley/Rankin naming legend and an explanation of "Underground Railroad."	Origin legend, not established etymology; unrelated to the upper Ohio route.
<i>Evening Review</i> , 17 Apr. 1936, "Notes on Ohio History"	Connects Jefferson County Quakers with antislavery work while confronting earlier indenture and the kidnapping of Mordecai Moore.	A digest "from the Galbreath Collection"; the original item must be identified.

The full pages also preserve unrelated material of high local value. The 1930 "Reviewing Stand" discusses demolition of the Thompson/Phoenix Club building at the Pennsylvania state line, older mountain roads toward Virginia and Maryland, and Stanton F. Ewing's Beaver County and Senator Matthew Quay connections. The 1906 page preserves the Holloway tailoring enterprise and Youngstown Afro-American mission described above. These items have been indexed independently in the accompanying newspaper register.

Are we still tagging, archiving, and databasing every newspaper item?

Yes—the governing policy remains one master newspaper corpus regardless of topic.

A search for the Underground Railroad does not authorize cropping away advertisements, labor news, Black business, church notices, road history, banking, politics, accidents, or other material. The page image is the preservation unit; articles and entities are indexed views within it.

The operational distinction is important:

- **Archive every supplied original** without alteration.
- **Register every page or clipping as an asset**, including newspaper, issue date, page, filename, scope, and relationship to a full-page parent.
- **Index salient items and named entities** as separate records with topic tags, people, organizations, places, and confidence.
- **Keep transcription separate from image evidence.** OCR or manual transcription is preliminary until checked against the page.
- **Do not duplicate a cropped article as a new historical event.** Link the crop to the same issue/page and duplicate group as its full-page image.
- **Use project tags as views**, not separate silos. “Underground Railroad,” “Black business,” “transportation,” “buildings,” and “labor” can all point into the same corpus.

The current all-years completeness question is not yet closed. The production-proof workbook examined during this project covers 1–7 September 1909 rather than the entire newspaper archive. The two CSV files delivered with this report are therefore **ingest-ready staging registers**, not a claim that every earlier clipping has already been merged into a complete live master database. A completeness audit and controlled merge remain necessary.

What is not established—and should not be written as fact

- No evidence reviewed proves a single organized “Crockery Valley line” with a fixed superintendent, timetable, or chain of stations.

- No case-level antebellum source has yet confirmed the 401 Phyllis Avenue tunnel, an East Liverpool commercial tunnel, or the Gardner-Pusey house as a place of concealment.
- No reviewed source proves that the Sandy and Beaver Canal regularly carried freedom seekers; its full operating window was only 1848–1852.
- No named antebellum Steubenville crossing incident has yet been found, despite Siebert’s later photograph caption.
- No case-level record has yet been located for Smiths Ferry, Midland, or Yellow Creek.
- No evidence supports assigning all Quakers, all abolitionists, or every old river house to Underground Railroad work.
- Large route totals and statements such as “more crossed here than anywhere” remain unusable without a traceable method.

These are findings, not failures. Negative and unresolved results prevent later researchers from mistaking repetition for corroboration.

Priority research program

1. Resolve the Chester-East Liverpool property cluster

Build a deed-and-map chain for the Gardner, Pusey, Ferry Road, and Phyllis Avenue properties from 1830 through 1960. Compare county deeds, tax duplicates, 1877 and later atlases, Sanborn maps, ferry licenses, bridge-company papers, utility plans, and demolition coverage. Interview living witnesses only after the property timeline is assembled, so questions can be tied to names, rooms, and dates.

2. Find the earliest local newspaper layer

Search antebellum and Civil War-era papers under terms that do not depend on the later phrase “Underground Railroad”: *fugitive, runaway, slave, kidnapped, colored man/woman, negro, abolition, rescue, ferry, skiff, boat stolen, marshal, commissioner, reward, Harriet*, and named enslavers or officers. Search both banks and reprints: Wheeling, Steubenville, Pittsburgh, New Lisbon, Salem, Beaver, and Washington papers may report an East Liverpool event that the local newspaper did not.

3. Reconstruct occupations and mobility

Create linked records for ferrymen, packet captains, deckhands, draymen, teamsters, hotelkeepers, Black ministers, barbers, physicians, and freight agents. Use census

occupations, city directories, tax lists, probate, court dockets, and advertisements. Transportation history is likely to reveal networks that a search for “station” will miss.

4. Follow the named Black actors

Prioritize Richard Naylor, Samuel and Henry Cooper, Thomas Pointer, Daniel Spires, Edward Devore, Richard Gardner/Woodson, William Henry Dawson, and the Youngstown mission officers. Track households, kin, churches, employment, property, arrests, and migration to Canada. Search variant spellings and names imposed during enslavement.

5. Revisit the Siebert collection at item level

Retrieve the original letters behind his route maps: Joel Wood’s 1892 correspondence; Hutchins’s address; Jefferson County testimony; Beaver County names; Mount Pleasant letters; and any Steubenville or Wellsville questionnaire returns. Record who spoke, when, age at the alleged event, whether the knowledge was firsthand, and what later publication changed.

6. Treat archaeology as a dated property investigation

If access becomes possible at a tunnel or passage site, commission measured documentation before interpretation: plan, dimensions, masonry, tool marks, ventilation, drainage, relation to mines/utilities/cellars, artifacts, and construction phases. The historical question is not simply “is there a tunnel?” but “what was built, when, for what function, and what evidence connects a person to its use?”

7. Build a transport timeline layer in the database

For every claimed route, record ferry operation dates, packet schedules, road openings, canal completion/closure, rail segment openings, bridge construction, and seasonal interruptions. A route claim should automatically flag when its infrastructure did not yet exist.

Working conclusion

The upper Ohio River Valley’s Underground Railroad history becomes stronger, not weaker, when the grand schematic is set aside. The surviving record shows a borderland held together by ordinary movement. At Martins Ferry, a documented ferry crossing triggered arrests. In Beaver County, a hotel, landing, small boat, and steamer enabled federal recapture. In Columbiana County, John Hutchins remembered wagons and a named chain from Wellsville to Lake Erie. At Mount Pleasant, a free Black and Quaker community supplied the density of relationships that repeated aid required. At Wellsville and

throughout Crockery Valley, river labor, packet service, drays, roads, and later rail created both opportunity and exposure.

The unresolved East Liverpool–Chester question should therefore be framed around people and transport before tunnels: Who owned and operated the ferries? Who worked the wharves, boats, hotels, and freight teams? Which Black households had kin or employment on both banks? What did local constables, commissioners, and newspapers record? Which routes were physically possible in a given year? Those questions are more likely to uncover the local system than another search for a hidden room.

The river did not simply separate slavery from freedom. It joined the two shores closely enough that information, commerce, assistance, and coercion crossed in both directions. That is the central history of Crockery Valley and the Underground Railroad.

Annotated source guide

Core scholarship supplied with this project

- Robert H. Churchill, “When the Slave Catchers Came to Town: Cultures of Violence along the Underground Railroad,” *Journal of American History* 105, no. 3 (2018): 514–537. Essential for the violent, legally contested belt north of the Ohio and for the counter-network of posses, officers, and rescuers. [JSTOR](#).
- Larry Gara, “The Underground Railroad: Legend or Reality?” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 85 (1961): 334–339. Concise corrective to centralized-system, tunnel, and passive-fugitive myths. [JSTOR](#).
- Larry Gara, “Friends and the Underground Railroad,” *Quaker History* 51, no. 1 (1962): 3–19. Shows that Quaker participation was real but uneven and later memory overgeneralized it. [JSTOR](#).
- Carol Kammen, “On Doing Local History: The Underground Railroad and Local History,” *History News* 54, no. 2 (1999): 3–4. A practical test for tunnel, cellar, and family traditions. [JSTOR](#).
- Stephen G. Hall, “To Render the Private Public: William Still and the Selling of *The Underground Rail Road*,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127, no. 1 (2003): 35–55. Explains Still’s records, Black vigilance work, and publication strategy. [JSTOR](#).
- Wilbur H. Siebert, “Light on the Underground Railroad,” *American Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (1896): 455–463. Early synthesis based on recollections; useful on river, road, canal, and rail modes, but numerical and organizational claims require checking. [JSTOR](#).
- E. Delorus Preston Jr., “Genesis of the Underground Railroad,” *Journal of Negro History* 18, no. 2 (1933): 144–170. Valuable as older historiography and for early legal background; its systematic-chain thesis should not control local reconstruction. [JSTOR](#).

- Henrietta Buckmaster, “The Underground Railroad,” *North American Review* 246, no. 1 (1938): 142–149. Evidence for the popular twentieth-century centralized and secret-service narrative, not a source to use uncritically for local tunnel claims. [JSTOR](#).

Regional and primary-source gateways

- Robert H. Churchill, “The Underground Railroad in the Ohio River Valley.” Best current regional synthesis of the river as a contested borderland. [House Divided](#).
- Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898). Use the testimony and citations beneath the maps; do not convert every mapped line into a fixed route. [Project Gutenberg](#).
- Ellis B. Steele, “Some Recollections of the Underground Railroad,” in *Centennial History of Belmont County* (1903). Detailed Martins Ferry–Colerain corridor recollection. [Internet Archive text](#).
- John Hutchins, 1887 address. Named Wellsville–Lake Erie chain and wagon practice. [Ohio History Connection transcription](#).
- “Fugitive Slaves—Arrest of Ferrymen,” *Daily Wheeling Gazette*, 4 April 1849. Strongest contemporary local river-crossing report found in this round. [Ohio County Public Library transcription](#).
- National Park Service, Mount Pleasant Historic District nomination. Community-scale evidence, free Black households, Quaker records, route testimony, and explicit source list. [NPS PDF](#).
- National Park Service, Network to Freedom listings. Current official documentation for Mount Pleasant and the Robert Townsend House; absence of a listing is not proof of absence. [NPS](#).

Supplied newspaper images

The accompanying asset register identifies all thirteen supplied images, their full-page/crop relationships, and their Library file identifiers. The item index records the Underground Railroad references and unrelated high-value items separately. The image remains the evidentiary original; the register transcription is an aid and must be checked before verbatim publication.