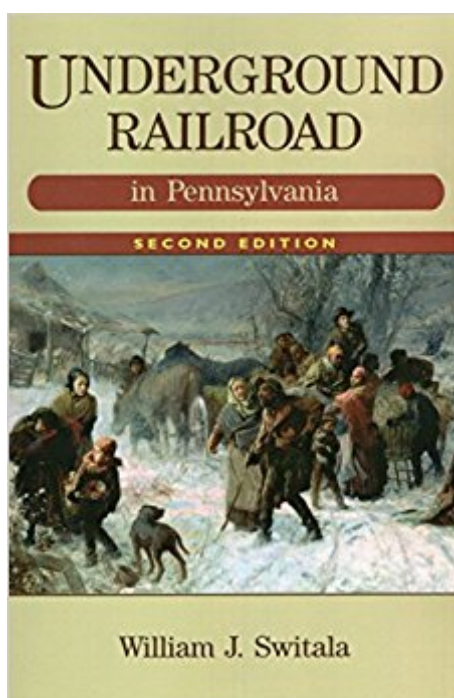


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Underground Railroad In Pennsylvania, 2nd Edition (The Underground Railroad)



Synopsis

Revised and expanded with recently uncovered information Detailed maps of escape routes and networks Eyewitness accounts of fugitives Organized in antebellum America to help slaves escape to freedom, the Underground Railroad was cloaked in secrecy and operated at great peril to everyone involved. The system was extremely active in Pennsylvania, with routes running through cities and towns in all parts of the state. This revised second edition retraces the routes with detailed maps, discusses the large city networks, identifies the houses and sites where escapees found refuge, and records the names of the people who risked their lives to support the operation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Includes detailed maps of the known routes and railroad sites. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

William J. Switala is a former professor of education at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the author of several textbooks on Pennsylvania history. He has been researching the Underground Railroad for more than ten years and has lectured extensively on the subject.

There is still more to be researched and written about the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania. The east of the Susquehanna the documentation covers events well. But west of the Susquehanna,

through the centre of the Commonwealth to the Juniata Valley accounts are sparse, yet, there are accounts of a network that followed the Great Road from Chambersburg to the the Juniata Valley and the Pennsylvania Canal that allowed those escaping both slavery and oppression access to freedom. Even the assistance to Owen Brown, son of John Brown, after the Harpers' Ferry Raid up through the Shenandoah Valley's extreme northern extension to south central Pennsylvania. This work and that of Charles L. Blockson still have additional geography to include for the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania. [George John Drobnock]

An extremely useful resource with maps and descriptions, examining specific regional routes of Pennsylvania Underground Railroad activity. Also includes short biographies of notable people along the way, often using letters written about and by the actors working within the system. Readers get a good grasp of the specific geographies involved, as well as a feel for mid-century period attitudes, and come to admire and marvel at the courage and selfless of the people who operated the "depots" and "stations" and who ran fugitives to freedom during dangerous times. A really stellar, beautifully-researched work, written in tight, clear, prose, that uncovers hidden histories and locations of remarkable people working together in the name of freedom.

I grew up in a house that was purportedly a railway station and a stop on the underground railway. The house was supposedly built for William Penn's niece, on a land grant from his estate to her. We played as kids in the false-walled passageways in the attic, where escapees were supposedly hidden. At least that's what we imagined. The house backed up to a railroad track that ran level with its second floor. There was a covered porch that linked the house to the land which carried the railroad tracks. I got this book, hoping to see if there was any mention of that house in the stations of the underground railroad network in Pennsylvania. Many places in the area were mentioned (it was a Quaker community, and Quakers were anti-slavery), but I never saw anything that supported my legends about the site. What I did find was mention of dozens and dozens of communities and stations and people who were involved in helping slaves make their way to freedom all around the state. Before reading this book I had the vague notion that the underground railroad was a loosely connected series of 'stations' manned by 'agents' who helped people make their way along the route to freedom in Canada or in non-slave territories. In fact (and this should be obvious) stations had to be 12 to 25 miles apart--close enough to allow escapees some place safe to rest during the day after they'd traveled at night, usually. I also found it fascinating that while many agents were sympathetic whites, many were freed blacks. And many freed slaves risked capture to escort others

out of slave states to free states. In desperation, southern lawmakers crafted laws which levied stiff fines and prison sentences on those who helped slaves escape. Of course non-white helpers were punished even more severely. The information about routes is collected and presented as probable routes. Exact information was closely guarded and probably died with the agents in most cases. Routes took advantage of Indian trails and roads, and most major centers had 3 to five routes in an out. After several chapters the routes begin to run together in the mind, but this is all interlarded with interesting stories of some of the agents, and escaped slaves, and life in the days and times of slavery. It's also eye-opening to realize that people then were like people now: pro-slavery, anti-slavery or apathetic. And some slave catchers would pose as anti-slavery helpers on the railroad to entice slaves to escape, then return them to their owners for the bounty on their heads. Seems, the more things change the more they remain the same.

Having just read a number of books pertaining to the issue of Slavery, the Underground Railroad, Lincoln, and the Civil War, I anticipated that this book would be rife with anecdotal stories of how African-Americans escaped the bonds of Slavery and successfully established new lives as free people. While there are occasional stories of that nature in this book, the book is more like an almanac of Underground Railroad actual routes in Pennsylvania, describing in detail the many "entrance" and "exit" routes to towns, sanctuaries, and Underground Railroad "stations". If the reader is a Pennsylvanian, intimately familiar with the "spider web" of roads and rivers located in that state, this is the book to read! As a non-Pennsylvanian who has only transited Pennsylvania on occasion, however, I've skipped over a great many of the technical descriptions in search of the desired human stories.

As I am from Pennsylvania I was very interested in this novel. I must say, I did not want to put the book down once I started reading it. This book covered so much, I cannot tell you how fascinating this history was to me. I really had no idea Pennsylvania had an underground railroad, but I even found out that Meadville was part of this. That is where I was born. Wonderful read, I would recommend it to anyone.

I bought the book and it is very handy for my purposes. However, the Look Inside view is for the first edition and the book I received is the 2nd edition. While normally that isn't a problem, the section I had bought the book for had been eliminated! Fortunately, I can use the Look Inside view for the information I needed, but it is a bit disappointing to have bought the book for a specific section that

had been removed, without comment. There is no preface to the 2nd edition to explain why information about specific stops on the Underground Railroad had been deleted.

This book taught me many things I didn't know about the underground railroad. It is great when an area comes up that I have been to because I can picture the area. I learned many new things and also had some things that I had thought about the underground railroad reinforced.

I found my great great great grandfather written up in this book. I enjoyed the style of writing and the flow with which the story was told. **If you found this review helpful, do vote by replying Yes to 'Was this review helpful' **

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