



A DESCRIPTION OF THE UNDERGROUND

RAILROAD ROUTES THROUGH NEW JERSEY

New Jersey was intimately associated with Philadelphia and the adjoining section in the underground system, and afforded at least three important outlets for runaways from the territory west of the Delaware River. Our knowledge of these outlets is derived solely from the testimony of the Rev. Thomas Clement Oliver, who, like his father, traveled the New Jersey routes many times as a guide and conductor.

Probably the most important of these routes was that leading from Philadelphia to Jersey City and New York. From Philadelphia the runaways were taken across the Delaware River to Camden, where Mr. Oliver lived, thence they were conveyed northeast following the course of the river to Burlington, and thence in the same direction to Bordentown. In Burlington, sometimes called Station A, a short stop was made for the purpose of changing horses after the rapid driver of twenty miles from Philadelphia. The Bordentown station was denominated Station B east. Here the road took a more northerly direction to Princeton, where horses were again changed and the journey continued to New Brunswick.

Just east of New Brunswick the conductors sometimes met with opposition in attempting to cross the Raritan River on their way to Jersey City. To avoid such interruption the conductors arranged with Cornelius Cornell, who lived on the outskirts of New Brunswick, and, presumably, near the river, to notify them when there were slave-catchers or spies at the regular crossing. On receiving such information they took a by-road leading to Perth Amboy, whence their protégés could be safely forwarded to New York City.

When the way was clear at the Raritan, the company pursued its course to Rahway; here another relay of horses was obtained and the journey continued to Jersey City, where, under the care of John Everett, a Quaker, or his servants, they were taken to the Forty-Second Street railroad station, now known as the Grand Central, provided with tickets, and placed on a through train for Syracuse, New York.

The second route had its origin on the Delaware River, forty miles below Philadelphia, at or near Salem. This line, like the others to be mentioned later, seems to have been tributary to the Philadelphia route traced above. Nevertheless, it had an independent course for sixty miles before it connected with the more northern route at Bordentown. This distance of sixty miles was ordinarily traveled in three stages, the first ending at Woodbury, twenty-five miles north of Salem,

although the trip by wagon is said to have added ten miles to the estimated distance between the two places; the second stage ended at Evesham Mount; and third, at Bordentown.

The third route was called, from its initial station, the *Greenwich line*. This station is vividly described as having been made up of a circle of Quaker residences enclosing a swampy place that swarmed with blacks. One may surmise that it made a model station. Slaves were transported at night across the Delaware River from the vicinity of Dover, in boats marked by a yellow light hung below a blue one, and were met some distance out from the Jersey shore by boats showing the same lights. Landed at *Greenwich*, the fugitives were conducted north twenty-five miles to *Swedesboro*, and thence about the same distance to *Evesham Mount*. From this point they were taken to *Mount Holly*, and so into the northern or Philadelphia route.

Still another branch of this Philadelphia line is known. It constitutes the fourth road, and is described by Mr. Robert Purvis as an extension of a route through Bucks County, Pennsylvania, that entered Trenton, New Jersey, from *Newtown*, and ran directly to New Brunswick and so on to New York.

From Wilbur H. Siebert,
The Underground Railroad (1898)