Between the years of 1820 - 1850, Greenfield was an active part of the Underground Railroad because of its location on a line between Ripley, Ohio (on the Ohio River) and Columbus, Ohio. A great number of escaping slaves crossed the Ohio River at Ripley, where John Rankin and his family helped many on their way to freedom. These slaves traveled northward through Columbus and on to Lake Erie and then to freedom in Canada.

Greenfield was also active in this movement due to its large population of Presbyterians. The Presbyterians held strong anti-slavery beliefs. Religious leaders, such as Rev. Samuel Crothers in Greenfield and Rev. James Dickey and Rev. Hugh Fullerton in South Salem, not only led their congregations from the pulpit, but also with their many writings and leadership in the formation of the abolitionist societies in the area.

**URR Routes**

Greenfield was an important stop on the route that ran from Ripley through Hillsboro and Bloomingburg to Columbus. At Greenfield, the freight could be shipped directly to Bloomingburg or through South Salem and Frankfort. The route taken was determined by where the slave catchers were active.

In the Rocky Springs area, located south of Greenfield were Colonel Thomas Rodgers, Samuel Strain, Squire William Wilson and James Douglass. They shipped through Greenfield to Adam Wilson, west of Greenfield, or to South Salem. Adam Wilson could ship east into Greenfield or north to the David Bonner farm and on to Ebenezer McElroy, Alexander Beatty, Robert Templeton or Hugh Ghormley. From these places the freight was sent to Bloomingburg, South Salem or Frankfort.

**Abolition Societies**

The Abolition Society of Paint Valley was formed during a meeting held in Greenfield on April 24, 1830. This society covered the area, including Fayette, Highland, and Ross counties with most meetings being held in Greenfield.

Many members of the Paint Valley group became active in the newly formed Ohio Abolition Society in 1835. In 1836, the Ohio society listed the Paint Valley group as the largest in Ohio with 946 members. On August 6, 1836, the Abolition Society of Paint Valley disbanded. Immediately, the Greenfield Anti-Slavery Society was formed.

The new Greenfield society published several pamphlets against slavery; many were written by Rev. Crothers. The Greenfield Group continued its meetings until August 27, 1845, when the last entry in the record book stated that the members would continue their work.

**Smith Tannery — Jefferson Street (5)**

Revolutionary War veteran, William Smith and his son, Samuel, built the Smith Tannery in 1821. It was used as the family’s home with the tannery in the basement. The Smith family were active members of the Abolition Society of Paint Valley and continued their membership when it became the Greenfield Anti-Slavery Society.

Samuel Smith’s sons went on to positions of prominence. Samuel Mitchell Smith became a teacher at and trustee of Starling Medical College of Columbus, Ohio, and he was also the Surgeon General of Ohio during the Civil War. William Robinson Smith was a civic and religious leader of Highland County and was appointed postmaster of Hillsboro by President Abraham Lincoln.
Augustus West and the West Settlement (8)

Augustus West was born in 1814 in Madison County, Virginia. His father was a slave, but his mother was a free woman thus Augustus was also free. On arriving in Ohio, he worked in Fayette County, not far from Greenfield, and made friends with Alexander Beatty (pictured at left (9)). West convinced Beatty to take him south and sell him as a breeding slave. Then at an agreed upon time, Beatty would return and help him escape. They did this at least three times and split the money.

Alexander Beatty was born in 1797 and settled in Fayette County, just north of Greenfield. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Greenfield and was station keeper on the Underground Railroad in the area. West used his money to purchase fifty-five acres of wooded land, which he cleared, divided into two sections and sold for more than he paid for it. He then bought 177 acres, cleared the land and built a large house of walnut he called the “Mansion” while the lane leading to the house was called “Abolition Lane”.

After the Civil War, West took in six families that were former slaves. Cabins were built on his land along with a schoolhouse. When members of the community died, they were buried in a cemetery on the land. Nothing is left to show of Augustus West’s efforts except for an Ohio Historical Society plaque erected at the entrance to the Greenfield Cemetery on North Washington Street.

Samuel Rouse (10)

Samuel Rouse settled in Greenfield and worked as a Blacksmith. One day two Kentucky slave hunters were in town and recognized him. Knowing there was a reward for Samuel, they grabbed him and took him before the court of Justice Wright to prove that he was property and must be returned to Kentucky. The courtroom was filled with people, but the courthouse door was closed and the rest of the town was outside. Standing near the doorway was Old Barney, a large, muscular Negro. While papers were being prepared, Samuel eased toward the door and when signaled, darted between the legs of Old Barney. Both Samuel and Barney disappeared as the crowd outside surged toward the door to see what all the commotion was about. Samuel later was heard to be in Canada. Old Barney continued to live in Greenfield.

Frederick Douglass (11)

Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, a slave born in Maryland, escaped to freedom in Massachusetts, where he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. There he became known as a strong anti-slavery speaker and was invited on the American Anti Slavery Society’s Hundred Convention speaking tour through the Midwest.

While in Indiana on the tour in 1844, he was attacked by a mob and his hand was broken. On his return through Ohio, he stopped in Greenfield and stayed with Dr. Milton Dunlap whose home sat on the northeast corner of Washington and Second streets. In 1854, Dunlap built the beauty salon house and Frederick Douglass was invited on the Underground Railroad speaking tour through the Midwest.

While in Greenfield, Douglass addressed several churches on the slavery issue. Greenfield residents were so impressed with his eloquence and power that they invited him on the American Anti-Slavery Society’s Hundred Convention speaking tour through the Midwest.

Ebenzer McElroy - 2169 Barrett Road (11) - Ebenzer McElroy (1791-1845) often rode northward on his gray mare over the back roads. At a safe distance, several black fugitives followed discreetly. McElroy would stop at a friendly house and would be back home before dark.

In 1898, John McElroy described the arrival of slaves at his father’s house. The “Coming” of fugitives was something exciting at our house. We would be waked in the night by the barking of dogs. Then probably a window sash at the rear of the house would be heard “rattling” by the striking with the “edge” of the hand against the bottom rail. To the inquiry “Who’s there?” the answer would be “Friends”. Then the door would open and in would come George Wilson or Irwin Brooks, or Thomas Rodgers, or Uncle David Gholston, with from one to six fugitives. A lunch would be set and heartily eaten. The conductors would say goodbye, the passengers would be disposed of for the night – in a spare bedroom, in the Garret, or possibly in the barn, and then we would sleep until morning.”

One story tells of Peter Dent, a freed slave, who was leading seven escaped slaves and decided to spend the winter at the McElroy home. In late winter, slave hunters passed out handbills offering a $500 reward for the capture of Dent. Rev. Samuel Crothers of the Anti-Slavery Society and Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, was minister for 35 years.

The building also served as a school for 35 years. Samuel later was heard to be in Canada. Old Barney continued to live in Greenfield.

Old Presbyterian Church (2) – 1853 – Built on the site of the original church. Samuel Crothers, leader in the Greenfield Anti-Slavery Society and Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, was minister for 35 years.

Old Burying Grounds (1) – Many of Greenfield’s early residents are buried here including Samuel Crothers, David Bonner and Ebenzer McElroy along with various members of their families.

Travellers Rest – 103 S. McArthur Way (1) – 1812 – Built by Noble Crawford on the old College Township Road, it was moved to the present site in 1972 to make way for a gas station. It is now owned by the Greenfield Historical Society and is used as a museum, research library and meeting rooms.

Caldwell House (13) – 3974 Lower Twin Road – next to the Caldwell Covered Bridge, last covered bridge in Ross County. It is said that slaves were hidden in a space under the stairs.