

"Fugitive Slave Case Was Tried" The Daily Gate City Article, April 13, 1915

FUGITIVE SLAVE CASE WAS TRIED

Burlington Was Scene of Hearing and Negroes Had Been Transported on Underground Railroad.

SALEM WAS IMPORTANT

Missourians Wanted to Take Negroes Back With Them, But the Quakers Were Praying Otherwise

The Salem (Iowa) News, in publishing reminiscences from its old files prints the proceedings of the No. 11, dated May 5, 1868, issued by fugitive slave case which was tried in Burlington in 1850. The article reads "A report of the trial proceeding of 'Fugitive Slave Case' was being published. Occupying considerable space, each week for several months. The trial was held in Burlington in 1850 Buel Dags, plaintiff, vs. Elihu Frazier, al., defendants.

The sum of \$10,000 damages was asked by plaintiff as compensation for the services of nine slaves who escaped from Missouri into Iowa and, it was claimed, were assisted to elude their owner by defendants. In this connection it will no doubt be of interest to the older residents to publish a report of an incident above referred to, taken from a family history written by Landsey Coppock, an uncle of Mrs. J.B. Bicksler, who at the time conducted a carding mill in the Edward Simpson house north part of town.

He says: "in June 1848, I had bought the carding machine, store and storehouse for \$4,000. I bought the tanyard and the property belonging to it, so I had my hands full. I ran the carding machine day and night, and had three hired men. Now I put in fulling works, as at this time the farmers made up most of the work in cloth. I was working one night in the mill when a man rushed in, saying the town was surrounded by Missourians. Nine negroes had run away and they had traced them to Salem and were hard after them."

Underground Railroad.

"At this time there was what was called "the Underground Railroad"— men who passed negroes up into Canada. Now there was one man and a small boy who had got to Salem. The rest got out in the brush at Siveter's hill, one mile south of Salem, and went to Washington, thinking it was Salem. They were taken from there to Missouri, thinking they were on the way to Canada, but soon found themselves in the hands of their old masters. I looked out and saw a crowd gathering at the Quaker church, and as Father Baldwin was hurrying past my store to see what the crowd meant,' I rushed out and overtook him.

When we got there we found the two slaves in the center of a ring, with an old Quaker lady, Mrs. Thomas Frazier, praying that the good Lord would not let the Missourians take this boy 'and his father back to slavery. Father parted the ring around them and said in a loud voice, 'They will not take these negroes back to slavery unless they take them over my dead body. Just then a school teacher named Reuben Dorland, spoke up and said we would take the negroes to a justice, and he did not want the Missourians to take them back. So he demanded of them their papers, and as they said they had none, he said to the slaves 'I pronounce you both free.'

Passed Through Salem.

"When they got out of the house there was a horse saddled at the door and the man got on and took the boy in front of him and started north, trotting his horse through Salem. I saw an old man named Way riding ahead, the negroes following. He lived six miles north of Salem and was acting as their guide. This man Way was an abolitionist and belonged to the 'Underground Railroad' When the trial came off at Burlington they put Way on the witness stand and he said he was afraid

of a negro, and he saw a couple coming behind him that day, and he was hurrying to get away. They let him off as they had no real evidence against him. The Missourians still had the town, but after the two negroes had escaped, one of the Missourians went back to Missouri and told that the abolitionists had killed one of their men. He came back with a mob of seventy-five men, armed and half drunk. They came across Clarkson Frazier out hunting about three miles south of Salem and frightened almost to death.

Sheriff From Mt. Pleasant

"The sheriff from Mt. Pleasant came along at daylight and gave the Missourians just 17 minutes to get out of town. They took him at his word, as they had begun to sober up.