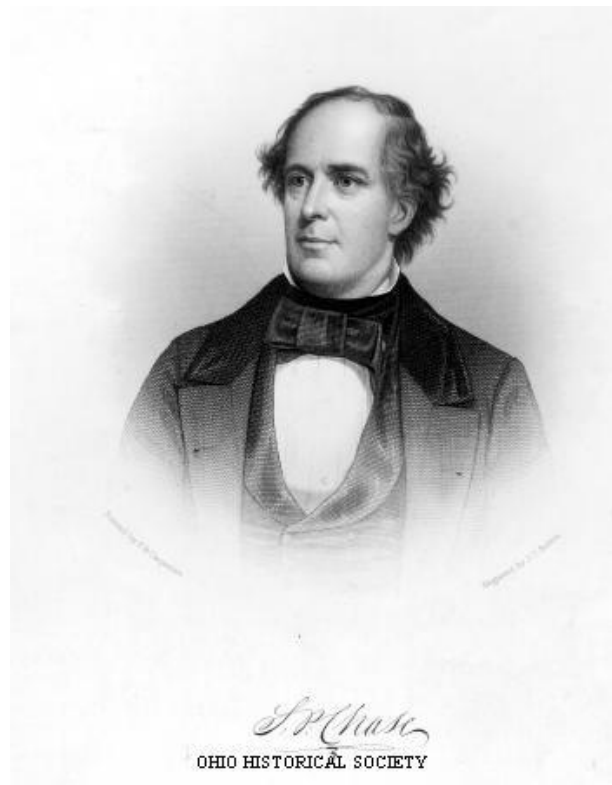


## Cincinnati before the Civil War: Abolition & the Underground Railroad in Art & Literature

The walking tour on which you are about to embark begins and ends at the Freedom Center. It is a tour that is not to be taken lightly due to its length and effort to complete. The walk up Gilbert Avenue to the Walnut Hills neighborhood where the Harriet Beecher Stowe House is located is strenuous, but it is worth the energy exerted. On this tour, you will meet some of the intellectual, artistic, and religious giants of Cincinnati from the years prior to the Civil War. These individuals affected social change in the community and across the nation through their actions as abolitionists, participants on the Underground Railroad, and artists or art patrons. Enjoy your trip around Cincinnati as you learn about the city's impact on the anti-slavery movement and the positive social change exacted on the nation.

### Stop #1: Salmon P. Chase Historical Marker

The corner of Third and Main Streets in Cincinnati, OH once housed the law office of Salmon Portland Chase, who was known by many as the “Attorney General for Fugitive Slaves”. Upon his arrival in 1830, Chase began building a successful law practice at this location, but he truly began making a name for himself when he started defending cases involving fugitive slaves and those trying to assist them in their quest to cross the Ohio River from Kentucky into Cincinnati. Among some of his better known cases is his defense of James Birney as well as his defense of a fugitive slave named Matilda. The actions of Salmon P. Chase garnered national attention and compelled him to prominence, first as Secretary of the Treasury under Lincoln and then as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction. But it was in the law office at No. 2 East Third Street at Main Street in Cincinnati where the foundations of politics without compromising principle began to formulate for Salmon P. Chase.



According to biographer John Niven, “Chase had always been devoted to measured change, as he understood the needs of society. To his orderly mind, slavery, the abasement of human beings, had always been an alien force, a kind of radicalism, that threatened the existence of the Republic, and a grave affront to personal and

There is a spark within each of us,  
**Fan the Flame**

public morality, a subversion of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.”

## Stop #2: Taft Museum of Art – Robert Duncanson Mural

316 Pike Street

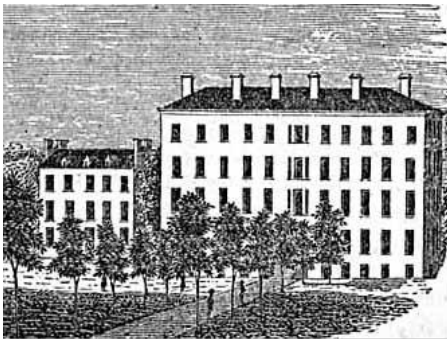
Robert S. Duncanson was born in New York State in 1821. His father was a Canadian of Scottish ancestry and his mother was an African American who lived in Mt. Healthy, a suburb of Cincinnati about fifteen miles north of the city. Duncanson moved there to live with his mother in 1841, and he probably remained there until 1857 when he moved to Cincinnati.

As an untrained artist, Duncanson gained prominence as a painter through the patronage of people like Nicholas Longworth, who commissioned Duncanson to paint murals in the hallway of his home, “Belmont,” which today is the Taft Museum of Art. Longworth’s patronage was essential to furthering Duncanson’s career, since Longworth was a member of an anti-slavery group. Several other abolitionists purchased landscape paintings by the African American painter and many sat for portraits by him, including Sutton Rust, the first president of Wilberforce University and a founder of the Western Freedman’s Aid Society. It was through this patronage that those in the anti-slavery crusade came to realize the talent and genius of African Americans.



The Taft Museum of Art is open Wednesday – Sunday from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Admission is \$8.00 for adults, \$6.00 for ages 60 and older, and \$6.00 for students ages 18 and over, and free for youth 18 and under. The museum offers free admission on Sundays. For more information, please contact the Taft Museum of Art at 513-241-0343 or [info@taftmuseum.org](mailto:info@taftmuseum.org) You can also visit their web site at [www.taftmuseum.org](http://www.taftmuseum.org)

## Stop #3: Lane Theological Seminary Historical Marker



In 1827, a family of pioneering Presbyterians donated several parcels of land in Walnut Hills to use as a western school for ministry. Bolstered by monetary donations from eastern businessmen, including New Orleans merchant brothers named Lane, the Presbyterian General Assembly gave its support to the founding of a theological institution in Cincinnati for “pious young men in gospel ministry.”<sup>1</sup> The new Lane Theological Seminary’s first efforts were to recruit the Reverend Lyman Beecher as head of the school through the help of Arthur Tappan, a New York philanthropist who donated

\$20,000 for the purpose of securing Beecher’s appointment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Vant Stephens, *The Story of the Founding of Lane*, (Cincinnati, 1940), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Thomas Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelism and Antislavery in Antebellum America*, (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), 39-40.

While Dr. Beecher was a respected Connecticut theologian, he had gained national attention and influence during the 1820s and 1830s for his public addresses concerning moral and political issues. He spoke energetically against dueling and attacked intemperance. He gave impassioned sermons denouncing the Missouri Compromise, and he encouraged the western spread of religion.<sup>3</sup>

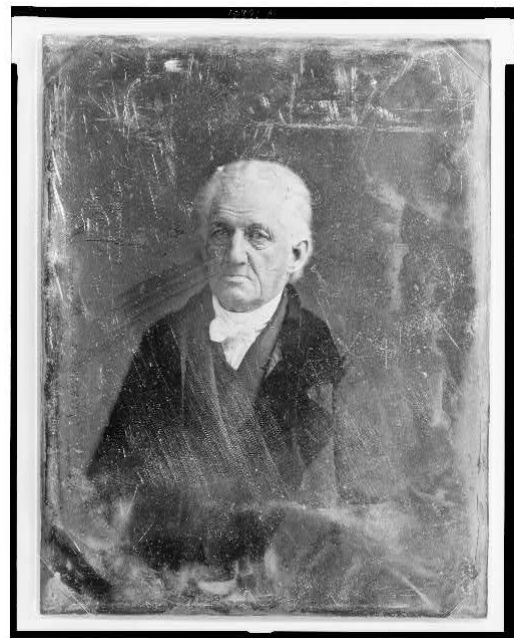
Here are some of the words of Lyman Beecher:

*In our own country, it is manifest that slavery must terminate quickly; and we trust that before the close of the present century, the reproach will be wiped away.*

*But by what authority do we limit the Almighty, and tie down the destiny of the colored people to a condition so low compared with the blessings of nationality?*

*The prejudice of color is doubtless the result of condition and character; since prejudice is the result of condition and character, it is invincible till the causes which created it are removed.*

Lyman Beecher's older children were becoming intellectual leaders in their own right when their father moved the family to Ohio. Encouraged by Lyman Beecher's enthusiasm for intellectual discourse, they also shared his belief in a personal commitment to one's faith through social action.<sup>4</sup> All of his sons pursued ministerial careers, and several, most notably Henry Ward Beecher, who spoke at African Union Baptist Church in Cincinnati, became active anti-slavery supporters.<sup>5</sup> In fact, several of Henry's sermons could be found on the shelf in the Lincoln-Herndon law office in Springfield Illinois; where, according to William Herndon, Lincoln "frequently read parts of the volumes".<sup>6</sup> Daughter Catherine was an early leader in women's education, opening the Hartford Female Seminary in 1824 with help from her sister Mary and her brother George. Both George and Henry Beecher lived with their family in Walnut Hills and attended Lane Seminary. However, the best known of the Beecher children is perhaps his daughter, Harriet. Her experiences in Cincinnati inspired her to write her now famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.



Lyman Beecher's national reputation as a theologian and abolitionist attracted talented, prominent, and activist students to Lane Seminary. In 1834, the school's student body engaged in an 18-day, anti-slavery debate between the two viewpoints of immediate emancipation and African colonization. After this debate,

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<sup>3</sup> Lesick, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen H. Snyder, *Lyman Beecher and His Children: The Transformation of a Religious Tradition*, (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1991), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey J. Giglierano and Deborah A. Overmyer, *The Bicentennial Guide to Greater Cincinnati: A Portrait of Two Hundred Years*, (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Historical Society, 1988), 109.

<sup>6</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln as a Man of Ideas*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 19.

many students were encouraged to teach and minister to the black population in Cincinnati, and it was determined that immediate emancipation was the answer. James Thome, an activist student, writes in an account of his years at Lane:

*... A fellow-student, Theodore D. Weld, had studied the whole subject thoroughly, and when he came to speak he held the floor for eighteen hours. His speech was a thesaurus, giving the origin, history, effects, both upon the despot and the victim, of slavery. When the debate ended, it was found that we were prepared to take decided ground. We were for immediate emancipation by a most decided majority.*

*Good fruits of abolition began to appear. A student who was a slave-holder, and who had come to the seminary relying upon the hire of his slaves to carry him through his theological course, went home and emancipated his slaves and put himself to expense for their benefit.*

*James G. Birney, a slaveholder and secretary of the Kentucky Colonization Society, whose conscience had been awakened, appeared at the seminary. The enlightened students took him in and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Every day brought its advance.*

(James G. Birney went on to publish an abolitionist newspaper, first in New Richmond then in Cincinnati called *The Philanthropist*)

Evidence strongly suggests that several students were known conductors on the Underground Railroad.<sup>7</sup> One of those students was Adam Lowry Rankin, son of Rev. John Rankin, who, according to author Ann Hagedorn, may have assisted as many as 300 enslaved fugitives during his time at Lane. In 1834, Lane admitted its first African American student; James Bradley, a former slave; who shares a little of his story: *As soon as I was free, I started for a free State. When I arrived in Cincinnati, I heard of Lane Seminary, about two miles out of the city. I had for years been praying to God that my dark mind might see the light of knowledge. I asked for admission into the Seminary. They pitied me, and granted my request, though I knew nothing of the studies which were required for admission... But in all respects I am treated just as kindly, and as much like a brother by the students, as if my skins as white, and my education as good as their own. Thanks to the Lord, prejudice against color does not exist in Lane Seminary. If my life is spared, I shall probably spend several years here, and prepare to preach the gospel.*

*My heart overflows when I hear what is doing for the poor broken-hearted slave, and free men of color. God will help those who take part with the oppressed. Yes, blessed be His holy name! He will surely do it.*

Concerned about this growing activism and public distaste in such “co-mingling” of races, the seminary’s board banned such controversial debates and placed restrictions on service organizations.<sup>8</sup> Beecher was faced with a crisis when a large majority of students, known as the “Lane Rebels,” abandoned the seminary under these restrictions to continue their anti-slavery activism.

Among the “Lane Rebels” was their fiery leader, Theodore Weld. Weld took a stand against the board of Lane Seminary, delivering a speech in protest of the board’s decision as the rebels were leaving the seminary. During his speech, Weld delivered the following words:

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7 Lesick, 90.

8 Lesick, 117.

*Is this a time to lay hands upon our mouths, when the ambassadors of Christ hold as merchandize, and sell for filthy lucre, the members of his own body; and with the price of blood in their hands, still break the sacramental bread?*

*No! God forbid that we should abandon a cause that strikes its roots so deep into the soil of human interests, and human rights, and throws its branches upward and abroad, so high and wide, into the sunlight of human hopes, and human well being.*

#### **Stop #4: Harriet Beecher Stowe House**

**2950 Gilbert Avenue**



The Harriet Beecher Stowe house in Cincinnati, Ohio was a center for abolitionist dialogue and theological debate long before the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published as a set of serials in 1851. It was in Cincinnati, at the house where her father, Lyman Beecher lived, that Harriet Beecher Stowe entered the anti-slavery debate and began to express her political voice, rare for a woman of that era. She would use many of the experiences she heard about or witnessed in Cincinnati to build a foundation for her novel, which she wrote the year after leaving Ohio. Following closely behind the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the Compromise of 1850, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* gave a human face and a compelling story to the victims of slavery, bringing the national debate over slavery into the homes and ordinary lives of millions of Americans.

The house known as the Harriet Beecher Stowe House was the home of Harriet's father, Rev. Lyman Beecher, who came to Cincinnati to serve as President of Lane Theological Seminary. The house in Walnut Hills was completed by the end of 1833, and Dr. Beecher moved in with all his dependents and retainers, except for his daughters Catherine and Harriet. The two sisters went to board with a Mrs. S. Wright to be near the school where they taught, at the corner of Fourth and Sycamore Streets. After she married Calvin Stowe, Harriet lived in the house while her husband was abroad for ten months, beginning in April 1836.

The house has undergone a number of changes since its initial construction when it consisted of the three-bay structure with a rear-wing supporting a balcony at the second story. At the end of the wing in back was a barn for a horse, cow and cart. The house was surrounded by old-growth oak trees, and there was a large copse of beech trees and a running creek at the rear of the property. As Rev. White reminisced years later about those early years, "It was all wood and ravine from Dr. Beecher's residence to the chapel, though which, by the help of a rustic shaking bridge, our master came and went on a dog-trot..."

By circa 1840, it appears that a small front porch was added and an addition was made to the south side of the rear wing, creating an interior hallway. Originally, the center hall in the front section of the house must have had a dog-leg staircase and a doorway at the back of the hall onto a rear veranda.

In 1850, Dr. Beecher returned to the east coast. Unknown occupants lived in the house between 1850 and 1865, when Rev. Joseph G. Monfort, editor of the Herald and Presbyter, moved in. In 1870, the house was

described by Sidney D. Maxwell in *Suburbs of Cincinnati* as follows, “Perhaps...no property is more distinguished than the residence of Rev. Monfort...It is a neat, two-story brick structure, with capacious porches in the rear and a roomy portico in front. It occupies a commanding position on the north-east corner of Montgomery Road and Chestnut Street, two squares north of the grounds of the Seminary. Without the semblance of ostentation, it speaks of the comfortable, hospitable home, which a palace sometimes may not so well declare.”

In 1943, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House Memorial Association purchased the house, and in 1946, conveyed it to the Ohio Historical Society. Sometime after 1945, another rear entrance was created by converting a window into a door in the passage between the dining room and the kitchen.

In the 1970s, the house was restored with help from the City of Cincinnati and in accordance with plans by Bruce Goetzman and reopened in 1979. Existing conditions include windows with nine-over-six sashes, paired windows with six-over-four sashes, white paint, removal of the railing across the front step, asphalt shingle roof, and retaining wall recapped.

The property on which the house sits is now a busy street corner, surrounded by urban sprawl and the noise of constant traffic. However, the house sits on a rise above the street, and the stone wall separating the house from the street provides an adequate barrier. The house itself is still shaded by century-old trees, and a small parking lot in the back separates the house from its nearest neighbor. Woods grow in a green-space area, owned by the City of Cincinnati, to the immediate north of the property.

*Based on a report filed by Beth A Sullebarger, Cincinnati Preservation Conservation Office (now Cincinnati Preservation Association), April 18, 1994.*

The Harriet Beecher Stowe House is open Tuesday – Saturday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM from May 1 through Labor Day; 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from Labor Day through November 30; and 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Wednesday from November 30 through April 1. For additional information, please contact the Friends of Harriet Beecher Stowe House at 513-751-0651 or 800-847-6075. You may also find more information on their web site at [www.stowehousecincy.org](http://www.stowehousecincy.org)

### **Stop #5: Union Baptist Church**

### **405 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

Founded in 1831, the Union Baptist Church is the second oldest African American congregation in Cincinnati. The church began as a result of fourteen African Americans leaving the Enon Baptist Church due to their practice of segregating the membership and forcing the black congregants to sit at the back of the church.

After meeting in a residence on Third Street between Plum and Elm Streets, a new house of worship was dedicated in 1835 on Western Row near Second Street. It was at that location that the seeds of abolition were sown for the Union Baptist congregation. Not only was the Union Baptist Church a station on the Underground Railroad, it was also a gathering place for anti-slavery meetings and summits. Some of the best known American abolitionists are known to have spoken at these meetings, including William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher, and Frederick Douglass.

In 1848, Union Baptist welcomed its new pastor, William P. Newman. Newman had been educated at Oberlin College, and he was well known as a fiery and passionate preacher. However, there was something about his past that would create an even greater firestorm in the Union Baptist Church community by 1850. Rev.

William P. Newman was a fugitive slave. He had come to Cincinnati by way of Virginia, and legally he was still the property of his owner. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Newman and his family were in danger of being captured by Federal Marshals and returned to Virginia. Therefore, they left for Chatham, Ontario, Canada; where Newman continued to fight for the cause of freedom until his return to Cincinnati in 1864. William P. Newman died in 1866 as a result of a cholera outbreak in Cincinnati. He is buried here in the cemetery.



On February 17, 1960, the city of Cincinnati notified the church that due to the Queensgate II planning project, the church's buildings were scheduled for demolition. The members of Union Baptist decided that they needed to remain in the West End, and thus they became the only church displaced by Queensgate II to remain in the neighborhood and purchase new property. The property they purchased is where the current building stands today.

The historical records of the Union Baptist Church are on site at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. If you are interested in researching the history of the church beyond this tour, please contact the Freedom Center to find out more information.

**Walking Directions and Map**

**Start:** National Underground Railroad Freedom Center  
50 East Freedom Way Cincinnati, OH 45202

1. Head east on E Freedom Way toward Walnut St (0.1 mi)
2. Turn left onto 100 Joe Nuxhall Way (374 ft)
3. Continue onto Main St (253 ft)

E 3rd St & Main St Cincinnati, OH 45202

4. Head north on Main St toward Hammond St (482 ft)
5. Turn right onto E 4th St (0.4 mi)
6. Turn right onto Pike St Destination will be on the left (82 ft)

Taft Museum of Art 316 Pike Street Cincinnati, OH 45202-4214

7. Head northwest on Pike St toward E 4th St (289 ft)
8. Turn left onto E 5th St/Pike St Continue to follow E 5th St (0.1 mi)
9. Turn right onto Broadway St (0.2 mi)
10. Turn right onto Gilbert Ave Destination will be on the right (2.3 mi)

Harriet Beecher Stowe House 2950 Gilbert Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45206

11. Head south on Gilbert Ave toward Foraker Ave (0.5 mi)
12. Slight left to stay on Gilbert Ave (1.8 mi)
13. Continue onto E 7th St Destination will be on the left (0.8 mi)

14. Head east on W 7th St toward Central Ave (249 ft)
15. Turn right onto Central Ave (417 ft)
16. Turn left onto W 6th St (0.3 mi)



17. Turn right onto Race St (0.3 mi)
18. Turn left onto Second St W (466 ft)
19. Turn right onto Rosa Parks St (371 ft)
20. Turn left onto E Freedom Way Destination will be on the left (233 ft)

**End:** National Underground Railroad Freedom Center 50 East Freedom Way Cincinnati, OH 45202