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## The Secret Routes to Freedom

# The Underground Railroad

### The legend



To some of us who live in cities, the Underground Railroad might mean the subway. In this case, the railroad really does run underground.

More than 150 years ago, there were no subways. However, there was something called the Underground Railroad. Its story has become one of our country's most famous legends.

### The name

One day, in about 1831 in Kentucky, a runaway slave named Trice escaped with his master chasing right behind him. Trice got as far as the Ohio River, which separated the slave states from the free states.



He jumped into the river, swam across and disappeared. On this far side was Ohio and freedom.

His master, following in a boat, could not find him. The story is that the master said Trice "must have gone off (on) an underground railroad."



A fugitive family on its way north arrives at an Underground Railroad "station." "Agents" who helped along the way risked fines and jail.

© The Underground Railroad, by C.T. Webber, 1927, the Cincinnati Art Museum

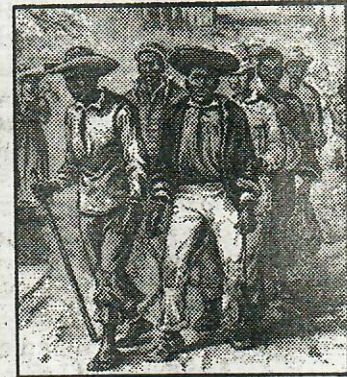
### Underground Railroad terms

- **Agents:** people who helped the fugitives.
- **Conductors:** people who led them from one hiding place to another.
- **Stations:** places to hide.

### The Underground Railroad

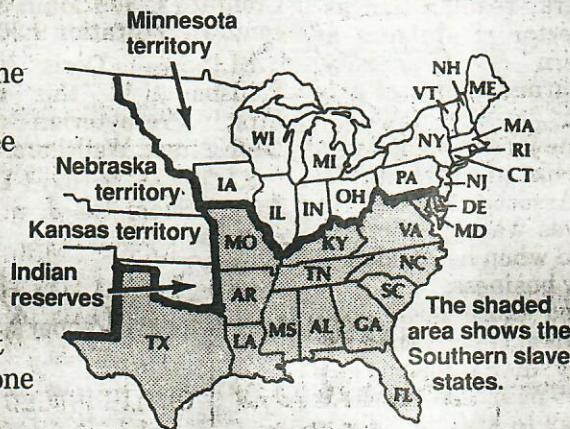
The Underground Railroad is the name given to secret routes and hiding places taken by fugitives or runaway slaves escaping from the South to freedom in the North.

### Slavery



Southern planters depended on slaves to work in their fields. Here, a group of slaves, chained together, moves through a city street.

Slaves could be bought and sold and moved anywhere their master wished. Families often were separated.



Secrecy was important to the success of the Underground Railroad. Some reports say as many as 50,000 fugitives escaped. As many as 3,000 people might have helped them.