



JOURNEY – to – FREEDOM

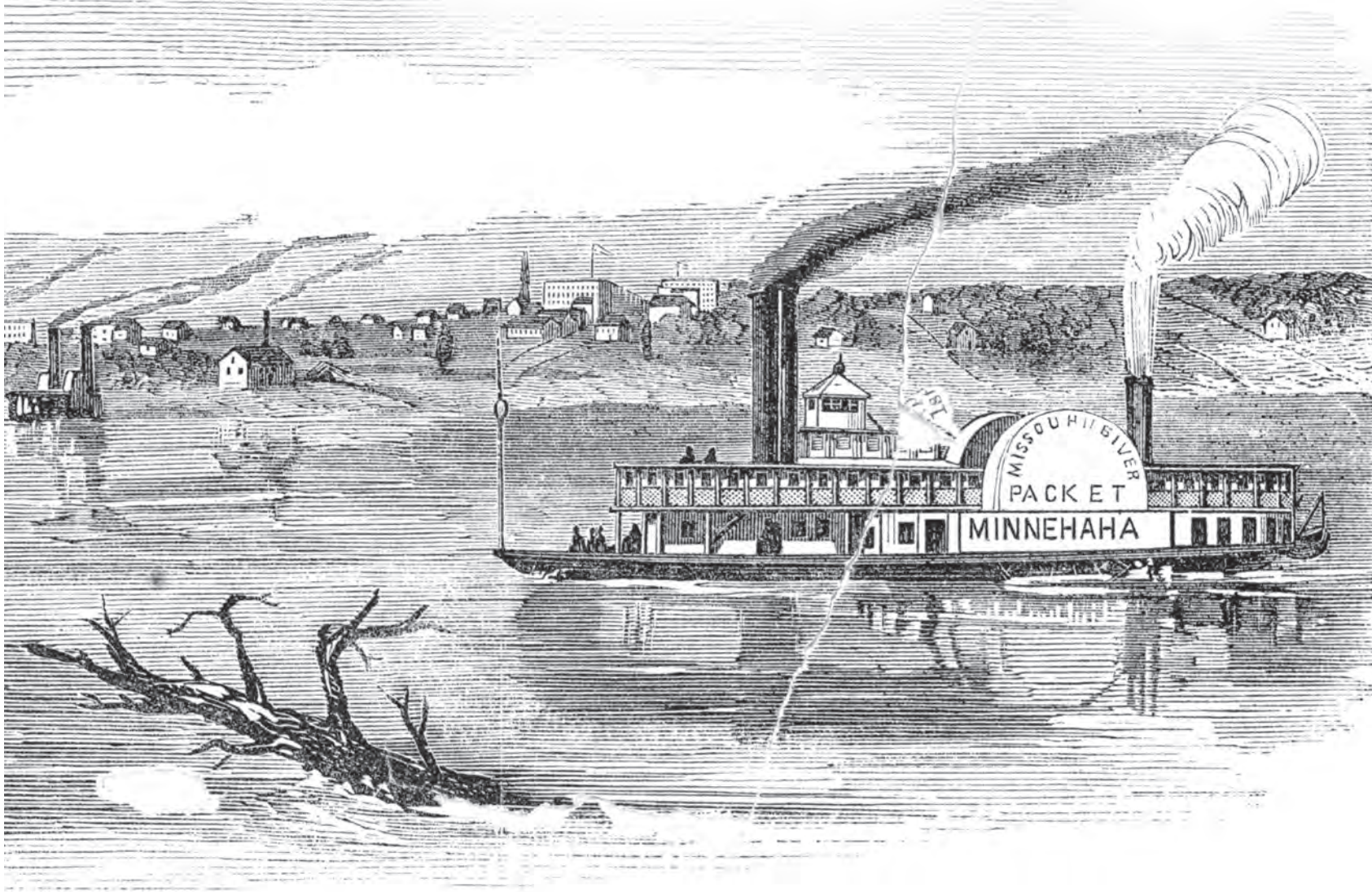
From Nebraska Territory

BY GAIL SHAFFER BLANKENAU



The night was wintry and cold in late November of 1858 when two enslaved women, Celia Grayson, age twenty-two, and Eliza Grayson, age twenty, slipped out of a house in the frontier river town of Nebraska City, Nebraska Territory. Afro-Cherokee abolitionist John Williamson, described as a “mulatto of considerable shrewdness and deal of experience in the world for one of his years,” guided the women north to a small Missouri River ferry landing called Wyoming Station. Williamson was a familiar figure who engaged in small trading back and forth between Iowa and Nebraska—well positioned to help enslaved people to cross the river. Once the group reached the landing, they boarded a skiff to cross frigid waters running with ice. The sisters were headed for their first stop on the Underground Railroad at Civil Bend, Iowa.¹

Nebraska City, artists' view for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, January 8, 1859.
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Stephen Friel Nuckolls.
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The next morning, Celia and Eliza's enslaver, Virginia native and Nebraska City founder Stephen Friel Nuckolls, known as "Friel" to his friends, discovered their absence and sprang into action. He sent messages to Iowa, with relatives in Glenwood and Sidney, to get the word out and to post lookouts at river crossings. He turned to family and friends to organize a search party. The next issue of the *Nebraska City News* declared that his female "servants" had been "enticed" away by "some vile, white-livered Abolitionist," and "will doubtless be found in some Abolition hole."² Nuckolls offered a \$200 reward for their return.²

While history has not been silent on the existence of slavery in Nebraska Territory, it has taken a small view of it. Historians have framed slavery in Nebraska as an interesting item of curiosity, because the numbers of enslaved people in the Territory remained small. Yet, when Celia and Eliza left bondage in 1858, newspapers across the country carried the story, recognizing that these Nebraska freedom seekers raised unsettled questions about the legitimacy of slavery in the territories.

Nebraska City, located in the southeastern corner of the territory, lay in a "four corners" situation. Although not as geographically tidy as the later four corners of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah, the area shared a border to the south with "Bleeding Kansas," where the tensions between proslavery and abolition forces were playing out in violence. To the south and east was the slave state of Missouri, while east across the Missouri River lay Iowa, a free state with a minority abolitionist movement. Nebraska's southeastern corner was a strategic location where the worlds of popular sovereignty, slavery, and abolition intersected and clashed between territorial and state systems.

In contrast to Nebraska City's celebrated history of John Brown's Cave and the Underground Railroad, the town also served as the nexus of Nebraska slavery and its potential expansion in the antebellum period. One writer reported in 1855 great "excitement" in Nebraska City about slavery, "in way of street debates, door-step discussions; and the question is, 'Shall Nebraska south of the Platte river be a slave state?'"³

Among the thousands of bondpeople who sought their freedom each year, why did Celia and Eliza's story rise to the top? Part of the reason was their location. Another reason was that their enslaver's hot pursuit shattered the peace in free states. Mainly, Celia and Eliza embodied all the

political and moral questions that dominated the 1850s, challenging assumptions about the potential for and nature of enslavement in the West.

Celia and Eliza born into "Mountain Slavery"

Celia and Eliza Grayson's first enslaver was Friel Nuckolls's father, Ezra Nuckolls of Grayson County, Virginia. Born in 1836 and 1838, the sisters grew up on a farm nestled into the Appalachian range of southwest Virginia, dominated by a "wild, thinly-settled mountainous tract" and high plateaus lying on the North Carolina line.⁴ Grayson County practiced a form of small-scale slavery historians later dubbed "mountain slavery," places with low numbers of enslaved where the majority of White residents were not slaveholders. However, the slaveholding minority in Grayson County possessed outsize power, dominating the social, political, and economic landscape. Enslaved labor was widely accepted, even by non-slaveholding Whites.⁵

Ezra Nuckolls transferred Celia and Eliza to his oldest son Friel as the ambitious and restless young man contemplated a new life out West, changing the trajectory of the sisters' lives forever. Already balding in his twenties, Friel was slim, dynamic, charming, and intense. In 1846, he traveled west to scout for a new home, and chose northwest Missouri. Once established, he returned to Virginia to marry, and in 1848, he took his new wife, along with Celia, Eliza, and probably another enslaved man, Shack, with him to Atchison County, Missouri. Celia and Eliza were just ages nine and eleven, wrenched away from their family, in what must have been a traumatic and painful separation.⁶

Nuckolls operated a store in a small hamlet called Linden, Missouri, and began to speculate in land, hoping the small town would become the county seat. In 1855, Friel's parents and some of his siblings settled in Atchison County, Missouri, bringing many of Celia and Eliza's family members with them, no doubt a joyful reunion. Ezra Nuckolls wrote back to Grayson County, Virginia, about their trip. "...we were 62 days on the road from Elk Creek had 43 persons and 10 wagons 6 carriages in our croud."⁷

The Grayson County Nuckolls clan brought their Appalachian cultural capital with them. Atchison County was much like Grayson County in the nature of enslavement. Slaveholders were a minority, yet enslavement was accepted by the majority who lived there. There was little reason for Nuckolls family members to think that the small-scale enslavement they knew in Virginia could not be transplanted west. As they had in Virginia, they

held important positions in commerce, the courts, and government, extending their influence into almost every aspect of frontier life, achievements they would repeat in Nebraska Territory.

No one in the Nuckolls family was more energetic or successful than Friel Nuckolls. From his perch in northwest Missouri, he was always on the lookout for new prospects. As Congress debated what was then called “Nebraska Bill,” destined to open the area to White settlement, his eyes were once again drawn west. Moving to a new territory would bring opportunities to advance his fortunes. “Almost everyone, according to one pioneer lawmaker, ‘fancied himself at no distant period, a Governor, Judge, United States Senator, Congressman, or millionaire—mostly preferring the latter title.’”⁸ Nuckolls fit the bill.

Slave or Free?

The question of slavery haunted Nebraska Territory from its inception. As the extension of slavery in the territories dominated the national debate over the Nebraska Bill, in 1853, a meeting took place at St. Joseph, Missouri, to call for Nebraska Territory’s opening to settlement. Still based in Atchison County, Friel Nuckolls attended the meeting, as well as his friends, Hiram P. Bennett, and Allen A. Bradford, all of whom would later move to Nebraska City. Another future Nebraska City resident, Missouri slaveholder Charles F. Holly, chaired the committee on resolutions, which stated that “the emigrants in the territories ought to receive the same protection to property that they enjoyed in the states from which they emigrated.” It was clear to all that the term property encompassed all forms of property, including enslaved people. As the group deliberated, little did they know they “were making a small ripple in the tidal wave which was soon to sweep over the bloody plains of historic Kansas, and finally culminating in a national wide-spread fratricidal strife.”⁹

When Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, Nebraska Territory commanded a vast expanse that included the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana, and part of what became Colorado. The main sticking point passing the bill was whether these lands would be slave or free. Congress would reject the balance-of-power strategy adopted by the 1820 Missouri Compromise, which had admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state, while containing legal enslavement south of the 36°30’ parallel—theoretically transforming the upper Louisiana Purchase lands into free territory.

Rather than honor this early agreement, which would prohibit slavery in Nebraska, Congress finally settled on Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas’s proposal of popular sovereignty as a solution to the impasse over slavery and overturned the Missouri Compromise.¹⁰

With the Missouri Compromise no longer recognized, opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act feared that Southerners would use this opening to extend slave power into the new territories, upsetting the precarious balance of Congressional power. Others dismissed the possibility of northern territories accepting slavery within their borders. Nebraska Territory in particular, situated squarely in the North, was a test case for whether popular sovereignty would work to settle the slavery question. The Nebraska bill’s architect, Stephen A. Douglas, pointed out that despite the prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Ordinance that opened the Ohio country in 1787, slavery had continued to exist in the territories and admitted that they were “already kept in Nebraska.” Yet, he dismissed the possibility of slavery taking hold, predicting that as “settlers rush in and labor becomes plenty it is worse than folly to think of its being a slaveholding country.”¹¹

Once Nebraska Territory opened for White settlement in 1854, Stephen Friel Nuckolls, and some of his relatives crossed the river from their Atchison County, Missouri, lands to take advantage of the opportunities that only a new territory could offer. They brought the “first slaves” in Nebraska Territory with them.¹² Newspaper editors took note. At Nebraska Territory’s first governor’s inaugural in 1855, the *National Era* newspaper in Washington, D.C., reported twenty enslaved people served at the ball. The same year, an Indiana newspaper reported forty enslaved people in Richardson County, Nebraska, while mentioning the *Nebraska City News* “advocating the establishment of a slave state in the Southern portion of that territory.” By 1858, twenty Black people resided in Nebraska City alone.¹³

As well as Celia and Eliza, Friel Nuckolls brought two other enslaved people into his household, Shack and Shade (likely their brothers). In addition to working for Nuckolls, Shack was hired out regularly at the *Nebraska City News*, one observer entering the press office to find Shack there alone and in charge that day.¹⁴ Thus, Shack would have been quite aware of the deliberations about territorial policy swirling throughout the region, including efforts to pass laws outlawing slavery. Shack would have shared



Lucinda Bourne Nuckolls.
Courtesy Brett Connover

this knowledge with Celia and Eliza. Shade still “belonged” to Friel’s father Ezra. Ezra either lent him, or hired him to Friel.¹⁵

Historians who have studied the persistence of low-level enslavement in the territories created out of the old Northwest Territory despite its express prohibition, have emphasized its small scale and domestic nature. Nebraska appeared to be following the same pattern. According to Nuckolls, Celia and Eliza, as well as the others, “belonged to a family” and “were scarcely regarded as slaves.”¹⁶ Slavery apologists would later describe the “light housework” that the women performed, while Shack and Shade often went hunting and fishing on both sides of the Missouri River. Indeed, Celia and Eliza worked in Nuckolls’s large brick residence on Main Street. Their duties probably included cooking, cleaning, minding children, mending clothes, laundry, ironing, tending poultry, gathering eggs, hoeing, and tilling the garden.¹⁷

“Five Negroes for Sale at Nebraska City” (*Nebraska City News*, Jul 16, 1855)

Shack, Celia, and Eliza probably discussed their prospects for freedom. Nebraska City itself was a “station” on the Underground Railroad (UGRR). They probably learned about their possibilities a myriad of ways. Across the river in Iowa, Tabor and Civil Bend’s abolition sentiments were common knowledge. Small trader John Williamson could have reached out during his peddling visits, and assured them of help from their Iowa allies. Abolition-minded Nebraska Citians may have been bold enough “to educate” them. Shack, in particular, would have heard snatches of conversation as well as discussions of slavery’s prospects during his work at the *Nebraska City News*.¹⁸

In addition to their advantageous location, other events may have entered into their thinking. On July 14, 1855, with J. Sterling Morton at the editorial helm, the *Nebraska City News* published an announcement that made a major news splash, with Nebraska Territory once again drawing a national focus as newspapers all over the country republished the piece:

Negroes For Sale at this Place: We call attention to the advertisement of negroes for sale, which appears in another column. A company of gentlemen from Missouri, who have large interests here, have imported them for the benefit of our young and growing city. Nebraska City is now about twice or three times larger than any other town in

the Territory. Help is much needed and but little to be had; for this reason slave labor is required. We are authorized to state that the same company have twenty more in Missouri, which will be brought to Nebraska City if sufficient inducements are held out.¹⁹

The original *Nebraska City News* issue for the date is not extant, but the *Fairfield Ledger* in Iowa published the exact text of the advertisement. Quoting the *Nebraska News* of July 16, 1855, it announced:

Five Negroes for Sale at Nebraska City
FIVE SOUND, HEALTHY NEGROES are now offered for sale at this place—Three Girls, good house keepers, and two Boys, Rufe and Joe, fine field hands, compose the lot. Terms easy. For further particulars, enquire at the News office.²⁰

Outside of Nebraska and Iowa, several newspapers picked up the slave sale story as big news in the ongoing argument about Nebraska’s status as potential slave territory, including the *New York Times*. After the *Times* criticized the imminent sale, New York lawyer John S. Patterson wrote a response, naming Nuckolls and his uncle William Hail as the sellers. Echoing Senator Stephen Douglas, Patterson dismissed the sale. There was “no danger of Nebraska becoming a slave territory, even if Kansas should... I am well persuaded that NUCKOLLS & HAIL have no faith in its being otherwise.”²¹

Back in Iowa, the *Fairfield Ledger* editors were not as sanguine about slavery’s prospects in the West, stating that, “The friends of freedom have now two territories to watch—for Nebraska is now marching side by side with Kansas in supporting the hateful burden of human bondage.”²²

By August 22, another Iowa newspaper announced that the *Nebraska City News* had published an explanation that the “whole thing was a fiction of its own coinage.”²³ In other words, the *Nebraska City News* advertised the slave sale as a kind of social experiment—dipping their toes in the proverbial waters to test public opinion, all to expose the ridiculous extremes of abolitionism. The *Chicago Free Press* viewed this assertion with skepticism. That the *Nebraska City News* “now declares that no such scheme is in contemplation and that the negro sale was a mere joke,” was a coverup to hide the movement to extend slavery there.²⁴

Given the uproar surrounding this prospective slave transaction, and Shack’s work as a pressman,

no doubt Shack, Celia, and Eliza caught wind of it. The sale must have sent a chill through them all, a grim reminder of their precarious position as property. The discussions may have made them look across the river to Iowa and its promise of freedom with increased intensity.

Life settled down again, once the ferment over the “false” slave sale in Nebraska City died down. However, this incident reveals some important points. Friel Nuckolls was not above engaging in the slave trade, despite the image of benign domestic slavery he practiced at home. He had access to more enslaved people than ever appeared in a census. And the more enslaved people who could be brought in, the closer the territory might be to eventual acceptance of small-scale domestic slavery.

“My slaves should not be distributed, sold or hired out” (Ezra Nuckolls)

Another factor in Celia and Eliza’s resolve to seek their freedom may have been the death of their first enslaver, Ezra Nuckolls, on May 4, 1857, followed by that of his wife Lucinda on May 17th. The death of a family patriarch was an important event, and for enslaved people, a time of increased vulnerability and danger. Ezra Nuckolls’s will specified that his nine slaves not “be distributed sold, or hired out to any other person except some of my heirs, unless sutch (sic) Slaves may be of bad character.”²⁵

Despite Ezra’s testamentary wishes, in September 1857, Friel Nuckolls and the rest of the adult heirs applied to the Atchison County District Court for permission to hold a slave sale because one of Ezra’s nine slaves, Henry, had died in the interim. Thus, Ezra’s provisions for an equal division of slaves made, “a distribution in kind impracticable.”²⁶ Perhaps a hidden reason among Ezra’s adult heirs to choose a sale rather than a straight division was that some of the heirs lived in the free state of Iowa. They may have felt forced either to free their enslaved people or sell them, while the Nuckolls clan in Missouri and Nebraska would be able to retain theirs.²⁷

In settling estates, enslaved people were often separated and sold off to satisfy debts, with the old household breaking apart. For Celia and Eliza, Ezra’s death and the estate sale may have kicked off a series of discussions that moved thoughts of self-emancipation to the forefront. With matriarch Lucinda dying a month after Ezra, none of the prior generation was left to watch how the heirs followed Ezra’s provisions for their treatment. There was no

guarantee that the heirs would not turn around and sell Ezra’s former slaves. Celia and Eliza, although already “owned” by Friel Nuckolls, might have feared the disintegration of the rest of their family.

In addition to these slave sales, the constant debates over slavery in the Territory continued to eddy about them. They would have observed with care how Friel and his siblings navigated their position in society to maintain the status quo. The Nuckolls clearly hoped to make Nebraska Territory a place like Grayson County, a society where enslaved people lived in smallholdings with an ongoing acceptance, or at least tolerance, of slavery from their neighbors. At the same time, if slavery was eventually prohibited in Nebraska, would they be grandfathered in and enslaved for life, or would Friel Nuckolls cut his losses and sell them south?

No matter what their reasons, leaving was risky. Celia and Eliza were well aware of slave-hunters, men who fanned out through Kansas, Missouri, and into Iowa to pursue fugitives to re-enslave them. Indeed, their prior home of Grayson County had been one of the inspirations for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the use of slave-hunters and vigilantes, who meted out extralegal punishment to freedom seekers and abolitionists. Without a doubt, they heard about the 1857 Myers incident in nearby Richardson County, Nebraska, where slave-hunters caught Missouri freedom seekers in the willows lining the Missouri River bottoms. Violence ensued. One White man was killed—William Myers of Atchison County, Missouri—and an enslaved man jailed for murder. The others were captured later in Iowa and some of them killed.²⁸ Any effort to seek their freedom would be fraught with danger.

“Enticed Away! Fugitive Slave Excitement in Nebraska”

On the night of November 25, 1858, the Nuckolls household slept. Nebraska City, so lively in daytime, slept. But Celia and Eliza Grayson did not. This was the night they would take their first steps toward freedom. They would have dressed in their warmest clothes and may have packed bundles for the journey. As they moved through the house, every little rustle of clothing or creak of the floorboards had to make them stop and wince. They would have shut the door behind them with excruciating care, making as little noise as possible. In shutting this door, they shut the door to their old life, the only life they had ever known.

The crunch of feet on the frozen and empty road would have echoed in their ears; the cold seeming



An early-twentieth century view of the partly-frozen Missouri River near Plattsmouth, about twenty miles north of where Celia and Eliza crossed.
RG3384-10-94

to amplify every sound. Yet they had chosen their time well. In late November, the streets would not be crowded as they were in high season, when masses of emigrants and teamsters passed through the town and single men populated the streets near the business district to drink and carouse. Gone too were the muck, mire, and mosquitoes that plagued cross-river travel in warmer months. Quick and silent, they passed to the edge of the growing town to meet John Williamson, their guide to the Wyoming Station ferry and freedom.²⁹

In the 1850s, Wyoming station lay some seven miles north of Nebraska City, a small town that initially set out to compete with Nebraska City and Omaha to be a Missouri River transportation hub. Wyoming founder Jacob Dawson certainly intended it. But Friel Nuckolls and some of his friends joined Dawson as proprietors of the Wyoming Town Company, with the secret intent of blocking their potential rival from success. Thus, Wyoming's population never exceeded about 151 people.³⁰

For freedom seekers' purposes, Wyoming's location and size were an advantage. Wyoming was a much quieter place for Celia and Eliza to cross, and it may be that Dawson and others were well aware that the slaveholders south of them kept a stranglehold on their community's growth. It would make sense that even if residents of the tiny place were aware of occasional nighttime crossings, they preferred to look the other way.³¹

The sisters would have traveled the hilly and rutted track that followed the winding bluff contoured by the waters of Missouri River. Despite their reduced vision, the long winter night was their friend, providing needed hours of cover. Once near

the crossing, Williamson and the women would have scrambled down the steep bluffs to the river. Small chunks of ice were floating and eddying around the skiff that awaited them, dipping up and down in the frigid waters.³²

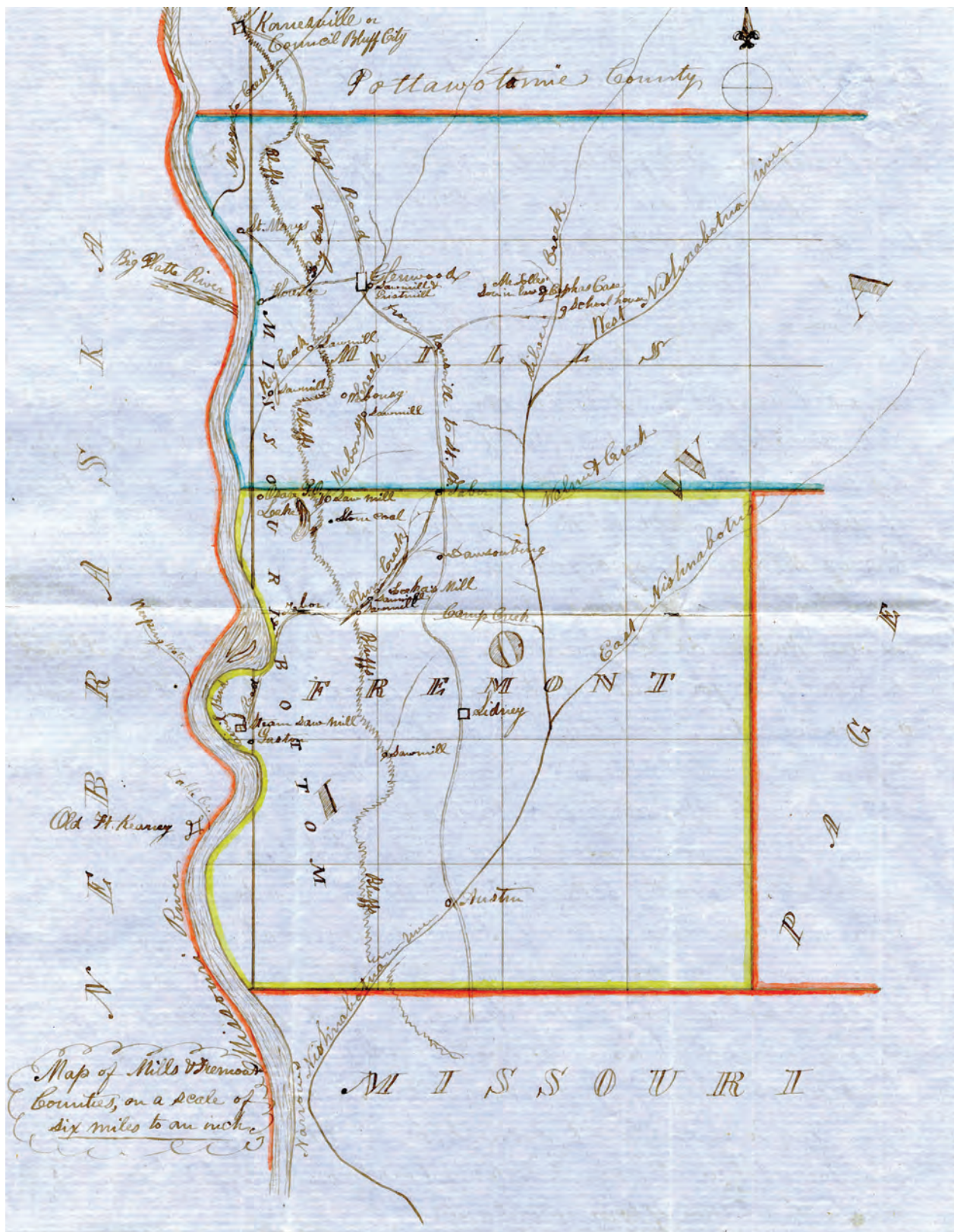
In the 1850s, the Missouri River was quite different from the narrow and controlled river it is today. Muddy and treacherous, the river was full of twists, turns, and snarls, and many an experienced boatman turned over, even in the best of conditions. Although they were clearly determined, their hearts may have quailed as they stood on the Nebraska side of the Missouri that night. Knowing the danger, they lowered themselves into the boat. There was no going back. At the core, they wanted to be free.³³

One can only imagine the small boat launching into the wintry river, waves and ice dashing and banging into the hull, shaking the small craft's timbers. With the night narrowing their vision, their eyes would have adjusted to a lantern light bobbing up and down, as Celia and Eliza would have clung to whatever might steady them as they crossed the wide expanse of water.

Civil Bend was almost straight across from Wyoming, Nebraska. The hamlet was less of a town and more like a string of houses perched along the river's east bank.³⁴ Called a "colony of Oberlin," former missionaries and abolitionists had started the community with plans for a college resembling Ohio's Oberlin College.³⁵ Among the settlers was a former missionary to the Delaware Indians, Dr. Ira Blanchard. "Doc Blanchard" was one of Civil Bend's principal citizens and he took charge of Celia and Eliza. They probably hid in Blanchard's cellar, recovering from the cold before they would move again under the cover of darkness.³⁶

Blanchard's house was just a few blocks from the river located near a commons area in the town. According to one account, the house was built with a concealed space under a closed storage porch in the back. A rug and trunk covered the trap door. Blanchard's great-grandson furnished a different view, recalling that "slaves were hidden in the basement behind a secret fireplace in the home. They were fed and received medical care from the Blanchards before continuing on their way to freedom."³⁷ How long Blanchard may have concealed Celia and Eliza is uncertain, but it seems likely that Celia and Eliza were moved north to Tabor and beyond as quickly as the UGRR agents could safely achieve it.

The morning after Celia and Eliza left, members of the Nuckolls household awoke to



1854 map drawn by abolitionist Rev. John Todd of Tabor, Iowa. Wyoming Station was just south of Weeping Water Creek. Nebraska City was located at the site of "Old Fort Kearny" shown on the map. Courtesy Tabor Historical Society.

a cold house only to find their “servants” gone. It is unknown whether Shack was elsewhere, or whether he witnessed the family’s reaction as disbelief and anger set in. Why he chose to stay behind it is impossible to know. Perhaps it was because Friel Nuckolls valued him highly and trusted him enough to allow him freedom of movement in the area. Shack might have been promised eventual emancipation. Perhaps, like Uncle Tom’s character in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book, he felt Celia and Eliza’s chances would be better without him.³⁸ Whatever the reason, it is likely Friel Nuckolls turned to Shack with suspicion, questioning him to the point of physical coercion to find out what he knew.³⁹

For Lucinda Bourne Nuckolls, her heart must have sunk as she realized that the full burden of housework would now fall upon her shoulders, while Friel gave full vent to his anger. He sent word to Iowa friends and associates to be on the lookout and went straight to the *Nebraska City News* to place an announcement about their flight, complete with a reward. Due out the next day, the typesetter rushed to ensure the news would be published as soon as practicable.

On November 27, 1858, the *Nebraska City News* reported “Quite a sensation was created in town yesterday morning by the fact being known that two female servants had been enticed away from our townsman, Mr. S. F. Nuckolls,” accusing “white-livered Abolitionists” for the crime.⁴⁰ Celia and Eliza’s act of resistance prompted newspapers all over the country to weigh in on their fate, along

with commentary on slavery’s morality from both antislavery and proslavery sides. Noting Nuckolls’s efforts to capture Celia and Eliza in the wake of their escape, the American Antislavery Society, no stranger to stories of violence and brutality as slaveholders reacted to retrieve “their property,” reported that, “The outrages perpetrated in searching for these slaves exceed, if possible, in villainy and meanness, those recorded in most of the cases in this tract.”⁴¹

“Nebraska Negro Catchers in Iowa”⁴²

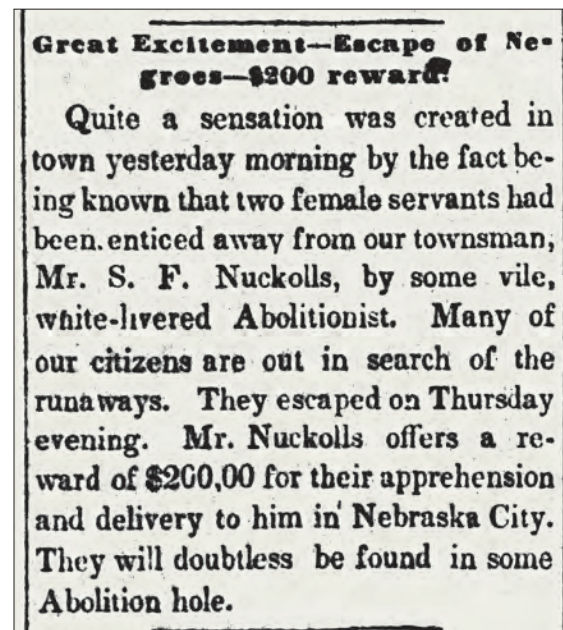
Friel Nuckolls must have known that both Civil Bend and Tabor, Iowa, had abolition sentiments. The day after Celia and Eliza left, he gathered a group of men, crossed the river, and went to abolitionist Doc Blanchard’s house. Nuckolls explained to Blanchard that two of his “slave girls—unthankful for past favors and unmindful of the benevolent things which he would do for them in the future—had made their escape from him” the night before. He asked if Blanchard if he would send the girls back to him if he saw them. Blanchard said he would hesitate to use force, and so would not send them back. But he promised to send Nuckolls word if he saw them.⁴³

Nuckolls and his men then went to Tabor and scoured the town. From there, Nuckolls sent out “spies” in different directions,” all to no avail. The women did not seem to have reached Tabor. He and his men rode back to Civil Bend, convinced that Celia and Eliza were still there. He stationed men to watch different points by day. That night, the men lighted the prairie grass, “so that no object could move without being visible.”⁴⁴

Weary of watching with no result, on December 1st, Friel Nuckolls and another search party—estimated to be forty to seventy men strong and armed with revolvers and clubs—once again combed Civil Bend and its environs for Celia and Eliza. Witnesses later recalled that many were the worse for drink. Nuckolls’s hatred of abolitionists boiled over, and his “search party” became a veritable mob. He first set his sights on the free African American Garners. The family of seven had recently lost their widowed father, and the remaining children, ranging in age from twelve to twenty, were in the house. The gang pulled down the outhouse, invaded their home and tore it apart. The men were certain the Garners either knew what happened, or had been involved.

They dragged Joseph Garner, age twenty, and his younger brother Henry, age nineteen, into the woods for “questioning” that soon became

Nebraska City News
November 27, 1858



torture. In a nightmarish scene, the Garners were whipped until they bled. Both of the young men were choked, as Nuckolls and his men yelled for them to give up what they knew. As the two held out, Friel Nuckolls put a rope around Henry's neck, and "hailed him up once or twice to make him confess." Henry must have thought he was going to die, but the rope was loosed, and he tumbled to the ground, no doubt gasping for breath. A few men started a fire—even burning might be in store for the brothers unless they confessed. Fearing for their very lives, the Garners still denied knowing Celia and Eliza's exact whereabouts, but identified their fellow free Black, John Williamson, as bringing the women across. Versions of the story differ, but one of them may have even suggested places where Celia and Eliza might be concealed.⁴⁵

The mob tore through Civil Bend from house to house, ransacking from "garret to cellar," all without a warrant. They trampled haystacks and thrust pitchforks into them. Any effort to confront the lawbreakers was met with violence, as Civil Bender Reuben Williams found to his harm. When he confronted the men, Friel Nuckolls drew a pistol on him while others roughed him up. One of Nuckolls's brothers, probably Heath, brought his cane down on Williams so hard, it knocked him senseless. Williams was left with permanent deafness, and later received damages of \$8,000.⁴⁶

Sometime during these searches, "the pursuers were in the same house as the pursued."⁴⁷ We can only imagine the fear and dread Celia and Eliza felt from their hiding place when they heard the ruckus above and around them. Knowing their enslaver well, Celia and Eliza may have expected that Friel Nuckolls would come after them. Yet, they may not have fathomed the depths to which he would go to hunt them down.

On December 2nd, the illegal searches continued. The mob first returned to the Garner house, but they had been removed to Dr. Blanchard's for safety. Still frustrated and angry that for all their efforts, the women were still missing, they continued to rummage through houses, "abusing and insulting everyone who had the manhood to oppose in word or deed their lawless conduct." The citizens had had enough. That evening, local magistrate Judge J. C. Larimore issued an arrest warrant for fifteen or sixteen people for assaults perpetrated by the mob, including Friel Nuckolls. Because of the hour, the examination was postponed until the next day. Nuckolls somehow procured permission to go home, while leaving a couple of the men to remain



as prisoners. He eventually returned to court to give bond. The next summer, the Iowa courts tried him for assault, awarding heavy damages to Reuben Williams and Henry Garner.⁴⁸

Although Nuckolls had men stationed at strategic spots to intercept the women, a week later, Celia and Eliza were still free. The evening of December 3rd may have been the time when Celia and Eliza emerged from their hiding place. The newspaper reported that "a man came to the river and hallooed across that the fugitives under an escort of thirty armed men had been transported to Tabor, another abolition hole a few miles distant."⁴⁹ Whenever the transfer took place, Doc Blanchard took Celia and Eliza to Tabor, Iowa, and the two women hid at farmer Benjamin Ladd's farm for the day. That evening it was cloudy, misty, and dismal, and a covered wagon left the Ladd farm with Celia and Eliza inside. The driver "could neither see the road nor his horses," nor were there fences to keep them on track. Deacon Origen Cummings lifted a lantern to guide them through "Egyptian darkness." The small group crossed Silver Creek near the Nishnabotna River's mouth at White Cloud without disturbance.⁵⁰

Even though Friel Nuckolls's initial trespasses were unlawful, he was able to swear out a warrant for Celia and Eliza's arrest as "fugitives from labor." Iowans, whether lukewarm, proslavery, or abolition-minded, would be forced to comply. In 1850 Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which obligated free states to aid slaveholders in finding and arresting so called "fugitives from labor," and not only authorized civil penalties but criminal ones as well. The law was very controversial and remained so throughout the 1850s.⁵¹

Photo by author. Taken a mile west of the site of old Wyoming station November 23, 2019. In 1858, there were fewer trees. Channelized and controlled by dams, today's Missouri River is narrower and deeper. Civil Bend is now underwater, the town of Percival a remnant on higher ground.



Horace Anthony House-Camanche, Iowa, where Celia and Eliza met before crossing the Mississippi. Wikipedia Creative Commons, by "Farragutful"

While many Northerners resented the law, it was largely enforced.⁵² Thus, slaveholders like Nuckolls knew that if they could establish ownership and capture their enslaved people, local authorities would feel forced to return them, even in free states. Then enslavers could mete out whatever private punishment they deemed proper.

Yet the abolitionist network Celia and Eliza chose to trust held fast. After they crossed the Nishnabotna River, abolitionists Benedict Hill and John Hunter transported them to Lewis, Iowa.⁵³ The chase remained hot. Abolitionist Oliver Mills—an associate of John Brown—told the girls and their agents they were not safe with him, or with Rev. George Hitchcock who lived a mile west of Mills. As a precaution, they asked James M. Baxter of Cass township to take the women on to Quaker Divide.⁵⁴ Although abolitionist Elvira Gaston Platt later recalled no other "set" station from Winterset, Iowa, to Chicago, their likely route passed through Des Moines, ran east to Grinnell and Iowa City, through Springdale or Tipton, to their last documented stop in Clinton County, Iowa, near the Mississippi River.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, Friel Nuckolls and his brothers turned to sympathetic newspapers for damage control. In January of 1859, the *Burlington (IA) Gazette*, quoting the *Pacific City Herald*, reported that the escaped "negroes belonged to a family, formerly owned by Mr. N's parents in Missouri, and were scarcely regarded as slaves. One of the same family is now living with Capt. L. Nuckolls, in Pacific City, Iowa."⁵⁶ The *Gazette* opined, "we do

not believe Mr. Nuckolls ever thought of forcibly detaining these Negroes in Nebraska as slaves." The article concluded, "the negroes are free, Mr. Nuckolls is rid of them, and nobody cares, except a few agitators."⁵⁷ This gloss defied all logic, given Nuckolls's much-publicized pursuit and violence at Civil Bend.

Having passed through most of Iowa with pursuers in their wake, Clinton County, Iowa, posed heightened dangers to Celia and Eliza. Located on the Mississippi River, it was a "logical place for slave-catchers to lie in wait."⁵⁸ Here the women stayed with farmer Robert Lee Smith, south of Dewitt. Smith's son, William, later recalled that "the first black persons I ever saw were two girls, whose names were Celia and Eliza and who stayed at our house for weeks, waiting for the river to freeze over at Camanche so it would be safe to cross the ice."⁵⁹ Celia and Eliza cooked some dinners for their hosts and friends during their stay, hiding in case visitors were not sympathetic to the cause.⁶⁰

Neighboring abolitionist John McDougall also remembered Celia and Eliza. After spending considerable time at Smith's home, McDougall advised Smith to see if sympathizer Horace Anthony, who lived on the river at Camanche, could help Celia and Eliza cross the ice into Illinois once the river was frozen over. Anthony agreed, and Celia, Eliza and Smith went to Anthony's house one frigid evening at midnight. Horace Anthony and his friend Samuel S. Burdett would accompany them—armed and ready for action.

From there, McDougall's story evokes images of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which a freedom seeker also named Eliza crossed the Ohio River, jumping from ice floe to ice floe.⁶¹ Instead of ice floes, the ice on the Mississippi was—they hoped—solid. For Celia and Eliza, having crossed the icy Missouri in the relative safety of a skiff, walking across the ice posed new risks. Falling through the ice into frigid waters would be an ever-present danger. Would the ice hold?

Horace Anthony went "in advance with his cane to try the ice, followed close behind by Samuel S. Burdett "with one of the women on his arm, and R. L. Smith with the other." In the darkness there was little way to tell how safe they were. Celia and Eliza would have clung to their helpers' arms. The small party listened to the *tap, tap, tap*, of Anthony's cane on ice, straining to hear any difference in sound—any telltale crackling or crunch. How long their journey across the frozen expanse lasted is unknown, but probably seemed much longer than

it was. Once on solid ground, their relief would have been palpable, but there was little time to rest. The group traveled in darkness up to Albany, Illinois, to a Methodist minister's house. The minister's son conveyed the women to the next stop in a carriage.⁶² From there, Celia and Eliza made their way to Chicago. Their journey to freedom seemed secure.

Although not rising to the level of hostilities in "Bleeding Kansas," the violence surrounding Celia and Eliza's flight mirrored the border ruffian tactics that earned Kansas its nickname. Even in Nebraska and Iowa, simmering tensions over slavery and freedom could be unleashed in vigilante-style force. Newspapers across the nation reported on their flight and Nuckolls's reaction. So-called upstanding citizens engaged in torture, assault, and illegal searches. Only the arrest of Nuckolls and some of his compatriots damped the fuse of this borderland powder keg.

Popular Sovereignty: "A Cheat and Delusion"

The election of 1859 for the upcoming Nebraska Territory legislative session was a Democratic victory. The people of Otoe County elected Friel Nuckolls as one of their representatives, while his brother Houston was elected from Richardson County. Nuckolls wrote to J. Sterling Morton, "Democracy is triumphant in Nebraska," while the *Omaha Nebraskan* proclaimed "Abolitionism in Nebraska Wiped Out."⁶³

Despite the predictions of abolition's demise in Nebraska, in December 1859, Samuel G. Daily introduced HR No. 4, "An Act to Abolish and Prohibit Slavery" on a second try, the territorial council having tabled the first bill indefinitely the year before. This time, a three-person committee was tasked to submit reports—a committee comprised of George Miller of Nebraska City, Chair, William H. Taylor of Nebraska City, and George W. Doane, representing Burt, Washington, and Sarpy counties.

Representative William H. Taylor referred to Celia and Eliza in his response to the continued assertion that slavery did not exist in Nebraska, writing:

I know of my own knowledge the Hon. Stephen F. Nuckolls had three colored persons, whom he claimed as slaves up to a very late period. Two of these persons escaped from Mr. Nuckolls, in the winter of '58 and '59 and the other, a colored man of twenty-five years of age, was sold by him...in the spring of 1859 and carried to some of the southern slave-holding states,

as a slave. This man had been a resident of Nebraska for about three years...as evidence that slavery does exist and is considered to be a legal institution here I have only to cite the fact that the Hon S. F. Nuckolls before alluded to has instituted suit in the second judicial district court of this territory against certain parties residing in Iowa for the value of two colored persons—his slaves.⁶⁴

Friel Nuckolls's ally, Otoe County representative Dr. George L. Miller, admitted in his report that there were "a few so-called slaves" in Nebraska but so few it did not matter, adding ⁶⁵ "no sane person" would think that Nebraska was in any danger of becoming a slave territory or slave state. Even if slavery were to become law, the "controlling laws of nature peculiar to the latitude" would prohibit its permanent continuance. Mocking William Taylor's report of "six slaves and a half," Miller also asserted that by moving these slaves from Missouri and Louisiana to Nebraska Territory, the slaves had been changed from a "worse to better condition—surrounded—by increased comforts, having before them the almost certain prospect of ultimately gaining their freedom." Legislator and *Nebraska City News* editor Milton W. Reynolds of Otoe County agreed on the benignity of enslavement, when "masters emigrated from Missouri to Nebraska, they [slaves] voluntarily and cheerfully accompanied them."⁶⁶ Rather than slavery, Nebraska practiced voluntary servitude. George W. Doane's report joined Miller's to weigh in against the bill on the grounds that slavery did not exist in any practical form and that the Republican bill to prohibit slavery was a waste of time.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the *Nebraska City News*, incensed by antislavery efforts, declared once again that, "Slavery does not, nor can it, practically exist here," calling out the "Black Republican small beer politicians" who only wanted to frighten people and make trouble, by "abolishing a myth, slavery."⁶⁸

The house voted 21 to 17 to pass the bill (Nuckolls and his brother voting nay), after changing the title to use the verb "prohibit" while deleting the verb "abolish"—a sop to those who still asserted that slavery did not exist in the territory.⁶⁹ Nebraskans either rejoiced or lamented, depending on their view. Newspapers as far away as Alexandria, Virginia, chimed in. "The House of Representatives in the Legislature of Nebraska have passed 'an act to prohibit slavery in the Territory of Nebraska.'—the negative vote was not a vote in favor of slavery, but a vote against the passage of a



Heath Nuckolls, Friel's brother, is probably the one who attacked Reuben Williams with a cane, leaving the Civil Bend resident with permanent deafness. RG2325-10-1

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most unnecessary piece of buncombe. There are no slaves in Nebraska, and none are ever expected to be there.”⁷⁰

The bill's narrow passage was not the last word. Although the legislature approved the measure, Nebraska's territorial governor still had to sign it into law. Governor Samuel W. Black, a pro-Southern Democrat, had served as a territorial judge in Nebraska City before President Buchanan appointed him Territorial Governor.⁷¹ He vetoed the bill on January 9, 1860. Governor Black's veto after the bill's passage represented the failure of popular sovereignty—the will of the people had been thwarted.

The Chicago Rescue of Eliza Grayson

Having staved off the prohibition of slavery in Nebraska and settled his Iowa assault cases in June 1860, it seemed that Friel Nuckolls's legal troubles regarding slavery were over. In the fall, word reached him that Eliza was in Chicago. Once again, he acted to retrieve her. Perhaps learning his lesson after Civil Bend, this time he stopped in Springfield, Illinois, to procure a warrant under the Fugitive Slave Act for both Eliza and Celia before he began his in-person hunt.⁷²

Although likely that both women arrived in Chicago, only Eliza was found. How Nuckolls learned of her presence there has developed a folklore of its own. A Chicago newspaper mentioned that Eliza worked as a domestic in a Chicago brothel, and one of the ladies of the night disclosed her situation to a client, who then contacted Nuckolls.⁷³ J. Sterling Morton's newspaper later implied that Nuckolls hesitated to pursue her because she was “damaged goods.”⁷⁴ Nuckolls' actions spoke otherwise.

When Nuckolls arrived with warrant in hand, United States Marshal Hoyne of Chicago appointed a temporary deputy, Jake Newsome to help him.⁷⁵ On November 12, Nuckolls and Newsome may have gone to Eliza's residence and dragged her out, or they may have spied her in the street—all versions agree that when in the street, the men were trying to force Eliza, who had been going by the name “Lottie Grayson,”⁷⁶ into a carriage or wagon. “Stout and sharp,” the ginger-haired Eliza, was “screaming...at a desperate rate,” attracting a crowd.⁷⁷ An abolitionist named Chancellor L. Jenks rushed to her defense during the struggle and “he and Jack Newsome and the slave holder were soon rolling over each other in the gutter,” while a crowd gathered, which prompted her removal to the armory for safekeeping.⁷⁸

Nuckolls faced a mob composed mainly of free Black persons, which pressed in “a dark and angry sea,” yelling epithets.⁷⁹ He began to fear for his life. Accounts diverge on what happened next. It may be that J. Sterling Morton's father-in-law, Chicagoan Hiram Joy, “took him to a ‘place of refuge’ and supplied him with a beard and disguise so he could leave the city safely.”⁸⁰ But a local reporter asserted Nuckolls was, “saved from violence by placing a policeman's badge upon him” and taking him to the Briggs House under guard.⁸¹

Meanwhile, free Blacks were crowding the streets outside the armory where Eliza was held. Chancellor Jenks went to a sympathetic judge, Calvin DeWolf, to have Eliza arrested for disturbing the peace, so that their friend, Deputy Sheriff George Anderson, could take custody and remove her from the armory. When Deputy Anderson emerged from the armory with Eliza, the crowd moved in and whisked her away. The same night, a federal grand jury indicted Chancellor L. Jenks, Calvin DeWolf, and Deputy Anderson for violating the Fugitive Slave Act, believing her rescue was planned. Before he left town, Nuckolls spoke with a Chicago reporter, vowing to spend “\$20,000 ‘in following the thing up,’ if necessary.”⁸²

Eliza's resistance in Chicago prompted comment and disputation all over the country. Newspapers from Baltimore to Richmond, Chicago to New Orleans, and back in Nebraska and Iowa, carried items about the “great excitement” over Eliza.⁸³ Even President James Buchanan intervened. Thinking that Chancellor was a title, he telegraphed Chicago's United States Attorney that Chancellor Jenks should be removed from office.⁸⁴

The next month, the Nebraska Territorial Legislature once again passed a bill to prohibit slavery. Once again, the Governor vetoed it. The house, now 38 Republicans and 11 Democrats, overrode the veto on December 29th. “The ‘House of Representatives of Nebraska, on this first day of January 1861; send greeting ‘to all the world and the rest of mankind’ that Slavery shall not exist in this Territory.”⁸⁵

When Celia and Eliza left Nebraska City in November 1858, they could not know what the future would hold. Because of their brief celebrity as freedom seekers, some of their story can be pieced together. However, the rest of the story is incomplete. After the Civil War, the utility of the fugitive slave account was at an end. No longer would abolitionists approach women like Celia and Eliza to flesh out the details of their stories—stories designed to inspire and move

others to join in a great cause—the cause of freedom for all Americans.

After 1860, both women dropped from the record. However, a woman who is a candidate to be Eliza appeared in the 1861 Canada Census. Eliza “Grason,” a twenty-year-old American-born Black woman, was working as a washerwoman in Windsor, Ontario. Long a destination for freedom-seeking African Americans, Windsor lies only two miles across the river from Detroit, Michigan. With its strategic location, Windsor not only had a Black community, it was a station on the Underground Railroad. Later Canada census enumerations do not list “Eliza Grason,” at least under that name. She could have married, she could have died, or she could have changed to an “emancipation name.”⁸⁶

Celia and Eliza Grayson’s quest for freedom and Eliza’s rescue merited extraordinary attention in 1859-1860, and merits greater attention now. Popular sovereignty apologists dismissed slavery in Nebraska, asserting either that slavery did not exist there, or if it did, it was on such a small scale that it did not matter. Yet Eliza and Celia’s much-publicized flight and Stephen Nuckolls’ pursuit into Iowa and Illinois challenged these dismissals. While the nation debated, Celia and Eliza refused to wait. 📖

NOTES

¹ For Celia and Eliza’s ages, see Account Book, Nuckolls Family Papers, folder 3, series 11, History Nebraska Archive, Lincoln. The account book provides a list of enslaved people titled “From the best information we could get.” Although the list is incomplete, Celia and Eliza’s birth entries are quite detailed, and may have been copied from an earlier record. See also, *Biographical Sketch of Rev. John Todd, of Tabor Iowa*, 1906, also naming John Williamson, with many details on their escape; Wilbur H. Siebert Collection, Ohio State Historical Society (OSHS), digital images, www.ohiomemory.org, citing OSHS MSS 116 AV, box 45, F02 020. Ellen Gaston Hurlbutt letter, March 18, 1935, Ohio Memory, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/8694>; *The Nebraska City News*, Dec. 4, 1858, reported that a skiff (flat-bottomed row boat) had been borrowed to transport them across. See also the *Clarinda (IA) Advantage*, Nov. 27, 1858, describing the weather as cold, with an occasional snow shower. Another version appears in Robert W. Handy, *Someday: A Tale of Civil Bend by the River*, (Lincoln, NE, Author’s Choice Press, 2000), 41. In this version, John Williamson encouraged them to escape, but Jim Lane of Kansas provided the boat for crossing over at Old Wyoming. Handy describes the river as running full of ice. His account, however, is not well documented. See also, Marcus A. Lowe, *Laws, Joint Resolutions and Memorials passed at the Regular Session of the First General Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska*,

(Sherman and Strickland, Territorial Printers, Omaha City, N. T. 1855) 448. The territorial legislature granted a ferry license on Feb. 23, 1855, to Josiah Burget and associates to keep the Wyoming ferry, which crossed over to Lambert’s Landing by Civil Bend, Iowa.

² “Great Excitement—Escape of Negroes—\$200 reward!” *Nebraska City News*, Nov. 27, 1858. A month later, newspapers were still printing the story, such as the *Liberator* (Baltimore), dated Dec. 31, 1858, p. 211, “Excitement on the Iowa Border,” about slaves “held in Nebraska” escaping from their “pretended owner.” These paragraphs are the opening for an upcoming book published by the University of Nebraska Press.

³ “The Ball Opened Slavery,” *Washington (DC) National Era*, 28 Jun 1855.

⁴ Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, SC: Babcock and Co., 1856), 284.

⁵ See Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South*, New York (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); as well as John Inscoe, Dwight Billings and Mary Beth Pudpup, whose jointly edited *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, challenges assumptions that minority non-slaveholders were anti-slavery, as well as urging scholars to study Black life in Appalachia in its own right.

⁶ For his scouting trip, new residence, and settlement at Linden, see, “Letter of S. F. Nuckolls,” *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 1 (Lincoln, NE, State Journal Co. 1885), 34; see also, Account Book, Nuckolls Family Papers. Shack does not appear in the Account Book list. The 1850 Atchison County, Missouri, Slave Schedule, District 3, S. F. Nuckolls, digital image from Ancestry.com, shows females the ages of Celia (14) and Eliza (12), and a male age 15. Given Shack’s presence as a fixture in the household in Nebraska, this male is almost certainly Shack. Two enslaved people appear to have been added later to the S. F. Nuckolls household, albeit in the wrong columns: a male age 12, and a female age 18. There are other biographies too numerous to mention here, that give more details on Nuckolls’s career.

⁷ Ibid. See also *Kanesville (IA) Frontier Guardian*, June 27, 1849, about Nuckolls’s Cheap Cash Store. Kanesville later became Council Bluffs, Iowa. For quote on Ezra Nuckolls’s family trip to Missouri, see, Ezra Nuckolls to Ephraim and Mrs. Gentry, Nov. 18, 1855. This transcription has been uploaded to Ancestry.com. It is a copy of the letter given to “Jim Nuckolls from Shirley Gordon.” It is believed she obtained the letter from Judge Colin Campbell who is related to the Gentry family from Grayson County. The letter also appears in Charles R. Nuckolls, Jr., *The Roses: The Nuckolls Family, the Lyman Family, and One Hundred Fifty Immigrants Who Helped Shape America* (Bloomington: INL iUniverse, 2010), citing the History Nebraska archive. However, this letter is not in the Nuckolls Family Papers and remains in private hands. Although many historians furnished the year of 1853 for Ezra Nuckolls’s arrival, a young Grayson County man named William M. Norman accompanied the Nuckolls party west confirming that the group arrived in November 1855, see William M. Norman, *A Portion of my Life: Being a Short & Imperfect History Written While a Prisoner of War on Johnson’s Island, 1864*, Kindle Edition, by Pickle Partners Publishing, originally published in 1959 under the same title.

⁸ James B. Potts, "Frontier Solons: Nebraska's Territorial Lawmakers, 1854-1867" (1992). *Great Plains Quarterly*, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/648>. Potts does not specify the source of this quote.

⁹ Edson P. Rich, "Slavery in Nebraska," *Transactions and Reports, Nebraska State Historical Society* (1887): 95, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebhistrans/19>; and in the same collection, Vol. 1, (Lincoln, Neb., State Journal Co, 1885), E. H. Cowles, "Otoe County in Early Days," 37.

¹⁰ For more on the Nebraska Bill and how it developed, see *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854*, eds. John R. Wunder and Joann M. Ross (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2008); and Alice Elizabeth Malavasic, *The F Street Mess: How Southern Senators Rewrote the Kansas-Nebraska Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

¹¹ Speech of Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois, in the Senate, Jan. 30, 1854, on the Nebraska Territory (Washington, at the Sentinel Office, 1854), 13. He was likely referring to enslaved people kept at forts, territorial appointees, and fur trappers operating inside these large territorial boundaries.

¹² Nebraska Territorial Census, 1854, Second District, p. 4, RG 513, S 1, Microfilm Roll 1, History Nebraska Archive; S. F. Nuckolls had three slaves, his brother-in-law Wrice Schooler had four; brother Heath had two; Ibid, for the year 1855, which showed Nuckolls with five slaves; in 1856, he had four. In 1858-1859, Nebraska City conducted its own census, with S. F. Nuckolls having just three slaves. Since Celia and Eliza left in late 1858, they represented two of the three.

¹³ "The Ball Opened Slavery," *The National Era*, Washington DC, June 28, 1855; "Slavery in Kansas and Nebraska," *The Dollar Weekly* (Madison, IN), June 14, 1855, citing the *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis) for the numbers in Richardson County. For Nebraska City in 1858, see Otoe County Assessor, RG 210, Series 1, Vol. 1, Nebraska City census and assessment, 1858, History Nebraska archive.

¹⁴ "Letter of S. F. Nuckolls," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 1 (Lincoln, NE, State Journal Co. 1885), 34; James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 51, repeats Nuckolls's story, saying Shack "was reported to have become a colored carpetbagger, and to have gone to Mississippi where he was last heard of as taking part in the deliberations of a Reconstruction Convention," a report which the author's forthcoming book will refute. The surname Grayson was obviously derived from their county of birth. Eric Foner's book, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1996), does not have an entry for a man fitting Shack Grayson's description. Andreas, *History of Nebraska*, Otoe County, Part 7, "The Press," www.kancoll.org/books/andreas_ne/otoe/p7.html#press The author's forthcoming book will illuminate what actually happened to Shack Grayson.

¹⁵ Nuckolls Family Collection, Box 45, correspondence.

¹⁶ Atchison County Probate Court, Estate of Ezra Nuckolls, 1857, Probate Packet #1956, Rock Port, Missouri; "Slavery in Nebraska," *Burlington (IA) Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 8, 1859, for comments on the "slaves" belonging to one family.

¹⁷ "Abolition Outrage," *Burlington (IA) Daily State Gazette*, Dec. 18, 1858, for the light work and leisure Nuckolls's "slaves" performed. Many works detail the work performed by women in these kinds of situations, including, Margaret

Walsh, "Women's Place on the American Frontier," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Aug., 1995), pp. 241-55; and for an African American woman, see Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). See also, *The Daily Illinois State Register* of Springfield reported in November 1857, that S. F. Nuckolls of Nebraska was raising "gigantic" vegetables, including a radish weighing in at twelve pounds, and a squash that weighed 155 pounds. Regarding the Nuckolls residence, although Andreas states that he lived in the three-story bank building, the report "Great Fire at Nebraska City! Immense Destruction of Property: Loss over \$100,000," *Council Bluffs Non-Pariel*, May 10, 1860, explains that the bank building was destroyed, adding that Nuckolls's house was saved, "although contiguous to the fire." The *Nebraska City News*, May 19, 1860, also reported the destruction of the bank buildings, saying that the county clerk and county register's offices would be found "in Nuckolls' private residence on Main Street." See also, "Recollections of an Old Settler, by J. W. Pearman, *Nebraska City News*, Feb. 22, 1873, which states Nuckolls had the first well dug at Lot 12, Block 5, "where the transfer company is now located," and also stated that the Nebraska Transfer Company was housed in the "first brick house which was built for S. F. Nuckolls." Because Pearman helped to lay out streets and provided labor for much of the early building, his 1873 account would be more reliable than Andreas's.

¹⁸ *Lincoln (NE) State Journal*, Jan. 20, 1896, report of Alice Minnick, quoting John Brown associate George B. Gill that Nebraska City abolitionists assisted "several hundred" fugitive slaves, "beside educating those who were held as slaves in Nebraska territory." However, Gill also stated that Nuckolls held the Nebraska City ferry, for which there is no evidence. He may have confused Friel Nuckolls with his brother Houston who was granted a ferry license at Yankton and St. Stephen, Nebraska, in Richardson County (*Council Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska, Fifth Session*, Nov. 1858, 166). The most likely way for Celia and Eliza to learn of the UGRR seems to be through Shack, who was out and about and more available for such an approach.

¹⁹ *Bedford (NY) White River Standard*, Aug. 9, 1855.

²⁰ "Nebraska City Slave Sale," *The Fairfield (IA) Ledger*, Aug. 16, 1855. Stories about the Nebraska slave sale are too numerous to list, but include, the *Tioga County (PA) Wellsboro Agitator*; the *Ebensburg (PA) Democrat and Sentinel*, Aug. 15, 1855; *Gettysburg (PA) Adams Sentinel*, Aug. 13, 1855 (which gave the exact date of the original piece in *Nebraska City News* of July 14, 1855). The *Nebraska City News* issues for the time period are no longer extant.

²¹ The unnamed writer signed with his address and the date he wrote his response: No. 293 Broadway, July 24. The New York City directories reveal that the writer at that address was a lawyer named John S. Patterson, see: New York City Directory 1857, p. 646, John S. Patterson, lawyer, 293 Broadway, h. 40, W. 85th in *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995*, image database, Ancestry.com; "Slavery in Nebraska," *New York Daily Times*, July 27, 1855 (quote). Other newspapers that picked up the story include the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, *Cleveland Daily Herald*, *Bedford (NY) White River Standard*, and the *Adams Sentinel* (Gettysburg, PA). See also, "Nebraska City Slave Sale," *The Fairfield (IA) Ledger*, Aug. 16, 1855.

²² “Nebraska City Slave Sale,” *The Fairfield (IA) Ledger*, Aug. 16, 1855.

²³ “Slavery in Nebraska,” *Burlington (IA) Daily Hawk-Eye and Telegraph*, Aug. 22, 1855.

²⁴ “Slavery in Nebraska,” *Delphi (IN) Weekly Times*, Sept. 12, 1855, quoting the *Chicago Free Press*.

²⁵ Atchison County Probate Court, Estate of Ezra Nuckolls, 1857, Probate Packet #1956, Rock Port, Missouri.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Harvey G. “Bowen” household, [no dwelling or family number – the enumerator may have added the family later] Fremont County, Iowa, Sidney, p. 919, in U.S. Census Office, *Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860), microfilm, Ancestry.com. By 1860, Friel’s young sisters, Sena and Elizabeth, called “Betty” were living in Sidney, Iowa, with their sister Frances and her husband Harvey Bourne.

²⁸ Grayson County attracted national attention for extralegal violence; see the *Wytheville (VA) Republican*, as cited in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, (Boston, 1853), 189-90; also, “Lynch Law,” *American Telegraph* (Washington, DC), Sept., 29, 1851, copied from *Richmond Times*; “News of the Day,” *Alexandria (VA) Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1851, and many other newspapers as Grayson County events became national news. For the Myers story, “Negro Hunting in Nebraska—A White Man Killed,” *Burlington (IA) Weekly Hawk-Eye*, Sept. 23, 1857; and *Dubuque (IA) Daily Republican*, Sept. 23, 1857; *Weekly Minnesotan*, Sept. 26, 1857, quoting the *St. Joseph (MO) Gazette* of Sept. 10; Siebert Collection, OSHS, History of Brownville, Nebraska; “Coroner’s Inquest” *Nebraska Advertiser*, Sept. 17, 1857; and Andreas, *History of Nebraska*, Part V, “Pioneer Incidents,” about the fate of the man who actually shot Myers; a thorough account appears in Marion Marsh Brown, “The Brownville Story: Portrait of a Phoenix, 1854-1974,” *Nebraska History* 55 (1974): 1-141, 22-25. An item on the fugitive slaves from the Myers incident later captured in Iowa (emphasizing the group had thirty guns) appeared in the *Daily Missouri Republican*, Dec. 3, 1857.

²⁹ Richard Thomas Ackley, “Across the Plains in 1858,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, IX (1941):191-92, on getting stuck in mud on crossing with hours delay. Todd, *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa*, p. 99, on difficulties crossing in almost ever-present mud.

³⁰ See David Dale, *The Nebraska and Midwest Genealogical Record*, Vol. XVI, 28-33; Helen Roberta Williams, “Old Wyoming,” *Nebraska History Magazine* 27, no. 2, (April-June, 1936); “Mormon Historian Visits Old Wyoming Landing Site,” *The Nebraska Daily News-Press*, unpaginated, July 20, 1934, Wyoming Vertical File, misc. holdings, ID# 57929, Genealogy Section, Morton James Public Library, Nebraska City, Nebraska. Mary Maltas, “Remembering the Past,” *Dewitt (IA) Observer*, Sept. 24, 1979, that “stations” on the UGRR were generally 7-10 miles apart—a night’s journey.

³¹ See David Dale, *The Nebraska and Midwest Genealogical Record*, Vol. XVI, 28-33; Helen Roberta Williams, “Old Wyoming,” *Nebraska History Magazine* 27, no. 2, (April-June, 1936); “Mormon Historian Visits Old Wyoming Landing Site,” *The Nebraska Daily News-Press*, unpaginated, July 20, 1934, Wyoming Vertical File, misc. holdings, ID# 57929, Genealogy Section, Morton James Public Library, Nebraska City, Nebraska. The river was not frozen over until early December according to the Civil Bender, “Correspondence,” *The Fremont*

(IA) Herald, Dec. 11, 1858 (account written Dec. 7), which described S. F. Nuckolls and his men laying boards across the frozen river to cross.

³² The skiff appears in, “The Excitement Continues: The Fugitives Heard From—Swamped in an Abolition Hole,” *Nebraska City News*, Dec. 4, 1858; *The Brownville Nebraska Advertiser* dated Nov. 25, 1858 (the night of Celia and Eliza’s escape) reported that the river was closed at Brownville due to floating ice “becoming gorged below here some distance,” although the river itself was not frozen over. *The Council Bluffs Non-Pareil* of Dec. 4, 1858, reported that the river had been closed for two weeks at Council Bluffs, while it was clear at St. Joseph, Missouri, on Nov. 30. Although running, the ice floes could not have been large, as it would have made crossing in a skiff impossible (see William G. Hartley, “Nauvoo Exodus and Crossing the Ice Myths,” *Mormon Journal of History* 43, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 30-58).

³³ Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Unruly River: Two Centuries of Change Along the Missouri* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999); and James Patrick Morgans, *John Todd and the Underground Railroad: Biography of an Iowa Abolitionist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006). See newspapers accounts like, “Man Drowned,” *Wyoming (NE) Post*, May 29, 1858, for danger even in good conditions.

³⁴ “Letter of S. F. Nuckolls,” *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln, NE, State Journal Co. 1885), 32-7, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebhistrans/55> What was Civil Bend is now underwater, but the old Blanchard cemetery occupies the high ground near present-day Percival, Iowa. For more on Oberlin College and its central role in the abolitionist movement, see Nat Brant, *The Town that Started the Civil War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990).

³⁵ Schneiders, *Unruly River*; and Morgans, *John Todd*. The dream for a college reappeared in Civil Bend’s sister town of Tabor.

³⁶ Wilbur Henry Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom: A Comprehensive History* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1898), 98 (quote colony of Oberlin College); Morgans, *John Todd*, 53-54; on Blanchard, 97-100.

³⁷ Handy, *Someday: A Tale of Civil Bend by the River*, 44. The account of Orman Paddock, great-grandson of Ira Blanchard, appeared in the *Nebraska City News*, Sept. 12, 1960, in a letter to the curator of John Brown’s Cave. The Blanchard house is no longer standing, but the Blanchard Cemetery near Percival, Iowa, is on the Iowa Freedom Trail. See also, *Nebraska City News-Press*, Oct. 4, 2004, “Cemetery, Farm Linked to Underground Railroad,” interviewing Max Bebout, whose family bought the Blanchard property and remembered going to the basement “where they kept the slaves,” regretting that he razed the abandoned home.

³⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Or Life Among the Lowly*, Tom sacrifices himself to allow fellow slaves Emmeline and Cassy escape.

³⁹ Some accounts related that Shack and Shade also self-emancipated; for instance, “Old Nebraska Slave Prospers,” *Omaha Bee*, Feb. 16, 1907, “Slave Auctions Held in City in Early Days,” *Nebraska City News Press*, Dec. 23, 1954, “Kick Column,” *Nebraska City News Press*, Jan. 22, 1953, “Story of John Brown’s Cave Found in Old Paper,” *Nebraska City News Press*, June 1, 1937; but there is no evidence to this effect. Shack was sold south as reported in 1859 by Nebraska Citian William H. Taylor. His fate will be explored further in the upcoming book.

⁴⁰ “Great Excitement: Escape of Negroes: \$200 Reward!” *Nebraska City News*, Nov. 27, 1858.

⁴¹ Brown, John, William Ellery Channing, Lydia Maria Child, Joshua Coffin, William Lloyd Garrison, John Hossack, Daniel O’Connell, Wendell Phillips, and Edward Lillie Pierce, *Anti-Slavery Tracts*, 15, series 2 (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1861), “Nebraska Territory,” 110. Other newspapers outside of Nebraska and Iowa that carried their story include: *Daily Pittsburgh (PA) Gazette*, Dec. 30, 1858; *Greenfield (MA) Gazette*, Jan. 10, 1859; *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, Jan. 15, 1859; *American Union (VA)*, Jan. 21, 1859; *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, Dec. 30, 1858; *National Era* (Washington, DC), Jan. 13, 1859; and the *Nashville (TN) Union and American*, Dec. 29, 1858. Even the *Nottingham Journal* in England, Jan. 14, 1859, carried a short item on the “fugitive slave excitement at Nebraska.”

⁴² Civil Bender and Abolitionist, Elvira Gaston Platt.

⁴³ Elvira Gaston Platt, “Nebraska Negro Catchers in Iowa,” *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 21, 1859, written Jan. 1, 1859. How accurate Platt was to the conversation between Friel Nuckolls and Ira Blanchard is unknown but she and her husband were close friends with Dr. Blanchard and undoubtedly heard the details from him.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Elvira Gaston Platt, *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 21, 1858, for most of the account; another version appears written by a “Civil Bender” in the *Fremont Herald*, Dec. 11, 1858, the timeline is drawn from this source; for details of Henry Garner’s mock lynching, see *St. Louis Daily Missouri Democrat*, Oct. 16, 1860, Houston Nuckolls quote on his brother Friel hauling Henry once or twice up the bough of a tree. In Houston Nuckolls’s account, Henry confessed that Blanchard rowed them across the river. I chose to use Elvira Gaston Platt’s version in which John Williamson brought Celia and Eliza across in light of Nuckolls’s lawsuit against Blanchard to recover damages, which may have prejudiced the accusation toward someone with more money.

⁴⁶ Elvira Gaston Platt, *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 21, 1858. L. Lingenfelter, *History of Fremont County, Iowa: Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., a Biographical Directory of Many of Its Leading Citizens... Etc.* (Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, 1975), 519, alleges that a “Jack” Nuckolls delivered the blow, the authors writing that, “we are indebted to Judge Sears for the particulars last given.” John Todd also identified Williams’s assailant as Mr. Nuckolls in *The Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa*. What all accounts agree upon was that Williams would never recover fully from the injury, suffering from deafness for the rest of his life. Some accounts (see Hardy, as well as *Nebraska City News Press*, July 17, 1985) mistakenly list Reuben Williams as a free Black man, but he was a White resident of Civil Bend.

⁴⁷ Letter of Sturgis Williams (son of Reuben Williams), Oct. 27, 1894, Wilbur H. Siebert Collection, OSHS, “Could you afford the time and space I would tell you how they got away and how Mr. N. followed across the State and how the pursuers were in the same house with the pursued, etc.”

⁴⁸ Ibid. Elvira Gaston Platt’s version, “Nebraska Negro Catchers in Iowa,” *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 21, 1859, differed with the “Civil Bender” account on whether a legal warrant to search was issued, asserting that after a few days, “they also got out a bogus search warrant, and backed up by its apparently legal face, entered and searched houses they had not otherwise chosen to go to.” Page County

District Court Dockets, reference May Term, 1860, R. S. Williams vs. S. F. Nuckolls et al, E. H. Sears Judge. The author thanks Trish Okamoto at the Page County Historical Museum for providing a copy of this docket—no case files are extant; *Muscatine (IA) Weekly Journal*, June 15, 1860, quoting the *Page County Herald*. Addison Erwin Sheldon, *History and Stories of Nebraska*, Part I, 102, cited a payment of \$10,000, which may be an error, or might represent the total of various cases; *Page County (IA) Herald*, June 22, 1860, “Compromised.” The value of the \$8,000 fine would be \$243,000, per Measuring Worth: “Court in Fremont County.” See also, *Page County (IA) Herald*, Sept. 23, 1859; “Served Him Right,” *Janesville (WI) Gazette*, July 9, 1860.

⁴⁹ “The Excitement Continues—The Fugitives Heard From—Swamped in an Abolition Hole,” *Nebraska City News*, Dec. 4, 1858.

⁵⁰ Ellen Gaston Hurlbutt letter, March 18, 1935, Ohio Memory, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/8694>; and Rev. John Todd, *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa*, 140. Abolitionist Origen Cummings joined his family when they removed to Oberlin, Ohio in the 1830s, later joining the Iowa effort to establish Tabor, Iowa, as another abolitionist center like Oberlin. His sister married fellow Taborite and Civil Bender, George Gaston. (Ibid., and George Mooar, *Cummings Memorial: A Genealogical History of the Descendants of Isaac Cummings*, 1903), 140, 280. See also, Mary Maltas, “Remembering the Past” *Dewitt (IA) Observer*, Sept. 24, 1979, UGRR workers preferred cloudy nights.

⁵¹ Books and articles about the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and Fugitive Slaves are quite numerous; among them are, R. J. M. Blackett, *Making Freedom: The Underground Railroad and the Politics of Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Steven Lubet, *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial*, (Harvard University Press, 2010); H. Robert Baker, “The Fugitive Slave Clause and the Antebellum Constitution,” *Law and History Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (November 2012), pp. 1133-1174.

⁵² Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860*, (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 1970) is still the most comprehensive examination of the numbers. Historian R.J.M. Blackett challenges Campbell’s numbers as “speculative,” due to incomplete data as well as a failure “to separate kidnappings from fugitive slave renditions,” while admitting the difficulties of quantification in *The Captive’s Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 179.

⁵³ *The Compendium of History and Biography of Cass County, Iowa* (Chicago: Henry Taylor and Company, 1906), 110, named them as Benedict Hill and John Hunter.

⁵⁴ James Connor, “The Antislavery Movement in Iowa,” *The Annals of Iowa*, 40 (1970), 450-479; *The Compendium of History and Biography of Cass County, Iowa*, 110.

⁵⁵ Letter of Mrs. E. G. Platt, www.ohiomemory.org, citing MSS 116AV, box 45, The Wilbur H. Siebert Collection, Ohio State Historical Society. For their last Iowa stop, see the *Dewitt (IA) Observer*, Jan. 24, 1883, interview with John McDougall, copy from Iowa Freedom Trail collection, Iowa State Historical Society, Des Moines. See also, Mary Maltas, “Remembering the Past,” *Dewitt (IA) Observer*, Sept. 24, 1979, on route from Iowa City to Tipton to Clinton. When Quakers were involved, Springdale may be used instead of Tipton on the way to Clinton.

⁵⁶ *Burlington Iowa Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 8, 1859, "Slavery in Nebraska." The enslaved person with L. Nuckolls in Iowa must have been Shade, given his presence in the 1860 census there.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Connor, "The Antislavery Movement in Iowa." *The Annals of Iowa* 40 (1970), 450-479.

⁵⁹ "Underground Railroad Program Set," *Clinton (IA) Herald*, posted Sept. 18, 2012. The actual letter from George Weston was addressed to Mr. C. B. Campbell.

⁶⁰ *Dewitt Iowa Observer*, Jan. 24, 1883, interview with John McDougall, copy from Iowa Freedom Trail collection, ISHS, Des Moines.

⁶¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896), reprint, first published in 1851; digital images online at www.archive.org. The Horace Anthony House is included in the Iowa Underground Railroad Freedom Trail.

⁶² *Dewitt (IA) Observer*, Jan. 24, 1883, interview with John McDougall, copy from Iowa Freedom Trail collection, ISHS, Des Moines.

⁶³ Stephen F. Nuckolls to J. Sterling Morton, Oct. 22, 1859, Correspondence, J. Sterling Morton Collection, History Nebraska Archives; Edson Rich, "Slavery in Nebraska," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 2:101, citing *Omaha Nebraskan*, Oct. 15, 1859. The Territorial Council tabled the bill indefinitely the year before, claiming that slavery did not exist in the territory and thus the bill was a waste of time.

⁶⁴ *House Journal*, Sixth Session (December 1859), 44. Taylor added that Mr. A. Majors kept slaves in Nebraska City, as well as Judge C. F. [Charles F.] Holly. Other slaveholders in public office were George H. Nixon, Register at the federal land office at Brownville, and Edward A. DesLondes, Register of the land office at Nebraska City. Also not mentioned was Robert M. Kirkham, who still had two enslaved people listed in the 1860 census in History Nebraska Archives microfilm RG 513, Otoe County, Nebraska, Nebraska City, loose paper before the regular census schedule, US Census Office, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860).

⁶⁵ George L. Miller later joined his friend J. Sterling Morton in writing the *Illustrated History of Nebraska*. Miller is quoted in the *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, saying that S. F. Nuckolls was "one of the strongest and ablest men of business the South Platte country has ever known," Morton, Watkins, Miller, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, 217.

⁶⁶ Morton & Watkins, *History of Nebraska*, 455.

⁶⁷ *House Journal*, Sixth Session (December 1859), 46-47.

⁶⁸ *Nebraska City News*, Dec. 17, 1859.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 100-101. Both Nuckolls men voted "nay."

⁷⁰ "News of the Day," *Alexandria (VA) Gazette*, Dec. 30, 1859.

⁷¹ "Gov. Samuel W. Black" (1885). *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 68. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebhisttrans/68> After the election of Abraham Lincoln, the make-up of the legislature changed, and Taylor once again introduced the bill to prohibit slavery. It passed, and once again, Governor Black vetoed it. The legislature overrode the veto in January 1861. Less than three months later, the Civil War began.

⁷² Adams-Snyder Papers, United States Commissioner's Docket-S.A. Corneau, February 1860-May 1880, series 1, box, 4, folder 27, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL. See also, the *New Orleans Crescent*, Nov. 19, 1860, citing the *Chicago Journal*; and Myra Bradwell, ed., *Chicago Legal News: A Journal of Legal Intelligence*, Vol. 27 (Chicago Legal News Co., 1895), 420.

⁷³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1860, "Eliza took service at housework in an infamous establishment on South Clark Street."

⁷⁴ *The Conservative*, Vol. 3:10, on Nuckolls considering Eliza "damaged, so that perhaps he was not over keen to have his own way in the matter, save for the principle of the thing." See also the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, Nov. 19, 1860, citing the *Chicago Journal* stating Eliza was a servant "with one Mary Beebe, who keeps a house of ill fame at No. 315 South Clark Street." According to the *Nebraska City People's Press*, November 21, 1860, citing the *St. Joseph (MO) Gazette*, a friend and Atchison County, Missouri merchant, J. N. White may have accompanied Nuckolls and Newsome.

⁷⁵ "The Union Again Threatened," *Chicago Daily Tribune* Nov. 13, 1860.

⁷⁶ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, Nov. 19, 1860, quoting the *Chicago Journal*, is the source for Eliza's alias Lottie Grayson. They mention that a girl named Mattie was also in the house, and that a revolver was drawn.

⁷⁷ *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* (OH), Dec. 1, 1860; for "ginger-haired," see *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 13, 1860

⁷⁸ Myra Bradwell, ed., *Chicago Legal News: A Journal of Legal Intelligence*, 420.

⁷⁹ "Several Statements of the Affair," *Nebraska City People's Press*, Nov. 21, 1860, quoting the *Chicago Tribune*.

⁸⁰ *The Conservative*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (Sept. 13, 1900), p. 10, regarding the incident with Hiram Joy; James D. Bish, "The Black Experience in Selected Nebraska Counties, 1854-1920" (1989) Student Work. 459. <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/459> erroneously reported that Nuckolls did not pursue her.

⁸¹ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, Nov. 19, 1860, citing the *Chicago Journal*.

⁸² *Nebraska City People's Press*, November 21, 1860, quoting the *Chicago Democrat* dated November 14, 1860, copied from Iowa Freedom Trail Collection, ISHS, Des Moines.

⁸³ For instance, *Baltimore Daily Exchange* Nov. 14, 1860; *Burlington (IA) Daily Gazette*, Nov. 16, 1860; *Spirit of the Age* (Raleigh, NC), Nov. 21, 1860; *Minnesota Staats Zeitung* (Minneapolis), Nov. 24, 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Press*, Nov. 15, 1860; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, Nov. 19, 1860.

⁸⁴ Robert Dickinson Sheppard and Harvey B. Hurd, *History of Northwestern University and Evanston* (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1906); Biography of Chancellor Livingston Jenks, 488.

⁸⁵ "Correspondence from the Capital," *Nebraska Advertiser*, Jan. 10, 1861.

⁸⁶ 1861 Census of Canada, Canada West, Essex County, Enumeration District 2, Town of Windsor, p. 29 (stamped), Line 23, Eliza "Grason," digital image, www.familysearch.org—this Eliza's age is close to that of Eliza Grayson, who may not have known exactly when she was born.