



## FAMILY GAME NIGHT

by Jess Lillie

There was no age limit to Family Game Night at the Hadley Social Club on March 15<sup>th</sup> in the Bricker Price Building. Young children, seasoned adults, friends, and families enjoyed an array of games from Uno to Checkers provided by the building's Executive Director, Ken Sidey. Friendly competition, snacks, door prizes, and jovial laughter were in abundance throughout the evening. A successful night of genuine fun with loved ones ensured everyone walked away a winner.



The Woolcott family battled it out playing a card game called Countdown.



Christina Hillgren and her son Logan jumped into a game of Checkers.



Amanda Marsh dealing out another hand of Uno to her son Tyler.



L-R: Marquis Lillie, Jeff Lillie, Jim Williamson, and Janet Williamson play a hand of "One Card" (Uno).



L-R: Cannon, Eliza, and Hunter Dobbins play Headbanz.



Sisters Coral, Maggie, and Audrey Dobbins playing Sleeping Queens.

photos by Jess Lillie

## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: THE VITAL ROLE OF PIONEERS IN THE EARLHAM AREA Part II

by Jess Lillie

So much can be learned by reading about the past and a common theme is that Americans were passionate about their beliefs whether they were against slavery or for it. While not of the same nature, today's buzz topics have Americans still passionate about their beliefs and terms of our time such as "snowflakes" are born. In the civil war era, nicknames were also a way to categorize groups and "butternut" would have been an insulting name used for pioneers and soldiers against slavery. The slang term was a reference to their yellow-brown homespun clothing dyed from nuts.

The underground railroad was run by a secretive society of people that didn't leave behind records. Proof of their participation could have led to imprisonment. Much of what we know today were spoken and printed recollections of family members, neighbors, and friends pieced together. George Phillips and Thomas Cox, former Earlham area residents, shared their knowledge of the underground railroad in an Earlham Echo printed in 1935:

*"There was an underground slave route, so called, through where I used to live. John Early<sup>(1)</sup> our neighbor just south of us was one of the so called abolitionists. The line house across the road from the City Wells on the Bluffs road west of Winterset was a stopping place<sup>(2)</sup>. I think the next stone house west Thos Roy's was another<sup>(3)</sup>. John E. Darby<sup>(4)</sup> was another of the abolitionists. Very little was said about these places, naturally. I have heard my father and uncle Robt. Stenand mentions some occurrence but very guardedly. All these have long gone, in fact very few now living know any thing about it. I am sorry I cannot give you any more information.."*

*"Some recollections of Thomas Cox, son of Wesley and Margaret Wilson Cox<sup>(5)</sup> and grandson of Thomas Wilson, of their home where the stone house now stands in the north edge of Earlham. It possibly was another Underground station in Madison County. When a small boy he remembers getting up one morning and find three negroes who remained all day in the house. On getting up the next morning they were gone."*

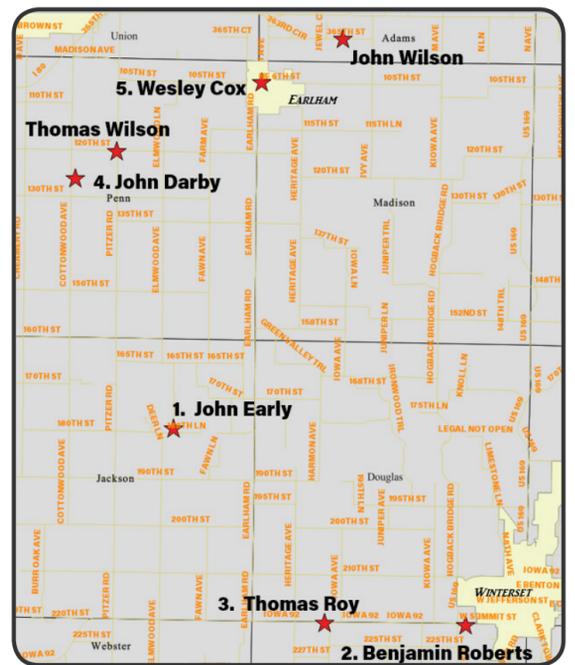
1. John Early came to Iowa from Ohio in 1855 and purchased 160 acres of land in Madison County (Jackson Township). He with his wife Elizabeth McMurn Early established a farm on the land and built a stone home between the years of 1863-1864. John also built a one room school house in Jackson township. The couple had two sons Thomas and James Early.

The Early home was a station on the Underground Railroad in Madison County. His role was written about in the book *"History of Madison County, Iowa and Its People"*.

*"John Early, of Jackson Township, was in charge of a very busy "underground station" and it is said, had as many as five runaway slaves in his place at one time. Advocates of the "peculiar institution" of the South were becoming exasperated at the repeated loss of their human chattels through connivance of abolitionists in the North, and placed warrants in the hands of deputy United States marshals for the recovery of their property. Early soon received a "telegram" presumably from "underground wires," that a United States officer was in his neighborhood, hunting slaves out of bounds, which led him to clean up an antiquated pistol and announce himself as being ready for all comers.*

*On another occasion Early became the host of Sheriff Sam Hamilton, a pro slavery man, and another democrat whose name has gotten away. The men were billed to speak on the political situation, at the Early schoolhouse, and were at the home of the slaves' friend by his invitation. When supper was about to be announced, three chairs were placed at one side the table and the democratic guests were so placed in them that the middle seat was left vacant Then Early told his wife to bring in her other visitor, and upon compliance with his request, a ponderous black "mammy" was escorted to the dining room and placed between the sheriff and his democratic friend. The trio made a remarkable setting to the scene and the present day reader can hardly realize the ludicrousness of the situation. But Hamilton and his companion were equal to the occasion and joined heartily with Early in his manifest and successful effort to please all. After the intentionally prolonged meal was finished, without any demonstrations of chagrin or hostility, the two pro slavery politicians thanked their host for his hospitality and took their departure for the democratic meeting waiting for them at the schoolhouse."*

The legacy of the Early family not only lives on in their stone home still standing today but also in the name of the Early Chapel Church. The Early's son, Thomas, donated the land to the North River Congregation for a church to be constructed. The congregation changed their name to Early Chapel in his honor.



Locations of homes used in the Underground Railroad in Madison County.

2. "The line house across the road from the City Wells on the Bluffs road west of Winterset" was the stone home of Benjamin Franklin Roberts. The Bluffs Road (Highway 92) was a major route through Iowa that went all the way to Council Bluffs. Settlers heading to Kansas and Nebraska were not the only ones who came through this area on their way to greener pastures, slaves making their way to freedom in Canada too passed over the Bluffs Road.

The Roberts home was located just east of the intersection of what is today Highway 92 & 169. As recounted by Cal Ogburn, Benjamin F. Roberts and his wife "lived in a stone house south of the road; the house had a basement kitchen facing south. A room about 10 feet square was dug out of the north of the kitchen and connected by a door with the kitchen. This was fitted up for keeping the fugitives in during cold weather, when danger lurked around. The door was so neatly fitted that I could not find it when Roberts told me there was one. He opened the door, but I cannot tell just how. The room was ventilated by a sliding door. In warm weather they staid at the barn, south of the house in the edge of the brush."

3. Thomas Roy, a soldier in the Civil War, owned a farmstead on the Bluffs Road. He was a highly regarded resident of Madison County and known to many as "Uncle Tom" during his lifetime. His name is listed as a station agent/conductor in Madison County based on research done as part of the Iowa Freedom Trail Project by the State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa.

4. John E. Darby came to Winterset in 1855 and eventually settled on a farm in Penn township. He was a Methodist Circuit Rider and along with Addison Armstrong was the first minister of the Penn Center Church. He was one of the first teachers at the school and in its day "Penn township was banner education township of Central Iowa". Their yearly school picnics held until 1941 went on to draw crowds in the thousands and hosted headline speakers such as Henry Wallace who was at the time the editor of Wallace Farmer magazine and later went on to be the Vice President of the United States.

Darby's roles as a teacher and minister were also accompanied by politician. He not only was a State Representative in the Iowa Legislature for Madison County, he attended the first meeting to organize the Republican Party in the county. A moral compass and an advocate against slavery, Darby's home in Penn Township was a stop for runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad in Madison County.

5. Wesley Cox and family lived in a stone home that he built between 1863 and 1864 and was located where the football field is today. The stone home was a landmark that "in former years when the old White Pole Road passed directly along its southern front, magazine writers traveling along the highway frequently paused to gather a story of the unassuming yet important looking house. For many years it was the home of Jennings Osborn, and since his death has been owned by Ornam Osborn, a son. Under Orman's ownership it was remodeled. In the opinion of many, these recent modern touches severely diminished much of the dwelling's old charm." Aerial photos reveal that between 1950 and 1960 the home was torn down and is now just a part of the past.

Wesley Cox's wife was a daughter to Thomas Wilson, a family that not only played a big part in settling the Earlham area, but too also took part in the Underground Railroad. The Thomas Wilson home is probably most widely known and written about for its design and role in the Underground Railroad. It will be featured in the final installment of the Underground Railroad Series.



Congrats to Eva Fisk on being selected as the alto sax alternate for the Iowa 1A/2A all state jazz band!

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