

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

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“What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”

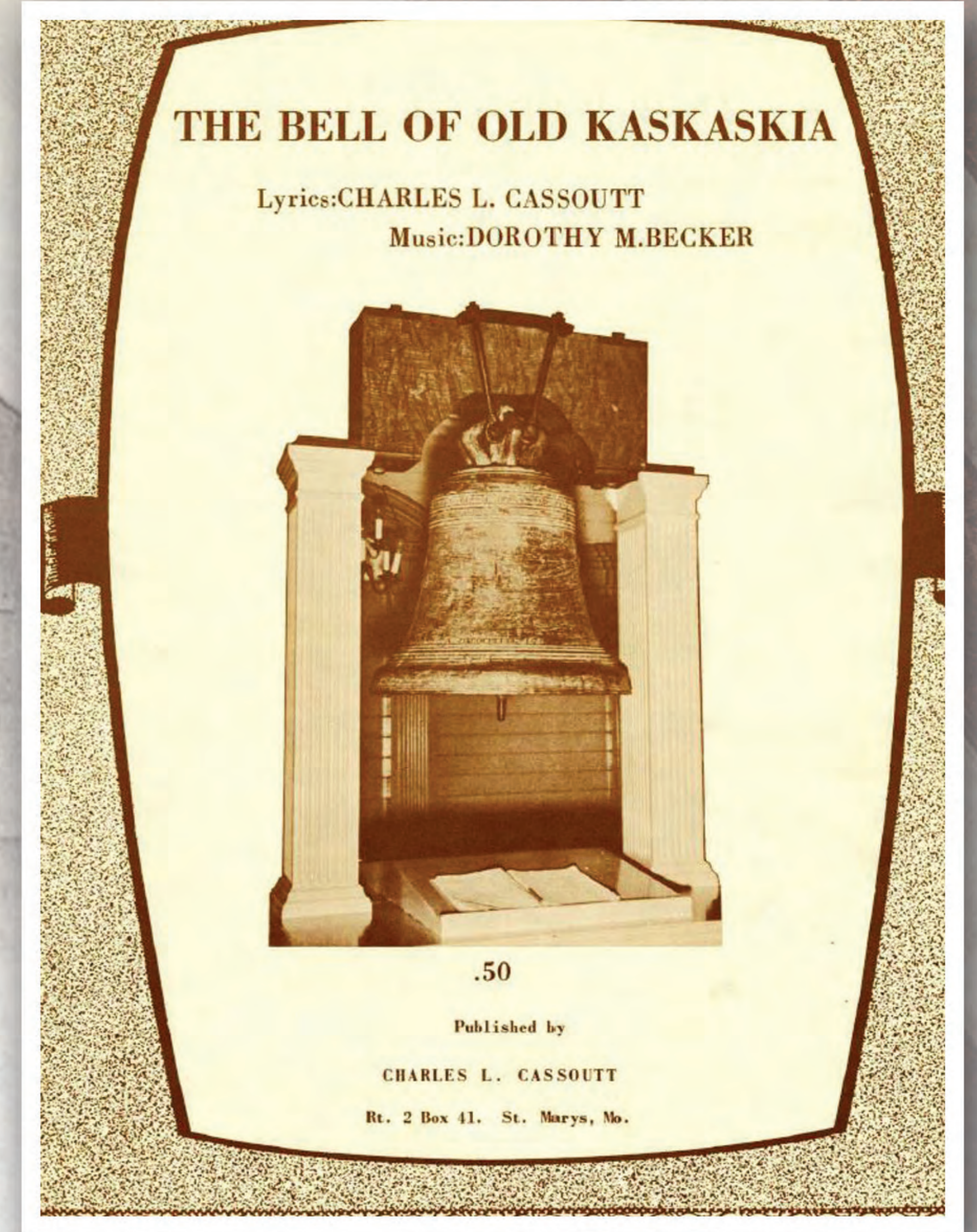
Frederick Douglass, 1852

First state capitol building in Kaskaskia

Every Fourth of July since 1778, Kaskaskia residents have rung the “Liberty Bell of the West” in celebration of America’s Declaration of Independence. The bell rang to commemorate liberty in a territory, and later a state, that enslaved African Americans. It rang over an Illinois plagued by racism, segregation and violence. While it rang, though, African American residents of Illinois fought for their freedom, never giving up on their quest for equality.



Music written about “The Bell of Old Kaskaskia”



Their journey was a long one. The struggle to end slavery in Illinois, from its introduction by the French in 1719 to its official abolition with the 13th Amendment in 1865, took nearly 150 years. And the struggle wasn’t over even then. Through the tumultuous years after the Civil War, African American residents of Illinois continued to face discrimination, racial violence and segregation.



Slaves chained together

PULLMAN PORTERS and MAIDS

JOIN WITH THE Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters IN ITS FINAL DASH FOR VICTORY

The Brotherhood has gone to the Board. On October 15th, 1926, application was made to the Mediation Board as provided in the Railway Labor Act in the matter of adjusting wages and working conditions for you. The Board of Mediation. Come to the Mediation Board details of this fight on our behalf. Remember your Board and we are through its hypocritical methods. Don't vote in the Plan is a vote against. The Plan has only given you disappointment. The Brotherhood has forced one increase in pay and with your continued support you are bound to win this fight for Economic Justice. Meetings Every Night except Saturday at 8 p. m., Saturday Afternoon at 3 p. m. Headquarters 3118 Giles Avenue M. P. WEBSTER, Organizer G. A. PRICE, Sec.-Treas.



Pullman Porters in Chicago and throughout the nation organized for better working conditions

But a sense of expanding possibility – that proposition that all are created equal – drove African Americans to create opportunity, stability, success and even greatness. It prompted them to form schools, establish clubs, build churches, pursue professions, organize unions, mobilize politically, prosper economically and protest effectively.

“I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1861

▶ Watch the “Fight for Freedom” video.



At Quinn Chapel AME Church in Chicago



A BAD START

“Children born from marriages between slaves shall be slaves, and if the husband and wife have different masters, they shall belong to the masters of the female slave, not to the master of her husband.”

Code Noir, 1685

The first African American slaves in the Illinois Country were transported from New Orleans. Slaves in early Illinois were governed by the Code Noir, or Black Code, a law created by France in 1685 that defined slaves as personal property that could be bought and sold just like any other possession. By 1725, 24 percent of Illinois residents were African American – most of them, presumably, slaves.

1824 newspaper ad offering a reward for the capture of a slave who escaped from the Menard family in Kaskaskia

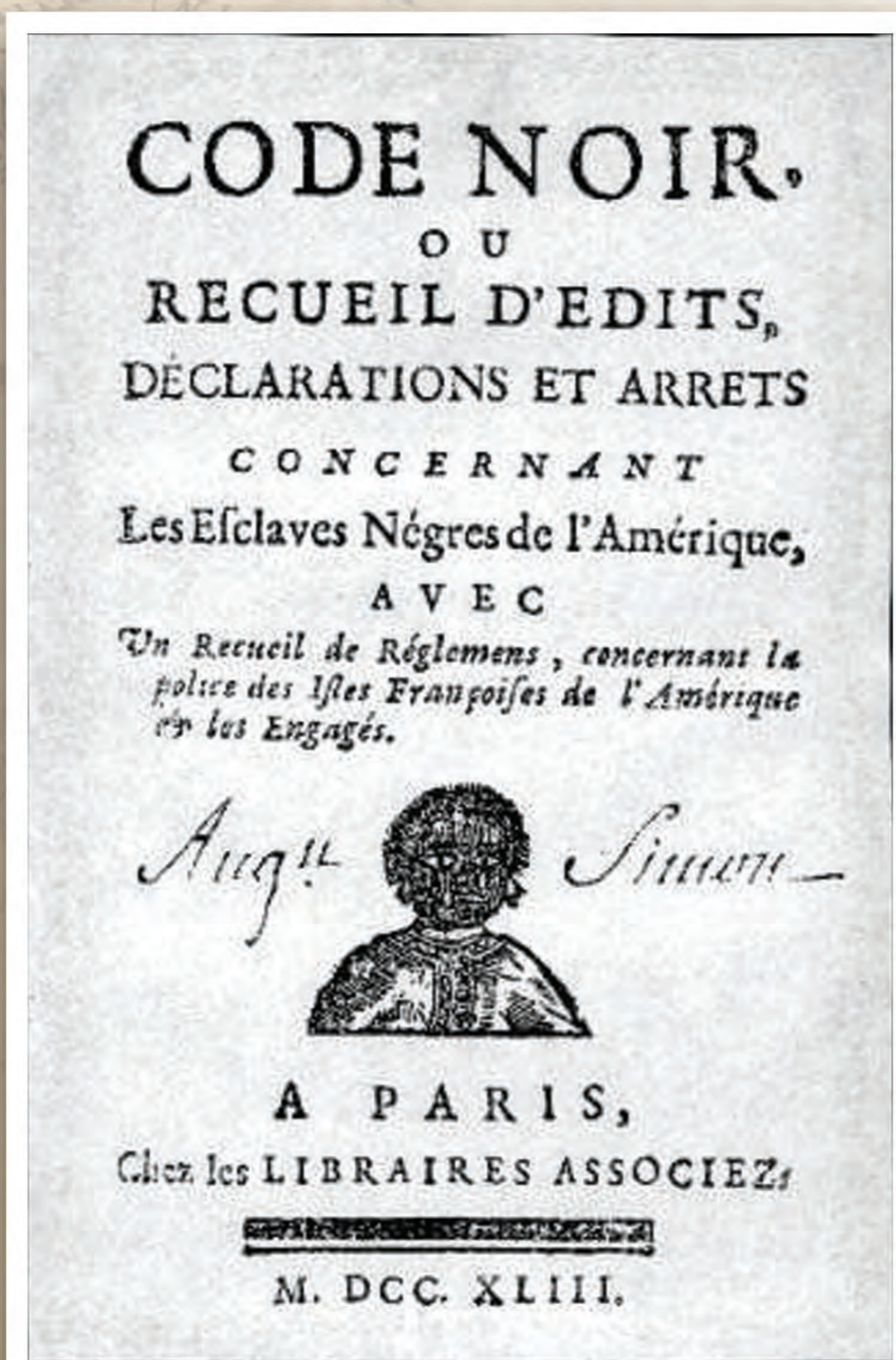


Pierre Menard

The French slave influence in Illinois is demonstrated by Pierre Menard, a French-Canadian who arrived in Kaskaskia in 1790. A trader and merchant, Menard was elected Illinois' first lieutenant-governor in 1818. He also was one of the largest slaveholders in the state and was listed as owning 18 slaves in 1830.

Pierre Menard Home State Historic Site near Ellis Grove

One of Menard's slaves was named Marie. We do not know when he acquired Marie, but we do know that she baptized her son Michel in 1799, and church records list Menard as her owner. Marie had at least four more children: Jean Baptiste in 1803, Agathe in 1805, Clarie in 1808 and Antoine in 1810.



The French "Code Noir" or "Black Codes" were written in 1685

The Code Noir, which restricted the rights of free African Americans as well as slaves, was expanded by the Illinois legislature in 1819, 1829 and again in 1833.

“You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore have the right to enslave them? By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1854

Watch the "A Bad Start" video.



At Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site near Ellis Grove



A VISION FOR SOMETHING BETTER

3

*“Baptiste Point DeSaible,
a handsome negro, well educated,
and settled at Eschikagou.”*

British commander in report about DuSable, 1779



*Fort de Chartres
in Prairie Du Rocher*

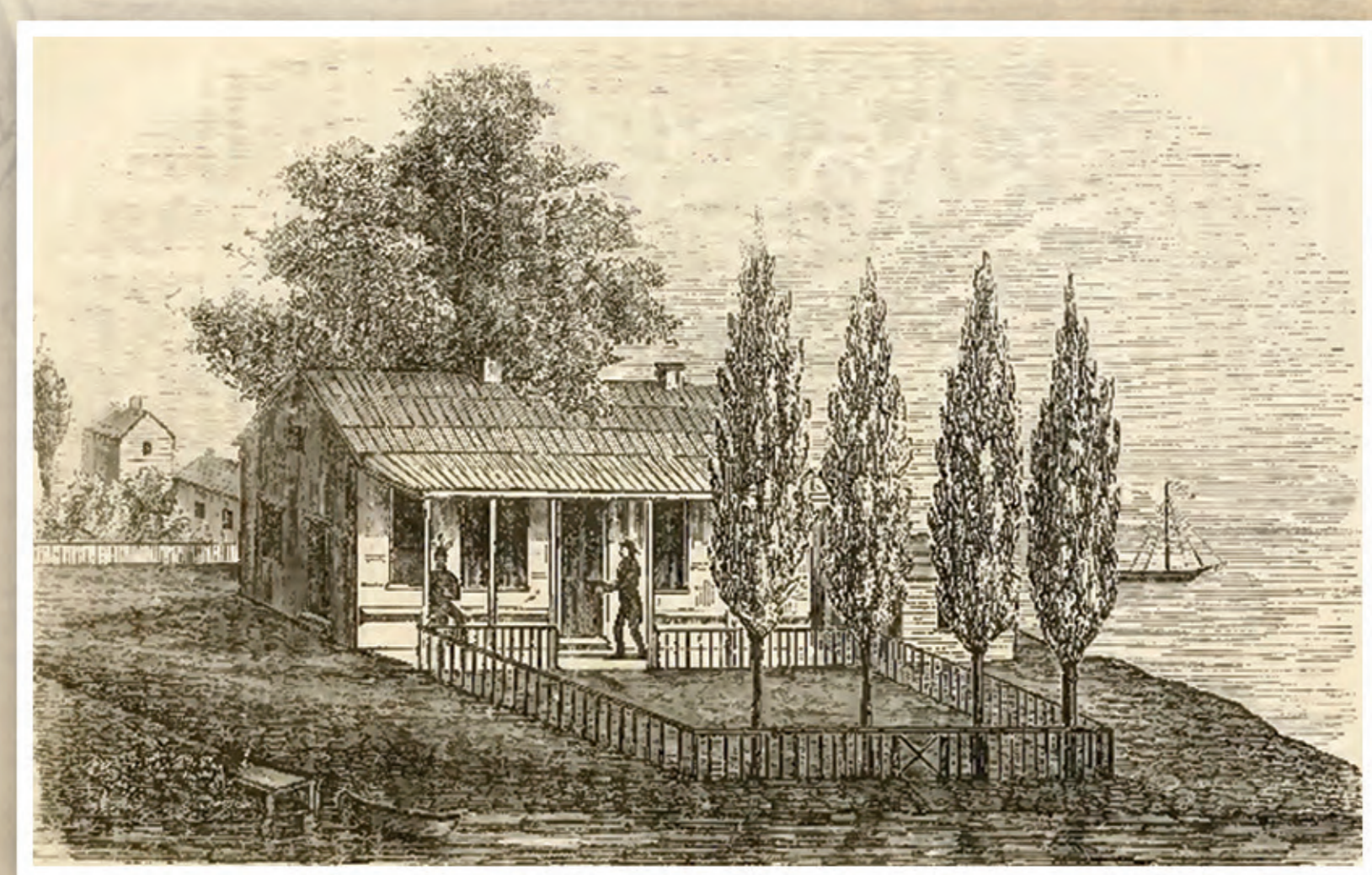
Not all African Americans in early Illinois were slaves. A small number of African Americans were free, and some even enjoyed a level of equality and acceptance among whites. We know very little about Illinois' free African American residents, but some of their stories appear in legal records held at Fort de Chartres, near Prairie du Rocher, the seat of French government in the Illinois Country.

Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was born in St. Marc, St. Domingue (now known as Haiti) around 1745. His father was French and his mother was an African slave. About 1765, he moved to New Orleans and from there to Peoria, Illinois, where he built a home and farmed. There he married Catherine, the daughter of a Potawatomi chief. In 1778, he travelled all the way back to Cahokia to have the marriage formalized in the Church of the Holy Family.



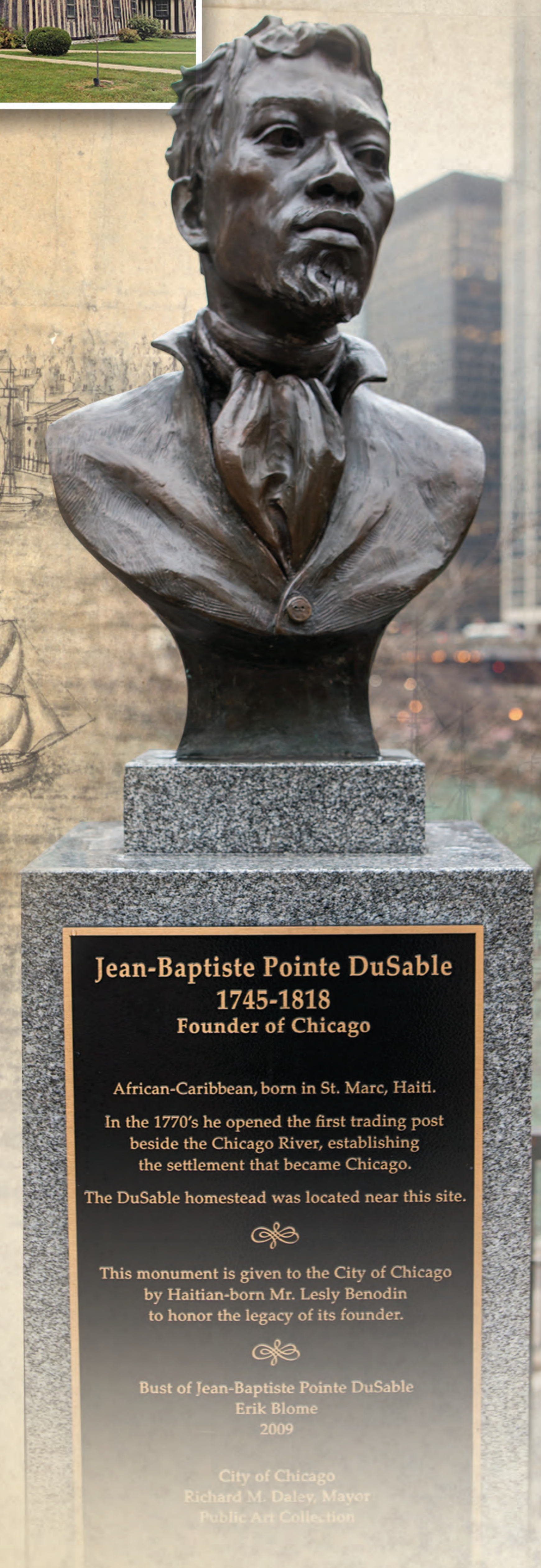
*Church of the
Holy Family in
Cahokia*

*View of
New Orleans,
Louisiana*



*Depiction of
Dusable's
Chicago home*

*Sculpture
of DuSable
in downtown
Chicago*



By 1779, DuSable had moved to the north bank of the Chicago River at its junction with Lake Michigan. The settlement was at a natural crossroads for both Native Americans and Europeans, which made it a perfect hub for transportation and trade. The DuSables raised two children in the first permanent settlement at what would become the heart of downtown Chicago.

Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable
1745-1818
Founder of Chicago

African-Caribbean, born in St. Marc, Haiti.
In the 1770's he opened the first trading post beside the Chicago River, establishing the settlement that became Chicago.
The DuSable homestead was located near this site.

This monument is given to the City of Chicago by Haitian-born Mr. Lesly Benodin to honor the legacy of its founder.

Bust of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable
Erik Blome
2009

City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor
Public Art Collection

“I want every man to have the chance – and I believe a black man is entitled to it – in which he can better his condition—That is the true system.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1860

Watch the “A Vision For Something Better” video.



*At the Church
of the Holy Family
in Cahokia*



VOTES COUNT

4

“The wise and the good of all nations would blush at our political depravity.”

Edward Coles, ca. 1823

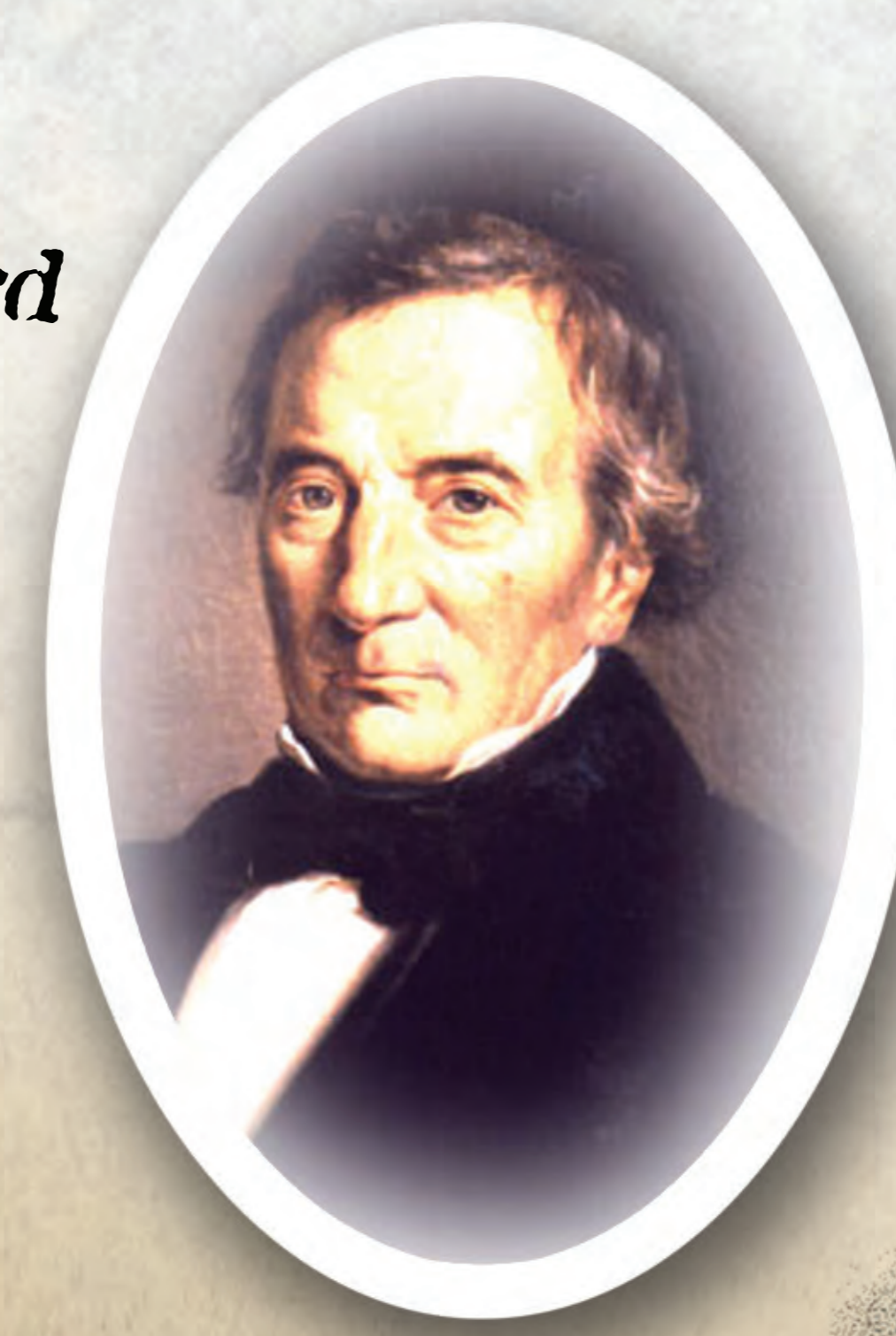
Vandalia
Statehouse
State Historic
Site interior

One early Illinois immigrant was Edward Coles, who was dispatched to Illinois as a representative of President James Madison. Coles had been born in Virginia to a prominent slaveholding family. Coles freed his slaves while on his journey to Illinois and helped them get established.

Coles settled in Edwardsville in 1819 and was elected governor in 1822. As an anti-slavery candidate, he faced opposition from advocates of slavery. In his inaugural address in Vandalia, Coles called for the emancipation of all slaves remaining in Illinois. However, pro-slavery legislators called for a constitutional convention designed to make Illinois a slave state. Coles led anti-slavery forces in voting down the convention.

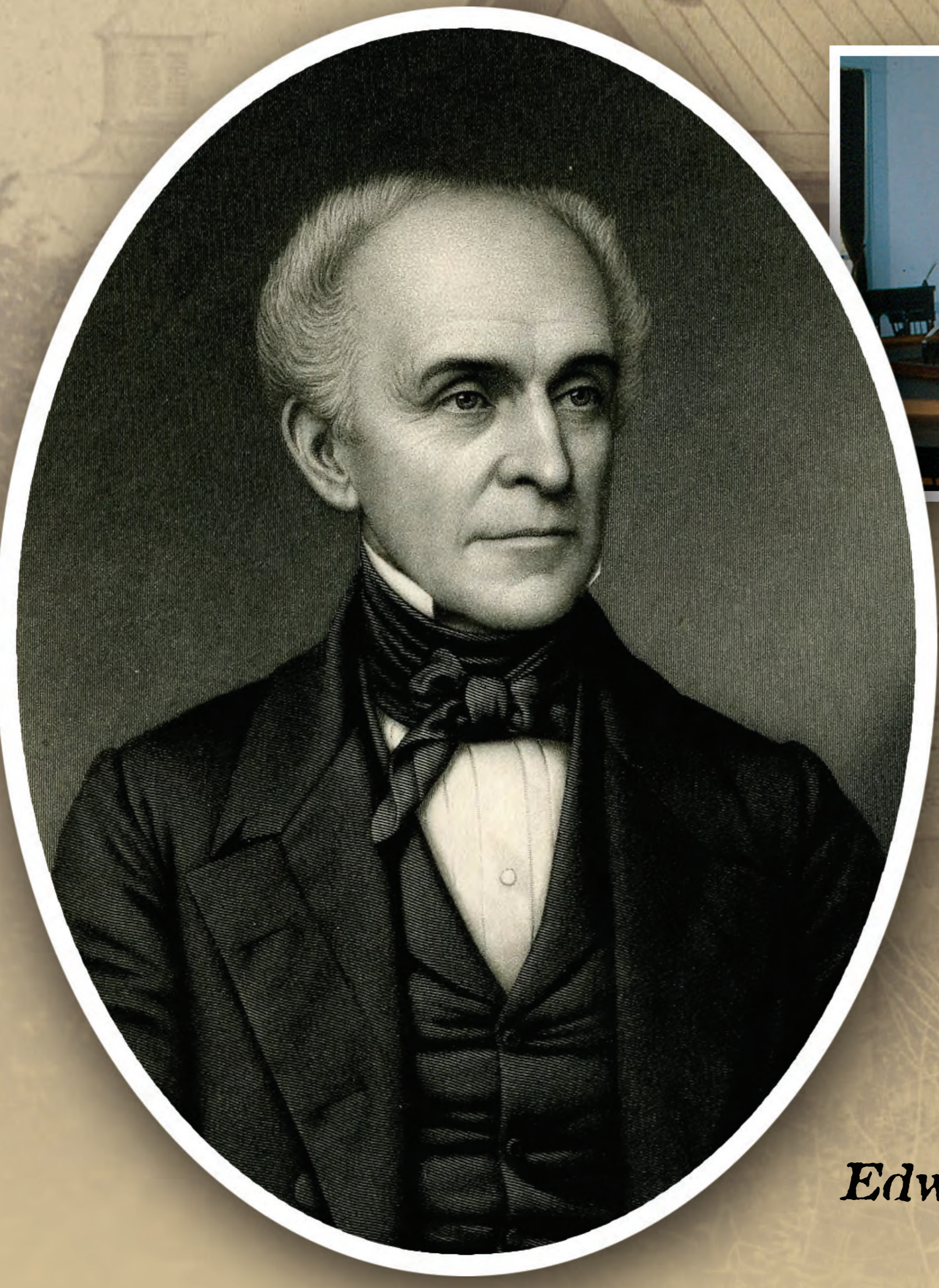
Illinois became a state in 1818 with provisions written into its constitution that protected slavery. That was not surprising, considering that many politicians – including Shadrach Bond, the first governor, and Pierre Menard, the first lieutenant-governor – owned slaves or indentured servants.

Pierre Menard



Shadrach
Bond

Vandalia Statehouse
State Historic
Site in Vandalia



Vandalia Statehouse State
Historic Site interior

Edward Coles

Slavery persisted in Illinois. In Springfield in 1827, the Sangamon County sheriff sold two girls, the slaves of Thomas Cox, at a public auction to satisfy Cox's debts. A Springfield resident recalled that "This sale created a great amount of talk and sympathy, not for the two girls, but for Mrs. Cox and her two children."

“The institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1837

Watch the
“Votes Count”
video.



End of day
debrief session
at Southern
Illinois University
in Carbondale



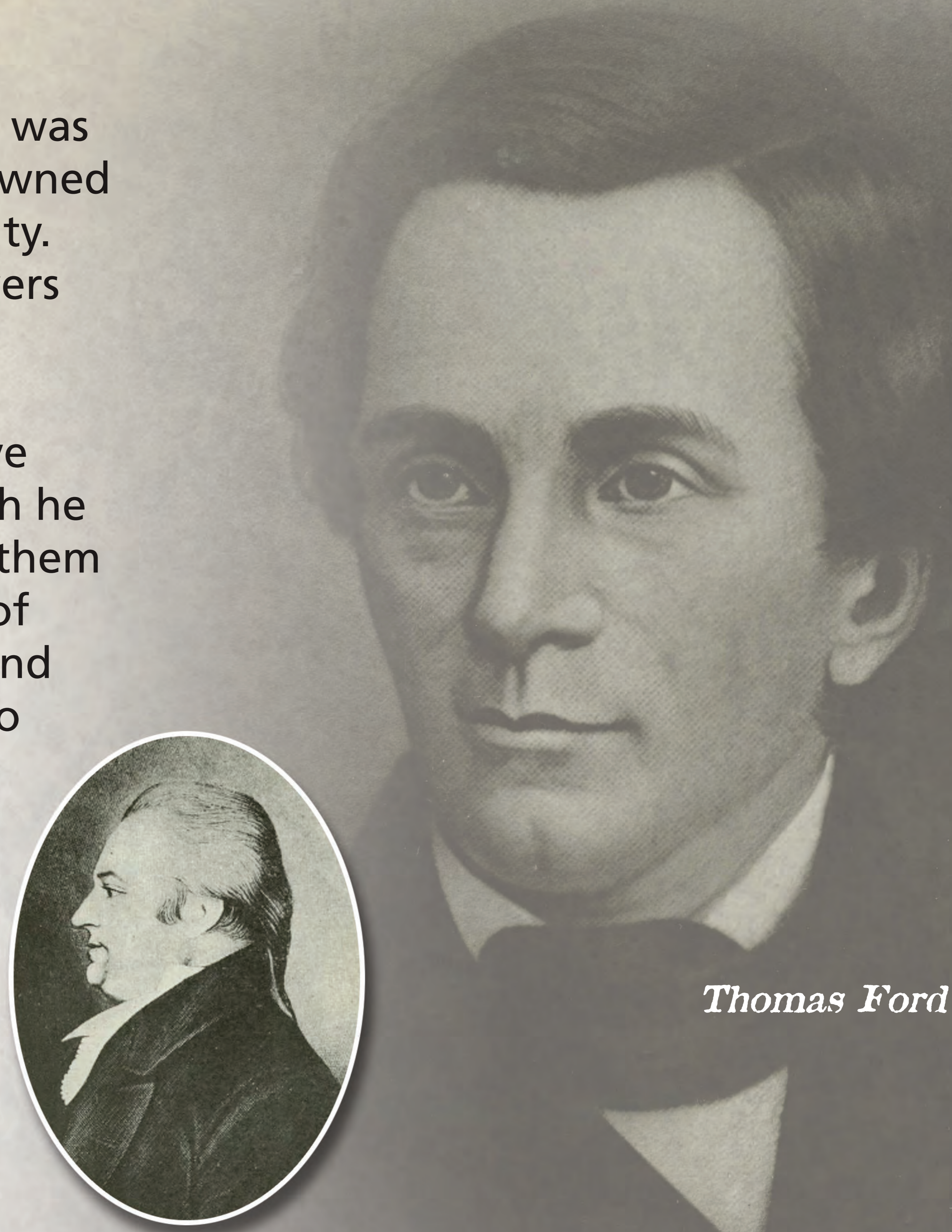
FACING INJUSTICE

“She says that some 15 years ago she lived in and around Shawneetown, and was stolen ... and sold into slavery. Her name is Lucinda and at the time she was taken she had two children. She says she worked at the saltworks. ...”

J.H.C. Ellis, Barren County, Kentucky, 1843

Among those who profited from slave labor was John Hart Crenshaw, who leased the state-owned salt works along the Saline River near Equality. The salt works was one of the prime employers of slave labor in early Illinois.

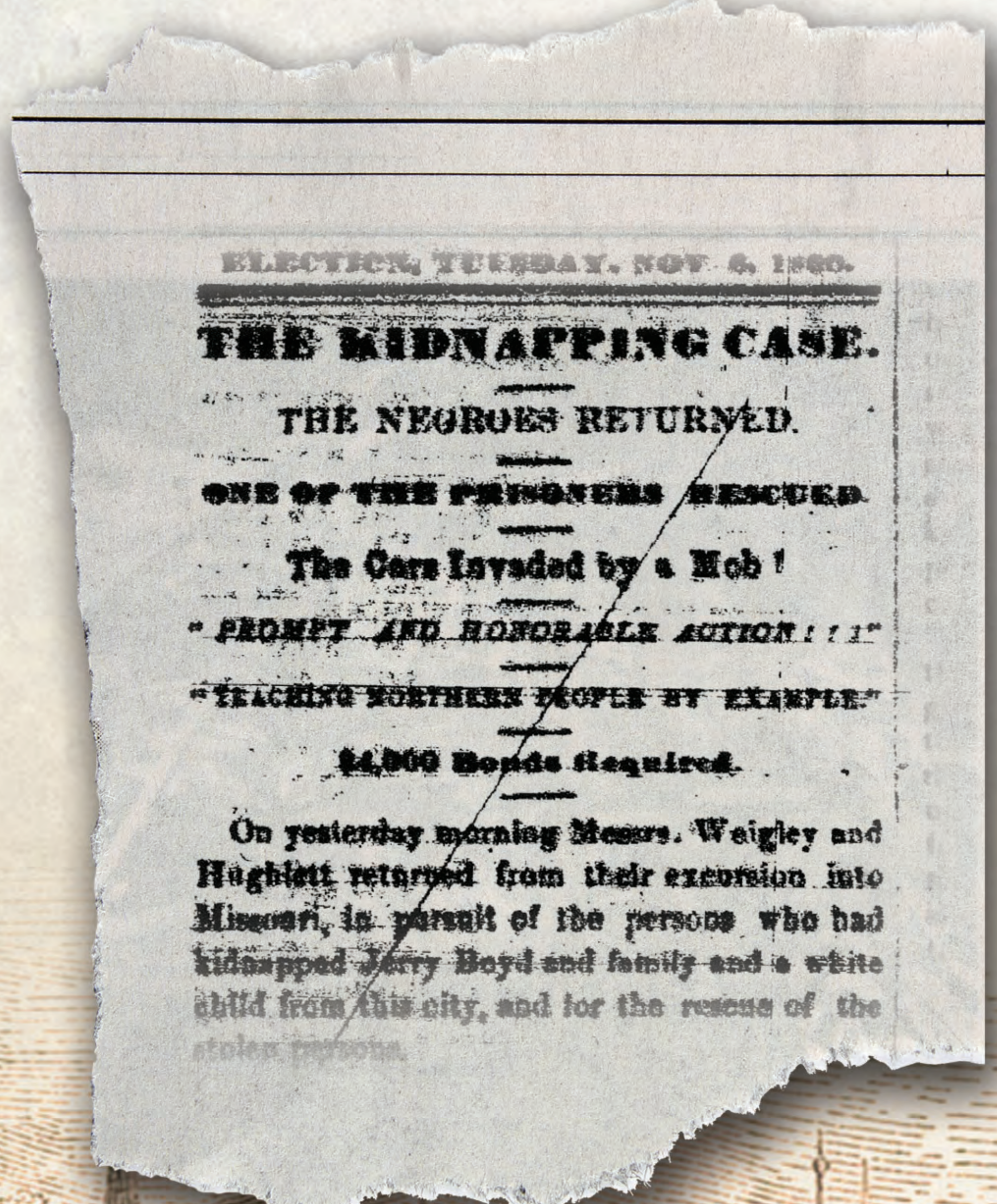
Crenshaw is believed to also have been active in a “reverse underground railroad” in which he kidnapped free African Americans and sold them into slavery. Crenshaw was accused in 1842 of kidnapping Maria Adams and her children and having them taken across the Ohio River into slavery. However, he was acquitted because those said to have been kidnapped could not be found.



Thomas Ford



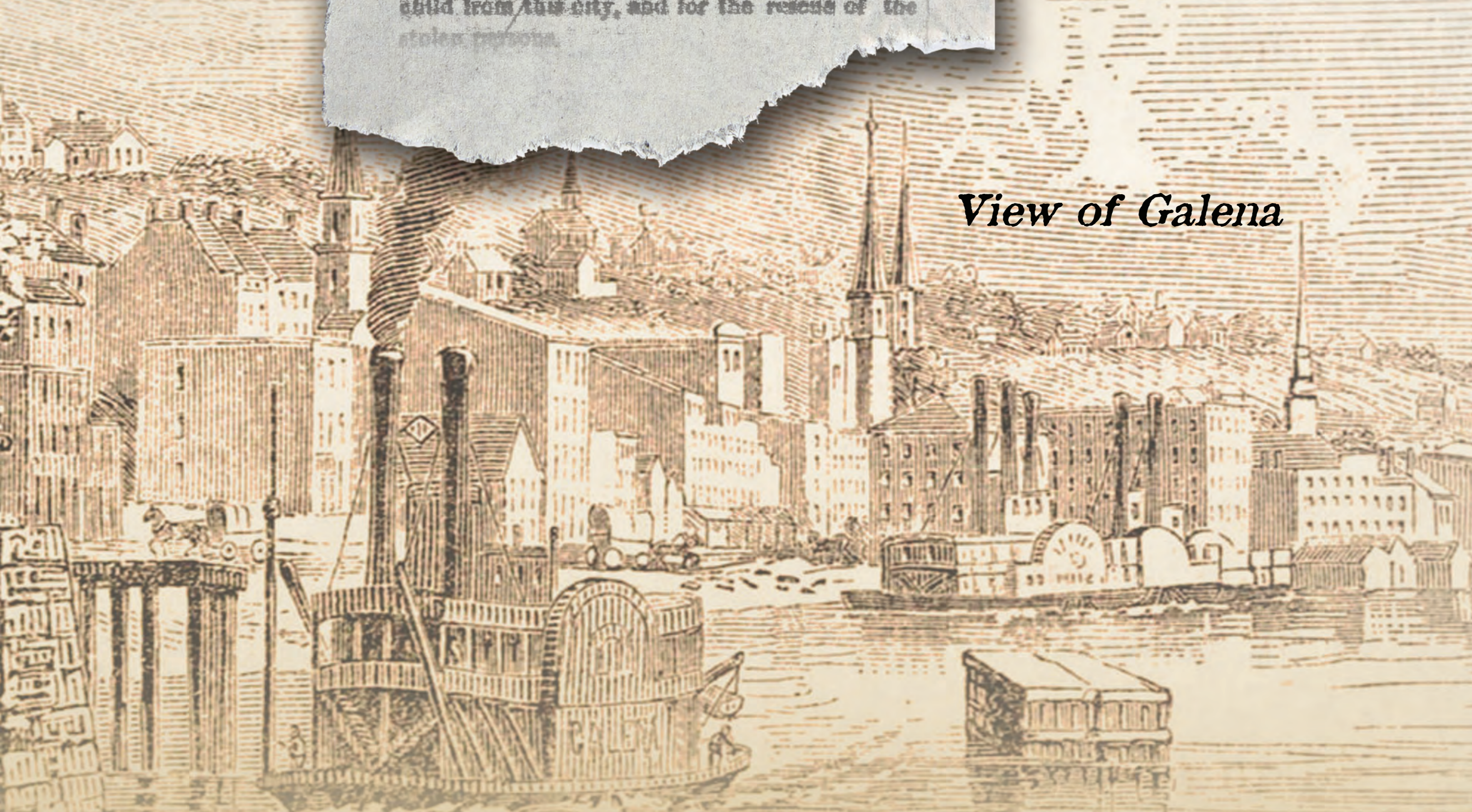
Ninian Edwards



Jeremiah Boyd story published in the Galena Daily Advertiser

In some cases, members of the larger community came to the aid of their African American neighbors. Galena resident, husband and father Jeremiah Boyd was an unemployed laborer who, in 1860, was enticed to leave by the offer of work in Iowa. Boyd and his family soon realized they were in the hands of kidnapers bound for the slave state of Missouri. Boyd was killed when he confronted his captors. Boyd’s wife, Mary, was able to alert authorities to the kidnapping, and her abductors were arrested. Residents of the Galena area traveled to Missouri brought Mary and her children back with them.

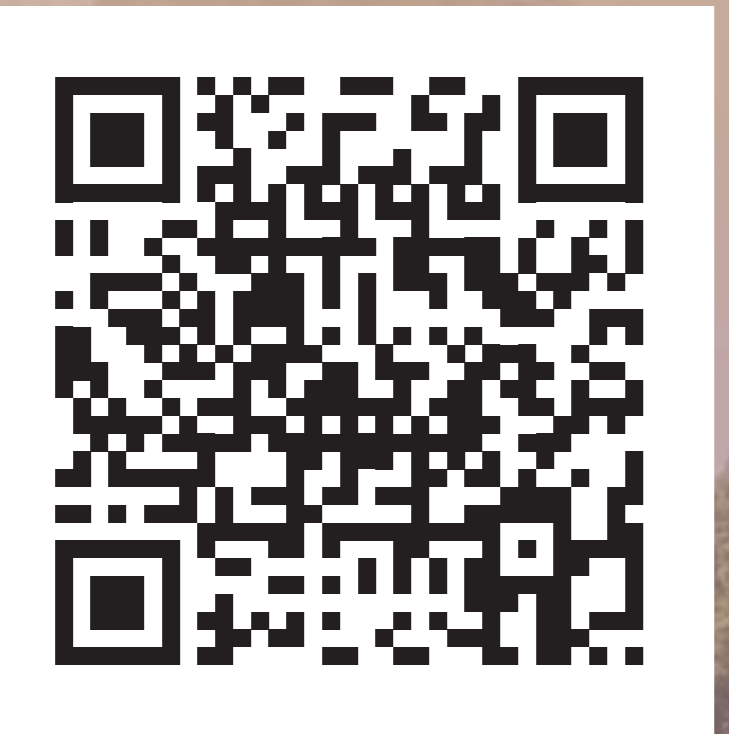
View of Galena



“You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1855

Watch the “Facing Injustice” video.



Outside of the Crenshaw House State Historic Site near Equality



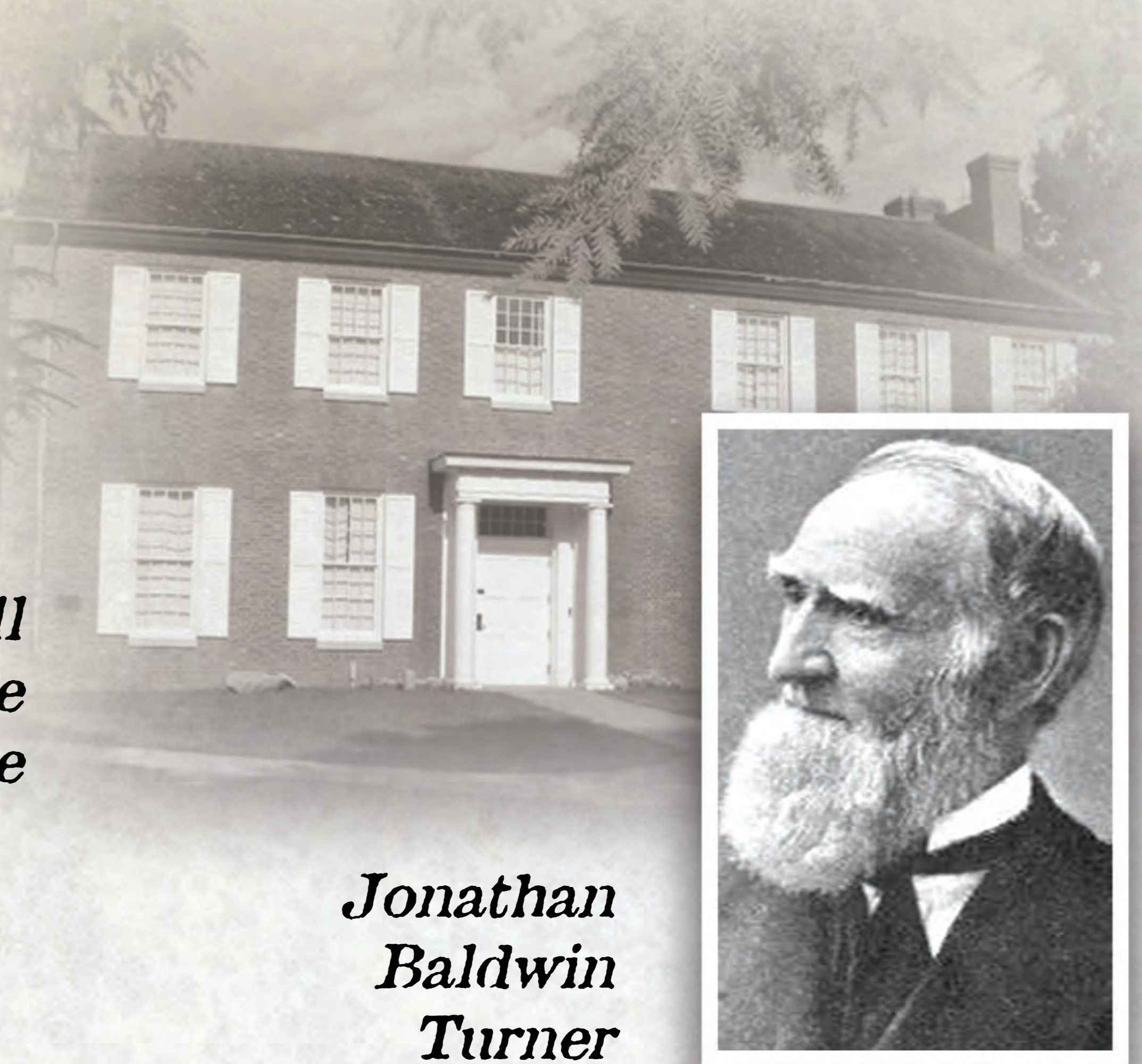
TAKING A STAND

6

“And who has not longed for the day when ‘every yoke shall be broken and the oppressed go free.’ ”

Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention, 1837

Proponents of abolition became more vocal in the 1830s, and tensions grew between pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions in Illinois. Abolitionists formed societies, established newspapers, aided runaway slaves, battled in the courts and sought political power. Considered radical by the majority of the population, they were met with fierce and often violent opposition.



Beecher Hall at Illinois College in Jacksonville

Jonathan Baldwin Turner

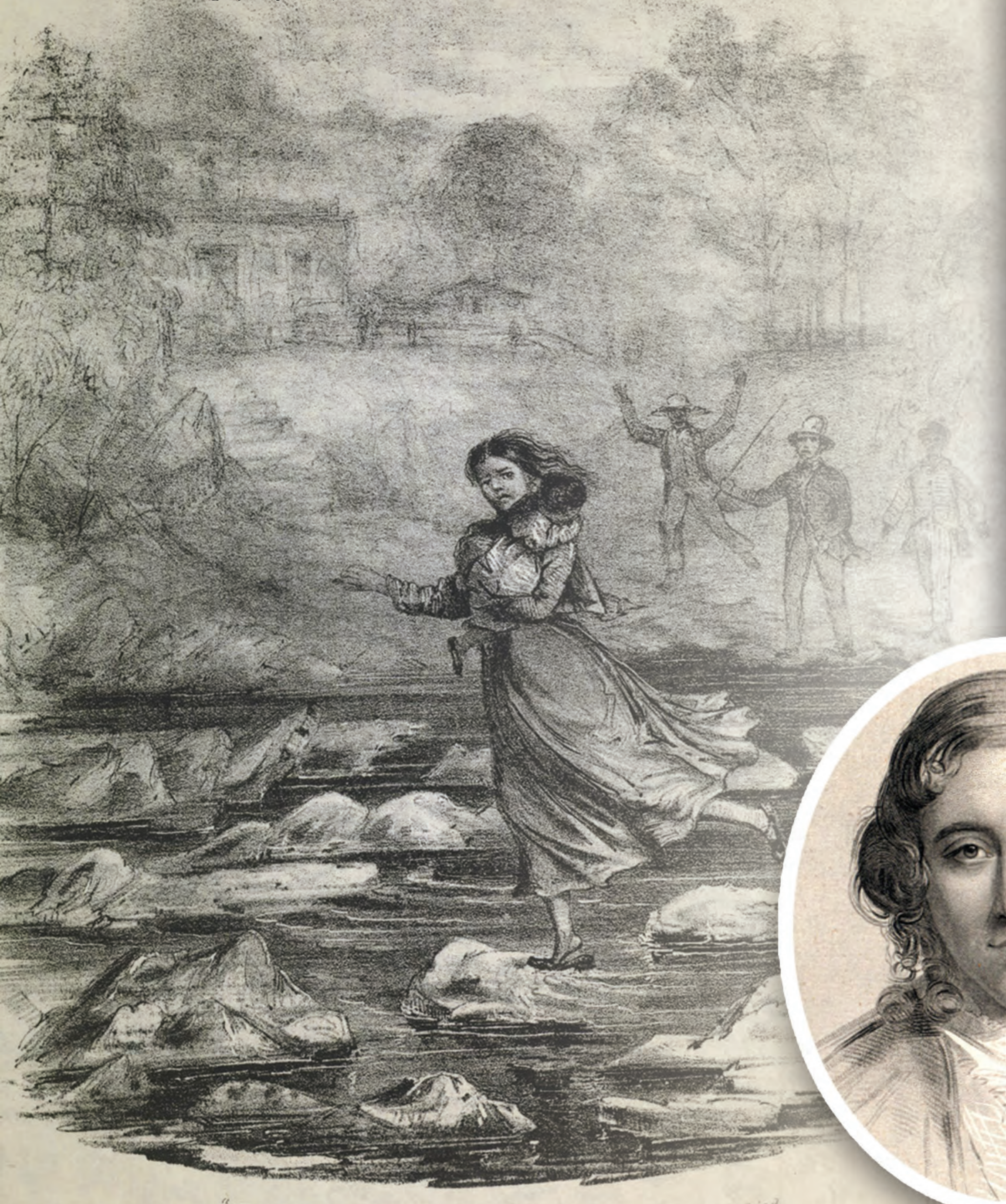
ELIZA'S FLIGHT

Scene from Uncle Tom's Cabin

Edward Beecher

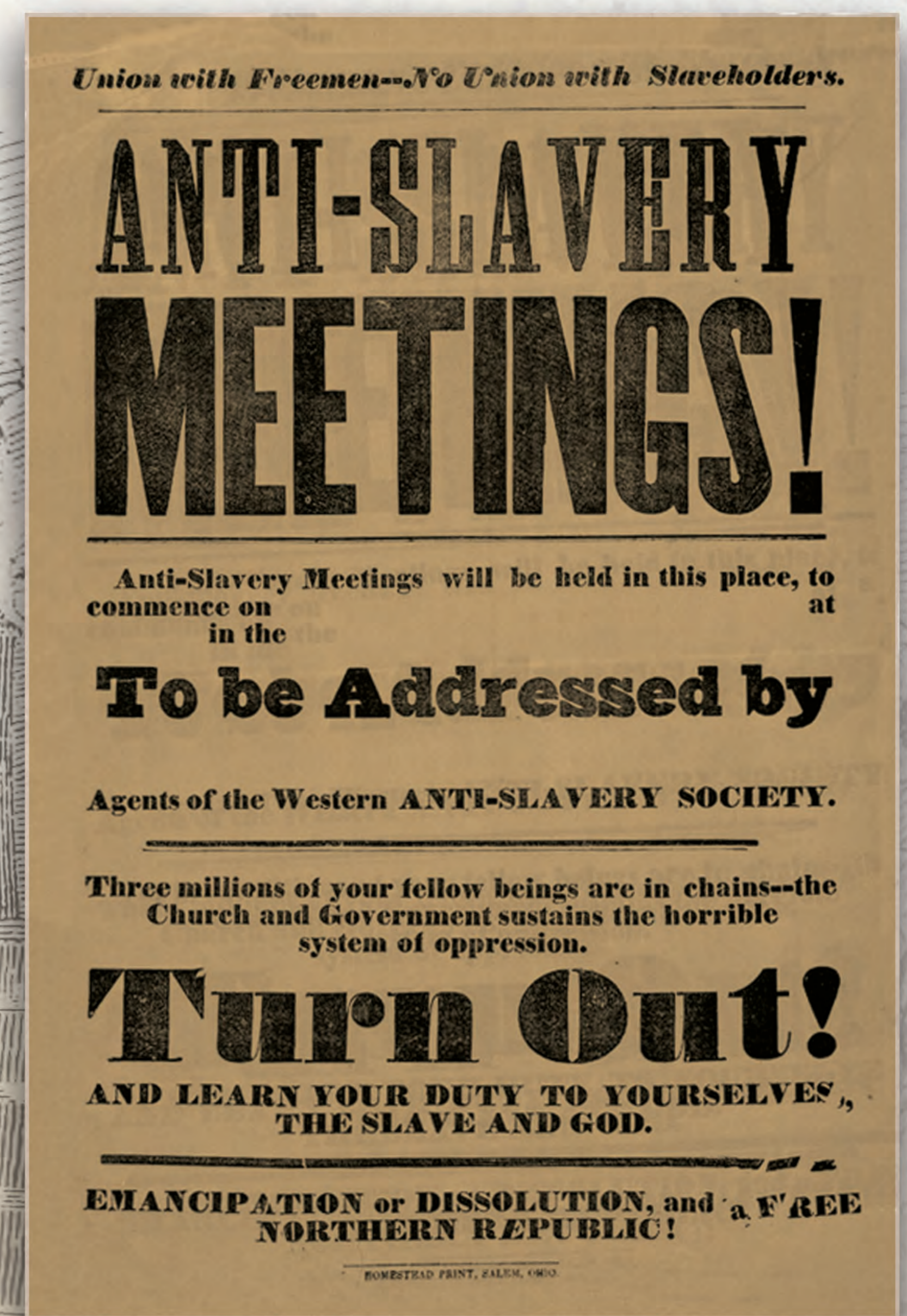


Illinois College in Jacksonville was a center of the abolitionist movement in Illinois. College president Edward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, was an outspoken opponent of slavery who helped organize the Illinois State Antislavery Society in 1837. Professor Jonathan Baldwin Turner helped three African American women to freedom, and student Samuel Willard was prosecuted and fined for attempting to free an escaped slave.



Abolitionist speaking at an anti slavery rally

Harriet Beecher Stowe



Anti slavery meetings were held in Illinois and other locations in the United States

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Founded in 1837 by anti-slavery advocates from New York State, the town of Galesburg and Knox College also were significant hubs of abolitionist and Underground Railroad activity in west-central Illinois. The Knox College founding document, called the "Circular and Plan," opposed slavery and declared that the college would be accessible to students regardless of their financial means and regardless of their race.

“But, to be plain, you are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1863

▶ Watch the "Taking A Stand" video.



Students visiting Knox College in Galesburg

