



# New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad

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- 1 Communities such as Somers Point and Egg Harbor City** offered freedom seekers a direct path to Pennsylvania, where slavery had been abolished. Michelle Craig McDonald, a professor of history at Stockton University, says: "The goal of slaves on the Underground Railroad was to make it to Pennsylvania...Think about New Jersey as the gateway or the last stop in a journey. When you got to Egg Harbor City you knew freedom was days away."
- 2 The Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church** in Swedesboro was built in 1834. The church doors were always left unlocked so freedom seekers passing through on the Underground Railroad could let themselves in for a rest. If slave catchers showed up in the area, runaways would be hidden in a secret room beneath a hallway in the church.
- 3 The Edgewater House** was built in 1741 in Cherry Hill, Camden County. It was owned by Thomas Evans and later by his son, Josiah Bispham Evans. They were both members of the Quaker religion and believed that slavery was wrong. By 1840, Edgewater was a safe house on the Underground Railroad. The Evans family passed down stories about the Underground Railroad to their family members. They said freedom seekers coming from Woodbury were hidden in the "haymow" (attic) and then "hurried off in a covered wagon to Mount Holly."
- 4 The Bordentown Friends Meetinghouse**, built in the 1740s, served as a shelter for freedom seekers during the time of slavery. Bordentown was known as "Station B" on the Underground Railroad, and three routes passed through the town. One went from Philadelphia north to Princeton. Another line ran east through Station B. There was also a southern route. Bordentown was a busy intersection on the road to freedom.
- 5 Members of the Buckingham and Lambertville** communities were outraged when Benjamin "Big Ben" Jones was captured by four slave catchers in a bloody struggle in 1844. Benjamin, who stood 6 feet 10 inches tall, had escaped from Maryland and settled in the area in 1833. The towns of Buckingham and Lambertville had ended slavery in 1776. Now they held anti-slavery talks and events at the Buckingham Friends Meeting House and other locations. They also raised \$700 (almost \$20,000 in today's money) to buy Benjamin out of slavery. He returned to the area, where he lived to the age of 75.



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- 6 Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church** in Springtown, Greenwich Township, is one of the oldest Black churches in New Jersey. It dates back to the early 1800s, when Springtown was a swamp area. We know about at least five members of the church who were secret Underground Railroad members. They probably hid runaways from Delaware and Maryland at the church and on their own properties.
- 7 Fort Stockton** in Woodbury was an important station for Civil War soldiers fighting against slavery. A marker on the site tells us it was the “training ground for the men of the 12th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry...considered one of the ‘fightingest’ regiments of the Union Army.” Of the 992 soldiers from Fort Stockton who fought in the war, only 278 returned.
- 8 John Coleman** was a Black pioneer and an Underground Railroad operator near Evesham and Mount Laurel. He worked tirelessly to provide hiding places for freedom seekers and to build the network of people and places on the Underground Railroad. He was so respected by his community that they named the area Colemantown.
- 9 Sampson Peters House and Cooper Shop** is an important site in Trenton's history. Sampson Peters was born into slavery in East Windsor in 1771. He was set free in 1802 and moved to Trenton, where he opened a cooper (barrel-making) shop. The shop was a meeting place for a group he helped form, called the Religious Society of Free Africans. Sampson was an abolitionist. He also spoke out against the movement to return free Black people to Africa. Sampson lived to the age of 74.
- 10 Crossing the Raritan River** near New Brunswick was dangerous. Slave catchers often patrolled the area. Conductors on the Underground Railroad worked with a spy named Cornelius Cornell, who lived near New Brunswick. He would signal when it was safe to cross the river. Freedom seekers could then head to Jersey City along the Hudson River, and ferry to New York City. There, they hoped to catch a train north to freedom.



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- 11 The Goodwin Sisters House** was an Underground Railroad station in Salem by 1838. It was operated by Abigail Goodwin and her sister, Elizabeth. They were Quakers, a religious group that promotes peace and fought against slavery in the 1800s. We know about the Goodwin sisters through a diary kept by their nephew and letters written between the sisters and a Philadelphia station master named William Still.
- 12 The Peter Mott House** is a special place because it is one of the only Underground Railroad stations owned and operated by African Americans. The house, built around 1844, is in Lawnside in Camden County. Peter Mott was a free Black farmer who may have escaped from enslavement in Maryland. He was also the pastor of a church in Lawnside. The community of Lawnside was officially recognized as a town in 1926, and was the only all-Black community in New Jersey.
- 13 The Thomas Budd House**, built around 1744, is the oldest structure in Mount Holly that's still on its original site. Thomas Budd was a plantation owner, but later his house was used to hide enslaved people on the Underground Railroad. The house's basement has a tunnel in the corner, which was used to secretly transport people. Today the building is a bookstore.
- 14 Paul Robeson**, born in Princeton in 1898, was one of the most important Black leaders of the past century. He was a singer, actor, athlete, author and civil rights activist. He was also the son of a man who was born into slavery. William Drew Robeson was born in 1844 and enslaved on a plantation in North Carolina. At age 15, William escaped slavery with his brother, Ezekiel, on the Underground Railroad. After serving in the Union Army during the Civil War and attending college, William settled in Princeton and became the minister of the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church from 1880 until 1901.

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