

## THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN RACINE

The Underground Railroad movement and abolitionist spirit were very much alive in southeastern Wisconsin even before statehood in 1848. Local newspapers from the time are riddled with articles spreading the abolitionist spirit, calling for anti-slavery meetings and carrying stories of interest from all over the country.

Documentation exists of numerous Racine County citizens who were outspoken in their hatred of slavery; those who chose to bravely and quietly become involved in the Underground Railroad risked everything – freedom, money, family and personal safety. Many of the heroes, both fugitives and abolitionists, will never be recognized because of the secrecy of the movement, but their mark on history is permanent.



**Racine Heritage Museum**  
701 Main Street  
Racine, WI 53403  
Phone 262-636-3926  
[RacineHeritageMuseum.org](http://RacineHeritageMuseum.org)

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**Exhibit Hours**  
Tuesday- Friday 9am- 5pm  
Saturday 10am-3pm  
Sunday 12pm-4pm  
Closed Mondays

For additional information on this subject or other Racine related topics that might interest you, visit our

**RESEARCH CENTER:**  
Tuesdays 1pm-4:30pm  
Saturdays 10pm-1pm

THIS TRAIN IS BOUND FOR  
GLORY: RACINE COUNTY'S  
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

# THE JOSHUA GLOVER STORY



*Joshua Glover*

Escaping from his master in Missouri in 1852, Joshua Glover had become a member of the Racine County community, working at the Sinclair Rice and Saw Mill in town. Two years after settling in Racine, he was captured in the middle of the night by several men including his master Benammi Garland, and jailed in Milwaukee.

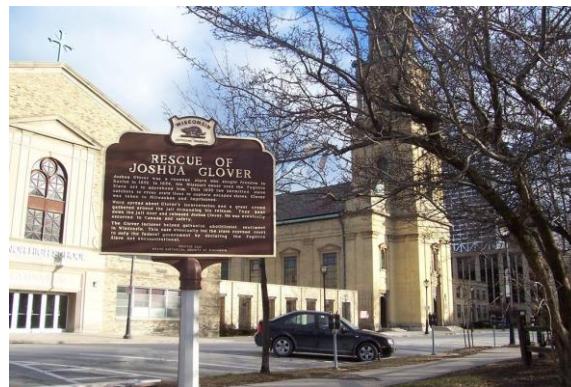
Upon hearing the news of Glover's "kidnapping," Racine citizens gathered in Haymarket Square (today's Monument Square), the largest gathering to date ever in Racine. During this gathering, the following was decided: a delegation of representatives would travel to Milwaukee to ensure Glover received a fair trial; resolutions were outlined and the newspapers were given the minutes of the meeting so that they could be published and publicized; and a finance committee began its work, raising money to take care of costs of Glover's trial.

At 5:00pm, the delegation from Racine arrived by boat in Milwaukee where they joined a crowd that had gathered outside the courthouse upon hearing of Glover's capture. Included in this crowd was Sherman Booth, editor of the newspaper *Wisconsin Free Democrat* and an outspoken abolitionist. Soon after the arrival of the Racine delegation, the abolitionists took matters into their own hands and, using pickaxes and large pieces of lumber, freed Glover from his cell. He was spirited away onto the Underground Railroad.

Glover's next three to four weeks were spent in and around Racine County- being helped by men such as John Messenger, C.C. Olin, Alfred Payne, Richard Ela, Joel Cooper, Moses Tichenor and more; and traveling through Prairieville (now Waukesha), Rochester, Racine, Burlington, Spring Prairie and other areas, all the while being chased by Garland and his posse.

Glover's final stop on Racine County's Underground Railroad was a warehouse owned by A.P. Dutton on Racine's Harbor. Dutton, a noted abolitionist, was privy to information about the ships coming in and out of the harbor including which ships and captains were friendly toward fugitives. It is unclear which ship took Glover to freedom, but evidence of Glover's arrival in Canada can be found in a note in an account book in Canada. (*Finding Freedom*, Jackson and MacDonald, 2007)

While Glover's arrival in Canada completed his flight to freedom, it began a long legal battle and a statewide repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act that would bring national attention to Wisconsin.



A historical plaque dedicated to Joshua Glover's story in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

After warrants were issued for people on both sides of the incident – slaveholder Garland as well as abolitionists Charles Clement, Thomas Mason, John Rycraft and others – a criminal case was brought against Sherman Booth. Byron Paine, Booth's attorney, argued that the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was unconstitutional by not allowing fugitives a trial by jury. Therefore, Booth had been wrongfully jailed. Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Andrew Smith agreed with Paine's argument, declared the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional and freed Booth. Later, the entire Wisconsin Supreme Court supported Smith's decision.

This decision brought nation-wide attention to Wisconsin, directly challenging federal law. However, when the decision reached the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Roger Taney declared the Wisconsin decision was wrong. Booth was sentenced to a fine and imprisonment, and later underwent a civil case brought by Garland. While the abolitionist movement was strong throughout the northern states, Wisconsin remained the only state to declare the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional.

***“Resolved, that inasmuch as the Senate of the United States has repealed all compromised heretofore adopted by the Congress of the United States, we as citizens of Wisconsin, are justified in declaring, and hereby declare, the slave-catching law of 1850 disgraceful and also repealed.”***

*(a resolution adopted by the citizens of Racine during the Glover incident, printed in the Daily Morning Advocate, March 12, 1854)*