

Appendix A

Inquiry Guide: John Parker

Questions About Abolition	Answers and Sources

Questions About the Free Black Community	Answers and Sources

Questions About the Underground Railroad	Answers and Sources

Sources Brainstorm – Where should I look?

Appendix B

John Parker's Autobiography

Source: [His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad](#)

The men and women of the metropolis of Ripley have passed on. Hardly a memory of them now exists, except in the mind of a few aged citizens like myself. So quickly does our country change in its centers of trade but [also] in its methods of trade. But the Ohio River still remains a thing of real beauty to me.

Amidst this commercial activity lived and moved the little group of old-time abolitionists. They were by name Dr. Alexander Campbell, Rev. John Rankin, Theodore, Tom, and Eli Collins, Tom McCague, Dr. Beasley, [and] Rev. James Gilliland. The undoubted leader was Rev. John Rankin.

While the businessmen were not abolitionists, they were antislavery. But the town itself was proslavery as well as the country around it. In fact, the country was so antagonistic to abolitionism at this time, we could only take the fugitives out of town and through the country along definite and limited routes.

There was also very active a certain group of men who made a living by capturing the runaway slaves and returning them to their masters. These men were on watch day and night along the riverbank the year round. While they captured quite a few it was remarkable how many slaves we got through the line successfully. The feeling grew so tense Rev. John Rankin and his followers left the Presbyterian church forming a new congregation who were given over to the antislavery movement.

Many of the Methodists were in silent sympathy with the movement, [and] would give us money, but would take no aggressive part. As a matter of fact, this abolitionist group were ridiculed, detested, and even threatened by the town's people.

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in [1850], the attitude of the town's people grew even more critical of our group. We had to be more secretive than ever, for it meant confiscation of property, a fine, and [a] jail sentence.

I had kept a diary giving the names, dates, and circumstances of all the slaves I had helped run away, which at that time numbered 315. As I had accumulated considerable property, as a matter of safety I threw this diary into the iron furnace, for fear it might fall into other hands.

The other men were equally as cautious, but the work went on just the same. Having now become actively engaged in aiding the fugitives, my contact with the other abolitionists was close, and maintained until the close of the Civil War.