

LYMAN GOODNOW'S STORY

Caroline Quarlls, the first slave transported over the underground railroad from this region, was probably an octoroon. She had thin lips, straight nose and was not very dark which probably accounted for her being able to escape from St. Louis where she was owned by an aunt, a Mrs. Hall. Caroline obtained some money, got permission from her mistress to visit a friend and taking a bundle of clothes which she had dropped from her window she took the steamboat to Alton, Illinois.

There a colored man who suspected she was a runaway slave urged her not to stay in Alton and put her on the stage for Milwaukee. On arriving there she saw a colored man by the name of Titball, a barber, and judging he would befriend her, she told him her story. He took her to his home where she stayed about a week. At this time some St. Louis lawyers appeared in Milwaukee searching for Caroline. They approached Titball and he would have given up the girl to them for a sum of money, but a firm of white lawyers heard about the matter and hid Caroline in some brush until night. A man by the name of Brown finally took her to his home and kept her for a day, but the next night started for Pewaukee with her in a rickety wagon which he feared would not last for the trip. Just before striking a main road, Mr. Brown heard voices and stopped till some men on horseback road by. They were the St. Louis lawyers with some from Milwaukee and had been to Frairievile looking for Caroline. and were on their

way back. Mr. Brown's wagon did break down but he took the saddle which he had thoughtfully brought along, put it on the horse and proceeded on the trip with Caroline behind him. He took her to "Father" Samuel Dougherty's two or three miles north of Pewaukee Village where she stayed for two or three weeks.

Meanwhile the St. Louis lawyers had taken quarters at the Frairieville House and were making a systematic search. Every road and bridge in the locality was watched day and night. Two men who were afterward governors of the state were assisting them. The offer of \$300 for a reward was a great temptation. While the pro-slavery people were producing a big excitement over this matter and making all kinds of threats as to what would happen to anyone found concealing Caroline, the Abolitionists went calmly about their business and not a particle of information could be gotten out of them.

The gang went to Deacon Mendall's treating him with some sort of violence as he was a staunch anti-slaveryite and supposed to know something of Caroline's whereabouts. They found him in the field engaged in hilling potatoes. The lawyers demanded to know the Deacon's opinion of his crime of law breaking. "Why," replied the Deacon, "I didn't know hilling potatoes was breaking the law." "You are harboring that slave girl which is against the law." "Well a bad law is sometimes better broken than obeyed," said the Deacon glancing at his rifle which lay near by on the grass. The Deacon's glance at his rifle cooled the slave hunters somewhat but they finally summoned courage to ask permission to search his house. "No, sir, you don't search my house for any slave," said Deacon Mendall sternly and the group, afraid of the rifle, marched back to Frairieville. A man over sixty years of age had frightened them away single handed.

By some hack or crook, some one caught sight of Caroline at the Dougherty's and brought word to the Lawyers. They made a rush one Saturday afternoon to effect the capture. Caroline happened to be sitting at a window which commanded a view of the road for some distance, and seeing some horsemen coming, she knew at once they were after her. She went down to the cellar and slipped out the cellar door to a cornfield back of it until the men went away. The men went into the house and asked Mrs. Dougherty if a slave girl was being concealed there. They did not get much satisfaction from her and asked to search the house, which she allowed. They hunted over the house and premises carefully but had to go away no wiser.

On going through Pewaukee Village, one of the party, A. F. Pratt, of Mukeshha, suggested they call on Elder Wheelock as he said they could depend on what he said. They asked the Elder if he knew there was a slave girl around. He said he had heard so. Then they told him a plausible story of having talked with Deacon Clinton about the girl and that she wanted to go back to St. Louis and the Deacon said that if that was a fact, it was anybody's duty to give her up. They then said to the Elder, "Do you know where she is?" "No!" "Can you find her?" "I think I can. I have a great deal of confidence in Deacon Clinton's judgement. I am going to Prairieville to preach tomorrow and I'll talk with him then. Wait till I get my horse." As they came into Prairieville, the elder left them saying he would go up to Deacon Clinton's farm just out of the village and have a talk with him and would meet them at the Prairieville House at ten that evening and bring the Deacon with him. He meant to keep them away from Pewaukee as long as possible. He then went to Deacon Clinton's

and told him to send a boy to bring Deacon Mendall. Mendall came. The Elder told him to take a man with him, get the girl away from Fewaukne keeping off the roads as much as possible and to hurry. The Elder and Deacon Clinton with him went to the Prairieville House as agreed at ten o'clock and talked and gassed with the men till about twelve and finally came to the conclusion that they would have nothing to do with the matter anyway.

Meanwhile Deacon Mendall took a man by the name of Jewett to go with him, went to Dougherty's and got the girl and brought her to Deacon Allen Clinton's, living on his farm about two miles from the Village. That Sunday all of Allen Clinton's folks went to church except his wife who stayed with Caroline. That afternoon Daniel Chandler came to me and told me to have my team ready that night at a place designated a mile west of the village in oak openings. I did not dare take my own horses for I was watched. So I went to Deacon Chandler and said, "Mr. Chandler, I want your horses tonight and I don't want you should ask me a question." He let me have his team a splendid one of which he thought everything. I did not dare take the horses till after dark. I then went to the woods as promised. After awhile, I heard a whistle and answered it. By and by I heard it in another direction and answered as before. Deacon Allen Clinton then made his appearance on horseback, Caroline riding with him. Chandler and Deacon Mendall were also there. Caroline was given into my hands. I chose Deacon Mendall as company and with Caroline curled

in the straw in the bottom of the wagon, we started.

Any place of safety was our destination but we did not know where. I drove through Mulvengano and arrived at Spring Prairie, thirty miles away, about daylight. We went to Charles Thompson's but he said that he would be having threshers that day and it would not be safe for Caroline there. He took us to a neighbor's house where we left her and turned toward home as quickly as possible. On the way home in moving my feet around in the straw, I struck something hard. On picking it up it proved to be the largest butcher knife I have ever seen. (Deacon Mendall in his earlier days had been a famous butcher.) I said, "Deacon, what's this?" "Oh, it is something I brought along to pick my teeth with." said the Deacon. You can guess what he had intended to do if anyone attempted to capture us.

We reached home safely and had not been missed. Those fellows were satisfied she had left the place. However, we still felt uneasy about Caroline as we did not know how good managers the people with whom she had been left might be. Some of the friends decided that we ought to take the girl to some underground railway station and they picked on me, being a bachelor with no family to keep me from going, as the proper one to do the job. At this time money was not plenty in Prairieville as everyone was paying for his land. I had to start away with very little money. I rode my horse up to Deacon Edmund Clinton's as I always did when I wanted him shed, with a rope halter on so as to not look suspicious. It was about dark. I told the Deacon I wanted his saddle, bridle, and all the money he had. "I'm going on a skeerup and I might be obliged to pay the quesa a

visit before I get back." He handed me \$5.00, all the money he had with him. That made \$8 with what I had to start with. I mounted my horse and started for the oak openings. Went through North Prairie, Eagle and through to Troy. Before reaching the last place, it began to rain and it was the darkest night I have ever seen. Reached my destination at 7 or 8 in the morning with not a stick of dry clothing on me.

I was startled to find Caroline gone. They had moved her to Gardner's Prairie (two miles from Burlington) but did not know in whose home she was. I started for Gardner's Prairie and on the way stopped at Elder Manning's. He had brothers at Fairleville and I know he was a good Abolitionist. He had been sick and had heard nothing about Caroline but insisted on going with me although this was his first day out of bed. He rode with me to Mr. Josiah Puffer's, who knowing the Elder, upon being questioned, said the girl was there. Sympathetic neighbors were called in and while we were consulting as to what was best to do, along came Dr. Dyer of Racine County. He proved to be the Commander-in-Chief, strong abolitionist and best friend to humanity. It was finally decided that I should take Mr. Richard Chenery's buggy and harness and continue the journey to safety. Dr. Dyer went home and gathered food and money for the trip - the money contributed brought my fund up to \$20. The Doctor wrote me a recommendation. I believe there was never an appeal like that written before or since. It would stir a heart of stone.

"When night came on we started, Caroline on the buffalo robe in the bottom of the buggy which covered her so that no one would know but that I had a sheep or a quarter of veal. Mr. Chenery accompanied us to the house of a Mr. Perkins (brother of the great sheep herder of Mukwonago) but we could not stop there as he was to thrash that day, so he took us to Elder Fitch of the Christian denomination who secreted us and the horse until night when we started on. The Elder started with us, it commenced

to rain and we saw we could not go through to Dundee as planned, so crossed a dark prairie a few miles from McHenry and reached the home of a Methodist named Russell. He did not know what Abolitionism was but was perfectly willing to help a slave to freedom. I made him a station keeper on the underground railroad which I established along this route.

In the morning Elder Fitch went back home and Russell went through with us to Dundee to Dr. Root's. This was the first we travelled by day. Dr. Root sent for some friends to come in and visit with us awhile and then we left there for Naperville where we arrived after dark. We went to Deacon Fowler's as the Doctor had told us. There were some young ladies there of about Caroline's size and they fitted her out with some clothes - a dress, some gloves, a thick veil and a small reticule in which to put her jewelry. Caroline, being well dressed, after that sat in the seat.

The next day we started on, going through Lockport, a few miles from Joliet, while the people were eating dinner so were not noticed. Then we drove eight miles to Deacon Beach's which was on the original underground railroad. Mr. Beach had gone to a church meeting and the women were suspicious of us but gave us some dinner and directed me to a place at Hickory Grove which I found was on the right road. The next day was Sunday but I thought we'd better travel and get on away from the vicinity of Chicago. We next stopped at the home of Mr. Beebe of Beebe's Grove and found him a very intelligent man. He had just returned from Chicago where he saw an advertisement on the docks, "\$300 reward for a colored girl," but did not pay much attention to the description. It was no doubt offered for Caroline. The clerk at the steamer on which Caroline left St. Louis was visiting all the lake ports to advertise her, for the company would be obliged to pay \$300 if she were not found.

This sum they were later obliged to pay.

After dinner we started on our journey, Mr. Beebe going with us as far as the school house. Sunday School was just out and Beebe wanted us to stop as they were all abolitionists and he wanted the people to see Caroline. He told them her history. Several of the young lady teachers came to talk to Caroline. Near by stood a liberty pole. Caroline asked what it was for. The young ladies said, "To commemorate the birth of liberty in America." "What do you do with it?" "Oh, I look at it," was the reply. "Who may look at it?" "May a slave look at it?" "How can it commemorate liberty in a country where there are slaves?" The girls could not answer and the pastor tried to but had difficulty. Caroline had thoroughly befuddled them. She was only sixteen and could neither read nor write, but had natural ability.

The next night a terrific storm brought darkness unusually early. I had been advised to trust the Germans so stopped at a shanty occupied by a German and his wife. The man said they had no extra bed, no fires, no wood or candles, but would do the best they could for us. The poor horse was tired and tied to a fence, Caroline slept with the wife, and the man and I on the floor. We started on or before daylight and that German woman never knew she slept with a colored girl.

From LaPorte we travelled three days among Quakers. The men had all gone to Ohio to attend a Quaker meeting. The women refused everywhere to say anything about an underground railroad but usually said, "Thee can have what thee wants," and would direct me to the next Quaker home at a convenient distance.

"After leaving the Quaker settlement, I was compelled to stop over night about 5 miles from Climax Prairie, Michigan with a man who did not treat us well. Caroline was given a room in which was an old-fashioned loom. On this she hung her reticule in which were her few jewels and the few dollars in money I had given her. In the hurry of starting the next morning the reticule was forgotten and the loss not discovered till we had gone twenty miles. The horse was too tired and our destination too distant to think of turning back."

"At Ann Arbor we were entertained by the editor of the Abolitionist paper of that place. Near Battle Creek we ran across a gang of thirty-two escaped slaves. As large as this group was, everyone was perfectly safe anywhere in the Quaker settlement. I never saw or heard of a Quaker who was not an anti-slaveryite. The same may be said of the Germans, except that some of those who have become Yankeeified."

"We passed through Detroit at six o'clock on Tuesday night -- about three weeks from home --- while the streets were filled with workers on their way home. We arrived safely at Ambler's the last station this side of the Detroit River, his house being separated from the river by a narrow street. He was absent but we were well cared for and his wife sent two men to take us over the river. To them I paid twelve shillings, the first money I had paid out on the whole journey which had been a trip of between five and six hundred miles. After crossing the Detroit River, Caroline began crying and clutched me by the arm, asking if it were possible she was being taken back to St. Louis. It took some time to clear her mind. I left her with Rev. Haskill, a missionary at Sandwich, Canada.

"The clerk of the steamboat whose owners were afterwards compelled to pay \$600. was in Detroit when we got there and had been watching every ferry boat that crossed the river for a fortnight. How long he remained on watch I do not know, but he never found Caroline."

"On the road home, I stopped near Climax Prairie where Caroline had left her reticule. The man refused to give it up. Finally I offered to obtain security from Dr. Dyer of Climax Prairie and to this he agreed. As my horse was very tired, I walked the five miles to the village and had to wait all night for the doctor to get home. On my return with the very strong obligation written by the indignant doctor, I got the reticule and started home. I returned to Milwaukee and to Father Dougherty's in Pewaukee and collected articles which Caroline had not been able to take with her. These with the money and jewels I forwarded to her at Sandwich, Canada through Dr. Porter of Detroit. He wrote me of their safe arrival.

"Caroline had given \$80 to Tibball, the Milwaukee barber, for safe keeping. I went to him to collect it. He said he had never had but \$40 of her money and refused to pay it. I sued him and got a judgment which I called paid when he died about thirty-five years ago."

After Caroline arrived in Canada she obtained some schooling and later married a Mr. Watkins. She wrote me a number of times. One of the letters is as follows:

Sandwich, Apr. 18, 1880

'Dearest Friend,

Pen and Ink could hardly express my joy when I heard from you once more. I am living and have to work very hard but have never forgotten you nor your kindness. I am still in Sandwich--the same place where you left me. Just as soon as the Postmaster read the name to me -- your name--

my heart filled with joy and gladness and I should like to see you once more before I die, to return thanks for your kindness toward me.

-----Dearest friend you don't know how rejoiced I feel since I heard from you. Answer as soon as you get this and let me know how you are and your address.

Caroline Watkins"

Thus ends the story, every detail of which is known to be true, of the first escape of a slave not only from Waukesha County but from the Territory of Wisconsin, the closing incident being the receipt of letters from Caroline thirty seven years after she was hidden in Prairieville or in its vicinity. Connected with incidents like this, the name of Lyman Goodnow will never be erased from the richest pages of American History.