

FREEDOM

THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM

THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM: THE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF RAMPTOWN AND THE MICHIGAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The urge to be free weighs on the hearts of people everywhere. This was certainly true among those Americans of African ancestry who were once enslaved in the American South. Many took great risks to escape the system they knew was unjust. Through their efforts and those of many others, slavery was eventually abolished. This exhibit highlights the history of Underground Railroad activities in Cass County, Michigan and the formation of the Ramptown community in the fields between Cassopolis and Vandalia. It demonstrates that people worked together across the color line to challenge the institution of slavery and work for social justice.

Archaeology can play a role in illuminating the history of the Underground Railroad by recovering and interpreting traces of the past that were lost, abandoned, and discarded by formerly enslaved peoples in the nineteenth century.

Initial research on Ramptown was conducted at the encouragement of the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission and summarized in 2005 by Amanda Campbell and Michael Nassaney in *The Ramptown Project: Documentary and Archaeological Evidence of Underground Railroad Activities in Southwest Michigan*, Archaeological Report No. 23, Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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