



The bustling lower levee on the Mississippi River, where boats coming upriver offloaded passengers, freight, mail, and sometimes fugitive slaves. From Joseph Farr remembers the underground railroad in St. Paul, Minnesota History, Fall 2000.

In one instance, an enslaved man left the Fuller/ International Hotel to Mr. Taylor’s place. “We got him right out into the county, and the next day there was a great ado made about it. He was a valuable man and his master offered a big reward for his capture. We sent him to Point Prescott, Wisconsin, and thought he was safe enough there.” An African American, who was supposed to help, heard of the reward and came into town and “gave the poor wretch up.”

A young mulatto girl who escaped from her master in Galena, was secreted on the boat coming this way with the help of Eugene Berry. “The girl was a handsome, robust creature, and her features were almost masculine, She adopted the familiar disguise of a man, and arrived in St. Paul clad in a suit of finest broadcloth. She was light enough to pass for a white person, and had no difficulty on the boat,” said Joseph in the **St. Paul Pioneer Press**, 1895. “She was young and fine looking and would probably be worth a couple of thousand dollars in the South, so it was a sure thing that there would be a great effort made to find her.” The southerner came to Taylor’s barber shop and offered \$30 to find her. While he talked, the woman escaped with the help of Hywadin, who disguise her and sent to Chicago, and then to Canada. A few months later, Joseph’s uncle got a letter from her, saying that she was safe.

At David and Alpheus Fuller’s hotel, many southern people including a planter who stopped there with his family and an enslaved woman, arrived in St. Paul. After talking to her, she said she wanted to escape. “We fixed everything to get her out of town but it took a couple of days to do it, and before we get all the arrangements made the girl got homesick for her



master’s family and insisted on going back.” Joseph thought it she did not want to escape, it wouldn’t happen, and after promising to say nothing about the people who tried to rescue her.

According to Joseph Farr, the loss of Dr. Franklin, the steamboat, collided with another boat at McCartney, Wisconsin in May of 1854, and Joseph Farr remembered his clandestine activities ended about 1855. Newspapers and the Winslow House register indicated that many parties of southerners and their “servants” (enslaved people) visited the area and stayed at hotels including the Winslow House as late at 1860, according to Swanson in **Minnesota History** Fall 2000.

Joseph Farr and his wife, Sarah, had four children in St. Paul. He died in St. Paul on December 29, 1910 at the age of 78, according to the **St. Paul Pioneer Press**, December 31, 1910.



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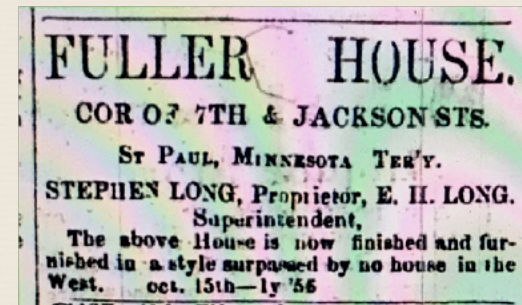
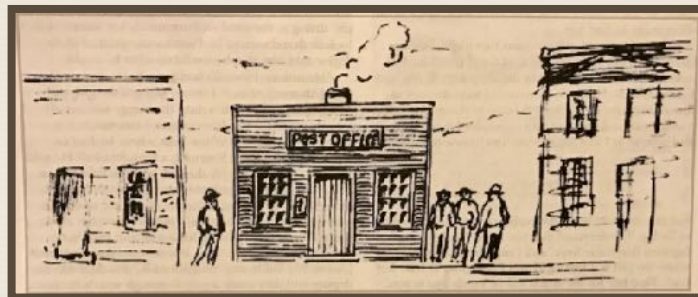


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Joseph Farr

1832-1910



William Taylor and his nephew, Joseph Farr, advertised the St. Paul barbershop and shaving saloon. It was probably located to the left of the post office on Third Street below Minnesota Street in 1852. The sketch on left was by Robert O. Sweeney. On the right is an advertisement about the Fuller House from the Valley Herald in Shakopee City on November 19, 1856.

In the 1800s Saint Paul served as the head of navigation on the Mississippi River. The lower landing provided entry for most of the people and goods coming North. Like many early groups to the region, African Americans settled near the river banks to ensure steady work and food. The river was also a route along the Underground Railroad, providing passage to slaves escaping to Canada, according to CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2008, "Points of Entry: The African American Heritage Guide to Saint Paul," "Lower (Lambert's) Landing," Saint Paul Historical, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://saintpaulhistorical.org/items/show/253>.

Minnesota was created as a free territory in 1849, a year before Joseph Farr arrived in St. Paul from Galena, Illinois. Although slavery was not allowed in Minnesota Territory, many vacationing southerners traveled north up to Mississippi River with the enslaved people during the summers, staying at hotels including the Fuller Hotel (later called the International Hotel), which was located on the northeast corner of Jackson and Seventh Street in St. Paul, and built by David L. Fuller. Later his brother, Alpheus G. Fuller, ran the hotel. The land was given to the brothers, and \$12,000 was raised as a bonus. It was opened on September 25, 1856.

The Fullers accumulated wealth by giving slaveholders lodging (about \$6,000 a month). So even though the Fullers were not from the south, but from Connecticut, they still supported slavery by benefiting from the money collected by southern slave owners, according to Dr. Christopher P. Lehman in a book in 2011 called **Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787-1865: A History of Human Bondage in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.**

The national Fugitive Slave Law, passed in 1850, required that escaped slaves be returning to their owners. This gave a measure of federal protection to owners who either visited the territory with the slaves or those human property managed to come within its boundaries by other means, according to the *CultureBrokers Foundation* in 2008.

During the 1850s, St. Paul was a way station on the the Underground Railroad. Many African American men and women found the way to freedom on the Canadian side through the people who came to their rescue at St. Paul. William Taylor, a barber, James Hywadin, David Edwards, and William Taylor's nephew, Joseph Farr, who helped at the barber shop, and participated in many of the rescuing of the enslaved people.

Joseph Farr told his story in 1895, according to editor Deborah Swanson in an article, *Joseph Farr remembers the underground railroad in St. Paul, Minnesota History*, Fall 2000.

Joseph Farr was involved in the Underground Railroad in St. Paul when he arrived here in 1850. "There was no society or anything of that kind, but we were doing whatever we could," said Joseph. Eugene Berry used to take care of the escaped slaves out of Galena. Another agent in Galena "used to get up all kind of schemes to get the slaves away from their masters. "He would disguise them as well as he could and get them aboard the Dr. Franklin, and then Berry would take care of them and stow them away among the freight." Then Joseph remembered "When the boat came into Saint Paul my uncle, or one of the others...would be at the wharf and the fugitives would be brought to my uncle's house, where I lived, according to *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 1895.



Steamboats visiting St. Paul stopped regularly at cities such as Dubuque, Galena, and St. Louis, with routine connections to Vicksburg and New Orleans. Joseph Farr was a cabin boy on the Dr. Franklin steamboat from 1847-1849, and he became accustomed to seeing the desperate efforts made by slaves who were trying their way to a place of safety, according to an article in the *Minnesota History*, Fall 2000.

