

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

1117

**National Register of Historic Places
Nomination Form**

SEP 17 2007

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tabor Antislavery Historic District
other names/site number Rev. John Todd House, Public Square (Tabor City Park)

2. Location

street & number Park, Center, Orange, Elm streets not for publication N/A
city or town Tabor vicinity N/A
state Iowa code IA county Fremont code 071 zip code 51653

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally X statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Ronell J. Sirke, Deputy SHPO September 13, 2007
Signature of certifying official Date
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain):
Signature of Keeper Linda M. Willard Date of Action 10/31/07

Tabor Antislavery Historic District
Name of Property

Fremont County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	4	buildings
1	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	1	objects
1	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling
LANDSCAPE / park

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / museum
LANDSCAPE / park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID 19th CENTURY

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WOOD / weatherboard

roof ASPHALT
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1852-1859

Significant Dates

1853

1856

1857

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Adams, Samuel H.

Todd Reverend John

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Tabor Antislavery Historic District
Name of Property

Fremont County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property about 12 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>274594</u>	<u>4531120</u>	3	<u>15</u>	<u>274777</u>	<u>4530922</u>
2	<u>15</u>	<u>274777</u>	<u>4531120</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>274594</u>	<u>4530922</u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Lawin McCarley / edited and additions by Lowell J. Soike
organization SPARK Consulting / Iowa Historic Preservation Office date October 12, 2006
street & number 1138 Oneida Avenue / 600 E. Locust Street telephone 563-324-9767 / 515-281-3306
city or town Davenport / Des Moines state Iowa zip code 52803 / 50319

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps: A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name see continuation sheet (at end of document)
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Description

Materials (continued)

BRICK

Narrative Description

The Tabor Antislavery Historic District consists of two primary properties: the Reverend John Todd House and the Public Square (Tabor City Park). Tabor is located on a plateau in northern Fremont County, along the Mills County line. The site was specifically selected in 1852 for its height above the nearby rivers and relatively flat ground. The large public square, approximately 10 acres, was designated with the original town layout and located one block west of Main Street, the north-south stage line through town. Early houses faced this public square. The Reverend John Todd House was built in 1853, and it was the third house constructed in town. It sits on the west side of the square, facing it. It is a simple, one-and-one-half-story, three-bay, side-gable, frame house with later rear additions. In the 1850s, the town of Tabor consisted of fewer than twenty houses, and much of the area was open land. The public square was open ground, used by the townspeople and passing travelers. Early accounts describe few trees anywhere in Tabor. Trees were planted in the public square as early as 1858, and numerous trees currently shade this area. Though 20th century park features have been added to the public square, the openness of these features and the trees continues to convey the feeling of a large open space. Currently, as platted and planned in the 1850s, the area around the Tabor Antislavery Historic District is residential in nature. Commercial buildings are found one block to the east along the north-south Main Street. Both the Reverend John Todd House and the Public Square (Tabor City Park) are significant, contributing properties to this historic district. They are both in excellent condition and continue to be used by the residents of Tabor. The Reverend John Todd House currently operates as a house museum by the Tabor Historical Society, and it was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places with a local level of significance in 1975. The public square is well maintained, with features added to continue to attract the local residents to utilize this public resource.

The integrity of the Tabor Antislavery Historic District is good. Naturally, some changes have occurred to the properties and setting over the last 150 years. The town of Tabor has grown, and more residential properties currently surround the historic district. However, the residential setting of these properties as part of the town of Tabor remains intact. Tabor maintains a distinct small-town flavor, with 993 residents in 2000. The overall, open characteristic and design of the public square, a dominant feature of the district, remains clearly distinct within the current setting. As noted previously, though additional features have been added to the public square, the overall feeling of a large open space remains, which characterized the public square in the 1850s. The Reverend John Todd House conveys the feeling of the 1850s, and the historic association to the events of this period. Changes were made to the house in 1868 and the 1890s, but the original front portion with cellar remains distinguishable. Overall the house possesses key features of its historic design, materials, and workmanship. The historic district and its associated resources have integrity of location, with the Reverend Todd House being on its original site, facing the public square.

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The number of buildings and objects and their contributing or non-contributing status is as follows: The Reverend John Todd House, previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a contributing building. Two recent metal buildings constructed for use by the Tabor Historical Society at the rear of the property are non-contributing buildings. The Public Square (Tabor City Park) is a contributing site to the historic district. Two buildings have been constructed for modern use in the park - the concessions building and new restroom facility - and they are counted as non-contributing buildings in the park. Additionally, the 1910 marker erected to commemorate John Brown's activities is outside the period of significance for the historic district, and it is counted as a non-contributing object.

With further research, the historic district may also be found to have archeological significance as well.

Narrative descriptions of the two main properties - the Reverend John Todd House and the Public Square (Tabor City Park) – are found on the following pages, as well as a brief description of properties no longer associated with this historic district.

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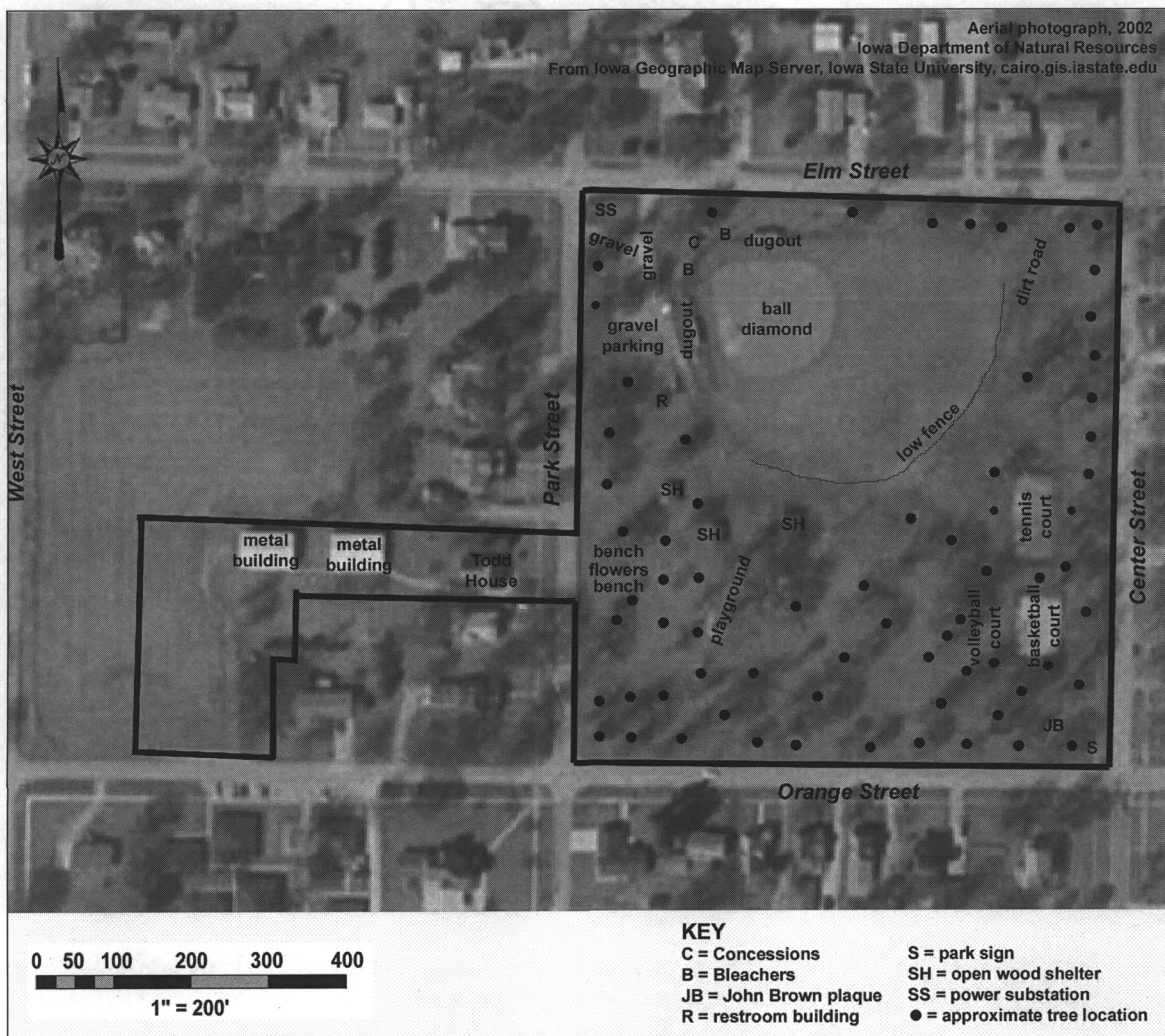


Figure 1. Identified features of the Tabor Antislavery Historic District.

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Reverend John Todd House

The Reverend John Todd House is a one-and-one-half-story, three-bay, side-gable, frame house built in 1853. It was the third house built in Tabor, which was settled in 1852. Currently, it is the oldest house in town. The original portion of the house is the front section with the ridgeline parallel to Park Street. The original 1853 house had a saltbox roof, the rear slope of which was longer than the front slope. The house included the 1 ½ -story front section and a one-story "lean-to" rear wing that evidently spanned the entire north-south length of the house. Quintus C. Todd (son of John Todd) in 1921 noted some changes to the house made over the years (Tabor Historical Society). He writes:

I was only three years old when our people moved in (to the Todd house.) The house was at first built of native lumber, no pine lumber being seen in that section of the state until the arrival of the Northwestern Railway to Council Bluffs in the summer of 1865 or '66. The siding was first of cottonwood from Chambers' Mill two miles southwest of Bartlett. The frame of the first upright portion from the street was with oak hewn timbers carefully braced with a long roof covering the dining room and bedroom on the west. In 1868 an L was built on making the dining room twenty by fourteen feet with one additional bedroom and bath with a fairly good kitchen opening out on the south porch. In 1890 the house was repaired replacing the old siding with pine and adding a porch in front and adding a bay window on the south and lengthening the L in the rear some six or eight feet.

Just the part fronting upon the street without the wide front porch and the bay window on the south was the original building built in 1853. The upright with a lean-to on the west added a dining room and bedroom.

For building the home several were employed, but Father Todd invariably assisted as he had opportunity and to hasten the work. Deacon S. H. Adams made the sashes and doors of black walnut. Marcus Spees worked at the added L in '68 and Wm. Shephardson in finishing off the chambers upstairs. S. H. Adams built the bookcase of black walnut into the house and I doubt its being taken out of the study. The foundation was laid of stone by Origen Cumming some five or six years after the building was finished. A portion of adobe wall, of which several of the earliest houses were built, may still be found in the cellar.

Regardless of the chronology, by the time that John Todd died in 1894, the house appears to have been completed to its present form.¹ It would certainly be recognizable to participants in the events of 1856-57 and John Brown would recognize it if he were here today. Photographs from around the turn of the century show the house in the current form (Figures 2 and 3). At this time, nine-over-six-light double-hung windows are found on the first story, with six-over-six-light double-hung windows on the second story. The rear additions also appear to have six-over-six-light double-hung windows. The house is clad in weatherboards. A chimney is found centered on the main section of the house, and a second chimney is slightly off center on the rear ell. The porch with the current columns

¹ Another suggestion of changes to the property might be construed from a photograph that in 1990 a local newspaper editor, Sidney Newlon, published in a history of Tabor (Newlon 1990: 96). It identified a house as an early view of Todd's house. But close analysis indicates that, while the building bears some resemblance to Todd's house, it is almost certainly that of another house in town.

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is found on the façade, and the south side porch extends along the rear ell. The second story windows on the façade are placed near the center and are oval windows.



Figure 2. c.1904 photograph of Todd House

(Villard 1910: 316).

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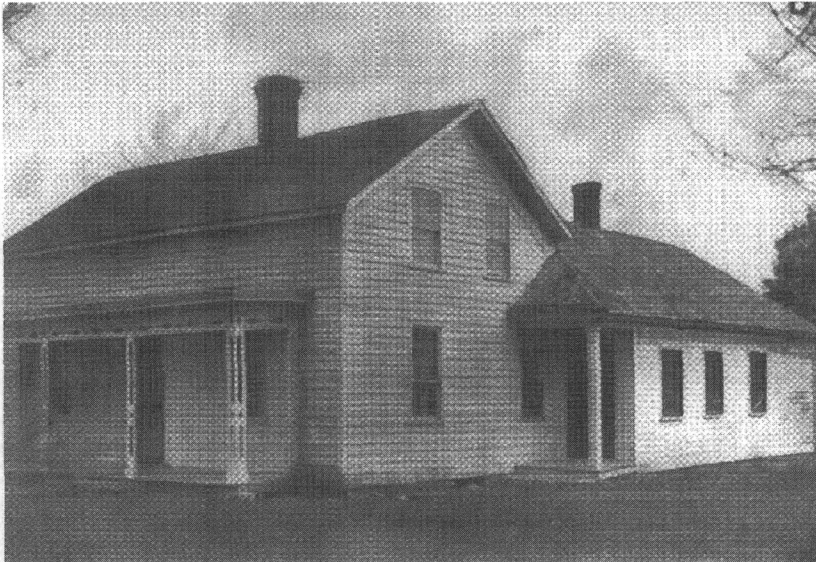


Figure 3. Todd House, undated photograph taken sometime after 1890, from glass negative found in attic

(Tabor Historical Society)

Currently, the Reverend John Todd House reflects nearly the same appearance as these historic photographs, with the exception of some first story window replacement. The façade (east elevation) has a porch that extends nearly the width of the house. The façade (east elevation) has a porch that extends nearly the width of the house. The columns and frieze have a cutout design to the wood components, indicative of the Victorian period. Two small oval windows in the frieze of the facade, spaced only slightly farther apart than the width of the front door centered below them, open into the second story of the house. A chimney, with the top rebuilt, is located near the center of the house.

The north elevation consists of the side of the original section of the house and the offset rear wing. The wide frieze of the facade continues on this elevation. The second story has two six-over-six-light double-hung windows on the original section. Under the front (east) window is a one-over-one-light double-hung window on the first story. To the rear of this window, also on the first story of the house is a smaller, high window. The original double-hung window in this location, seen in Figure 2, has been replaced by a smaller bathroom window. The rear wing projects about five feet beyond the north elevation of the original section of the house. A single-door entry is located in the small east elevation of this addition. Three windows extend along the north side of the addition, spaced evenly but toward the front of the building leaving the westernmost nine feet as a blank wall. The front (east) two windows

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have one-over-one-light double-hung sashes, while the third (west) window has six-over-six-light double-hung sashes.

The south elevation consists of the side of the original house with its lean-to section containing an added bay window, and side of the rear addition or additions. The original section has two six-over-six-light double-hung windows evenly spaced on the second story. One-over-one-light double-hung windows are found spaced slightly further apart below these windows on the first story. A bay window overlaps the east end of the lean-to section and the west end of the front one-and-one-half-story section. It was added in 1890. Two one-over-one-light double-hung windows are found on the south side of the bay window, while one one-over-one-light double-hung window is found on the east and west sides. The bay window has a flat roof with wide eaves, and paneling is found under the windows. The south side of the rear additions has a roof that extends over the side porch. The porch has a new wood floor and retains its turned wood columns (one being repaired in June 2006). The single-door rear entry is roughly centered on this section. A one-over-one-light double-hung window is found near the junction with the lean-to section, and a smaller, high window that was added since 1904 (Figure 3) is near the rear of the elevation.

The rear (west) elevation consists of the rear of the lean-to section to the south and rear of the rear addition. The small exposed rear facade of the lean-to section has a one-over-one-light double-hung window about three feet from the rear ell addition. The rear of the gable-roof ell section has two widely spaced windows on the first story and what appears to be a covered window of similar size on the second story. The north (left) window on the first story has six-over-six-light double-hung sashes, while the south (right) window has one-over-one-light double-hung sashes. A brick chimney is located on the ridge of the roof near the center of the rear ell. A metal pipe vent is located further to the east along this ridgeline.

The first story of the house interior is divided into six main rooms (see Figure 6). The original section of the house follows the hall and parlor layout, with rooms of unequal sizes. The house entry opens into the larger, north room (Room 1A). The stairs to the basement and second story are located offset to the south, within the space dedicated to the smaller, south room (Room 1B). This room also has a closet space (Room 1C) that extends across the west wall, taking up about three feet of the room's overall footprint. The west wall of the larger, north room of the main section has also been extended into the room's space, with the addition of a bathroom (Room 1D). A door leading from this room into the bathroom has been sealed, with entry now gained from the large room of the rear ell. The original lean-to section to the west of the smaller, south room contains a single room (Room 1E). This room was extended with the addition of a bay window in 1890, which overlaps the edge of the main section of the house. The largest room of the house (Room 1F), the east room of the rear ell section, is located to the north of the lean-to room and behind the north room of the main section of the house, extending about five feet to the north beyond the main section of the house. Two rooms open off of this large room to the west: a kitchen (Room 1G) and a smaller bedroom (Room 1H). Throughout the first story of the house, the floors retain wood flooring, the walls and ceiling retain plaster, and the wood moldings are simple. Large square posts are found in the corners of the original house with its lean-to rear section.

The second story of the house has four main rooms of various sizes (see Figure 7). The stairs enter into a small hall space, offset to the south of the center of the house (Room 2E). A small closet is found in this space, which

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has one of the oval windows seen on the front facade. On the south side of the second story are the two smaller bedrooms (Rooms 2A and 2B), connected by a large opening. A closet is found at the northwest corner of the west room, above the stairs. The east room on the north side of the house is a long, large room (Room 2C), with access from the hall. The west room on the north side is accessed through a door in an angled wall off of the hall (Room 2D). It is the largest room on the second story, and is currently used for storage. Throughout the second story of the house, the floors retain wood flooring, the walls and ceiling retain plaster, and the wood moldings are simple. Large square wood posts are found in the four corners of the second story. Additionally, a large beam that spans the post overhangs into the room along the east and west elevations.

As indicated in Figure 5, the basement or cellar of the house is also divided into spaces – one under the main section of the house (Room 0A), one under the lean-to section (Room 0B), and one under the rear ell section (Room 0C). The stairs enter offset to the south of center of the cellar under the main house. A rough cut post is found near the stairs, under the dividing wall of the first story. An earthen “berm” is located around and under the stone foundation of the exterior walls of the main portion of the house. The west wall, currently interior, is still adobe, with no berm found along the part adjacent to the section under the lean-to. The lean-to segment also has stone walls, with a section patched with concrete block. Two wood posts support the open east wall of this section. The basement under the rear addition section has been dug out, though less completely than the other areas. The east wall, along the main section of the house, has a dirt or stone solid ledge about four feet in height and width along this area. A similar berm extends along part of the north wall of this section. Two cisterns/wells were located in this space. The first is near what would be the original exterior northwest corner of the lean-to section, which had extended farther north than the present lean-to section, and is now within the space under the rear ell section. The second is located further to the west, under the kitchen addition, and was accessed by a trap door in the kitchen.

Originally, the property associated with the house consisted of Lots 5, 6, and 7 in Block 12, just under three acres (Figure 4). The small part of Lot 7 was sold by the early 20th century, and the south 66 feet of Lot 5 was sold around 1911, with a new house constructed on this section. The remainder of the property stayed in the Todd family until 1955, when it was sold to the Hall family. In 1967, the Tabor Historical Society acquired the property, and they restored the house as a house museum. Approximately the west 149 feet of Lots 6 and 7 was sold in 2004, resulting in the current boundaries of the property.

Some non-historic features are found on the site of the Todd House property (Figure 1). A front concrete walk extends from the sidewalk along the street to the steps leading to the front entry of the house. A concrete walk also extends from this point around to the south side of the house. At the northwest corner of the front walk and the sidewalk along the street is a brick column with a metal plaque identifying the Todd House and a stone panel on which the board of directors' names are carved. To the northeast of the northeast corner of the house is a circular brick feature with flowers in the center. Near this location is a larger wood sign with a short history of the Todd House. Two large metal buildings, set back on the rear of Lot 5 and on Lot 6, are used for exhibits for the Tabor Historical Society.

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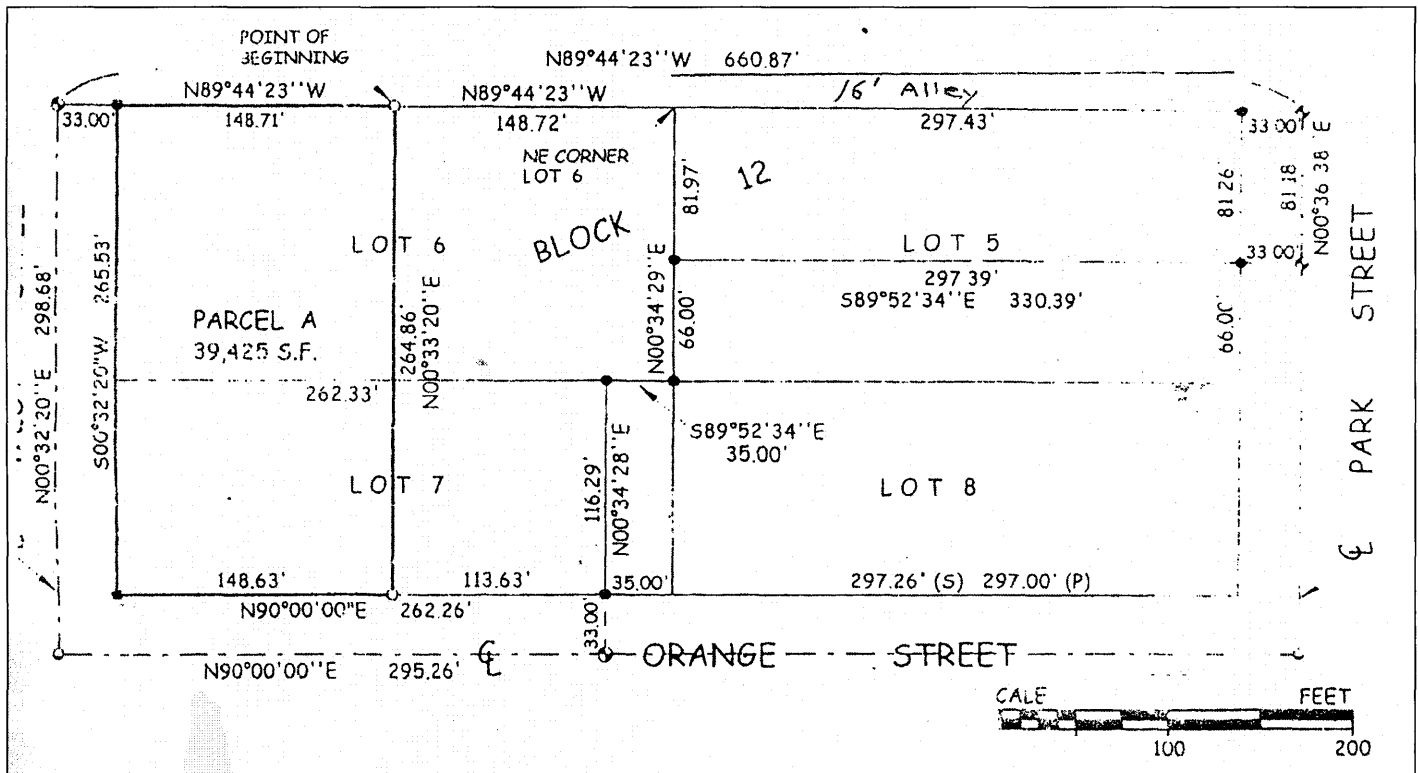


Figure 4. 2004 surveyed plat of the Todd House property

(Tabor Historical Society)

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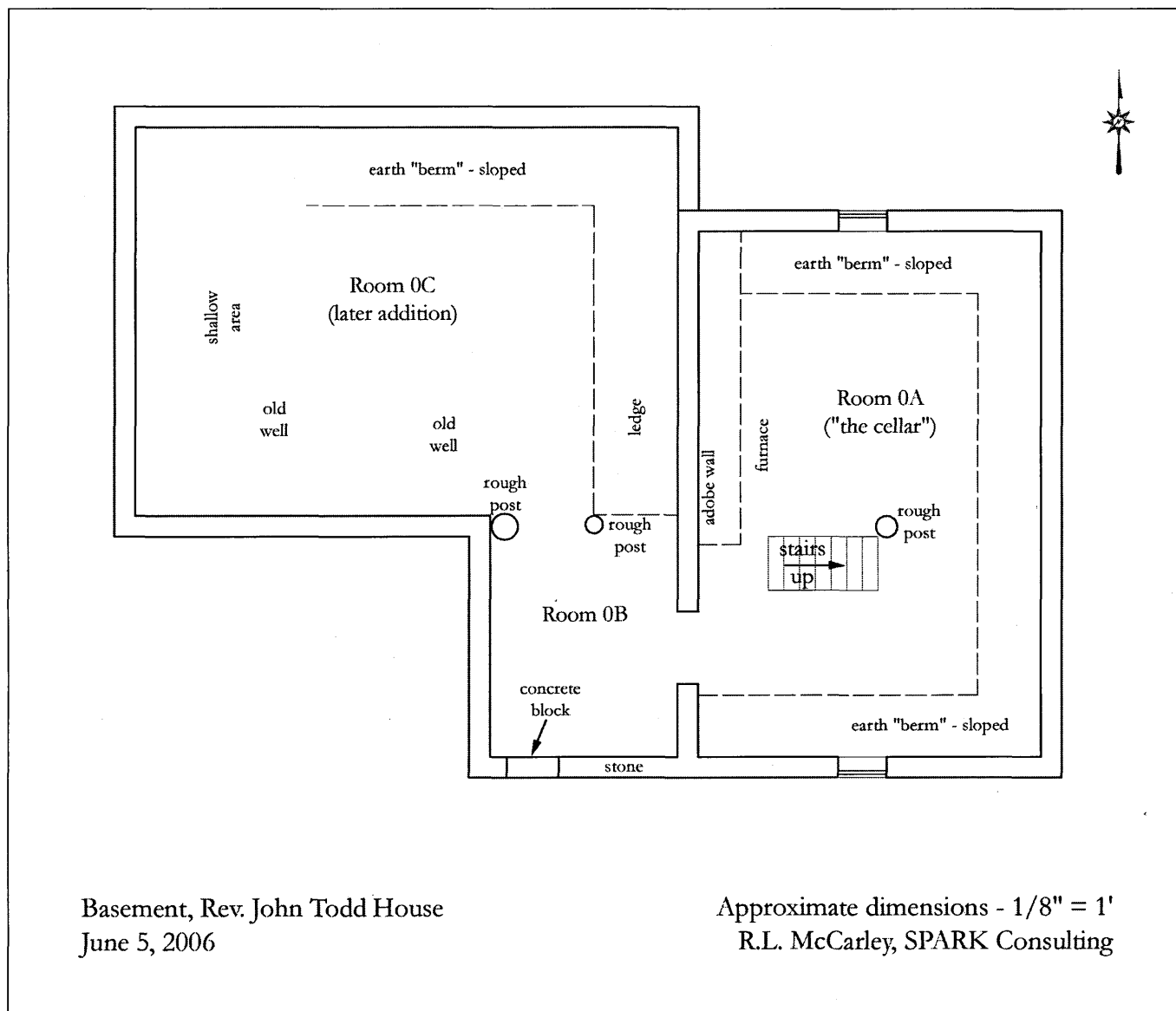


Figure 5. Basement story of the Todd House.

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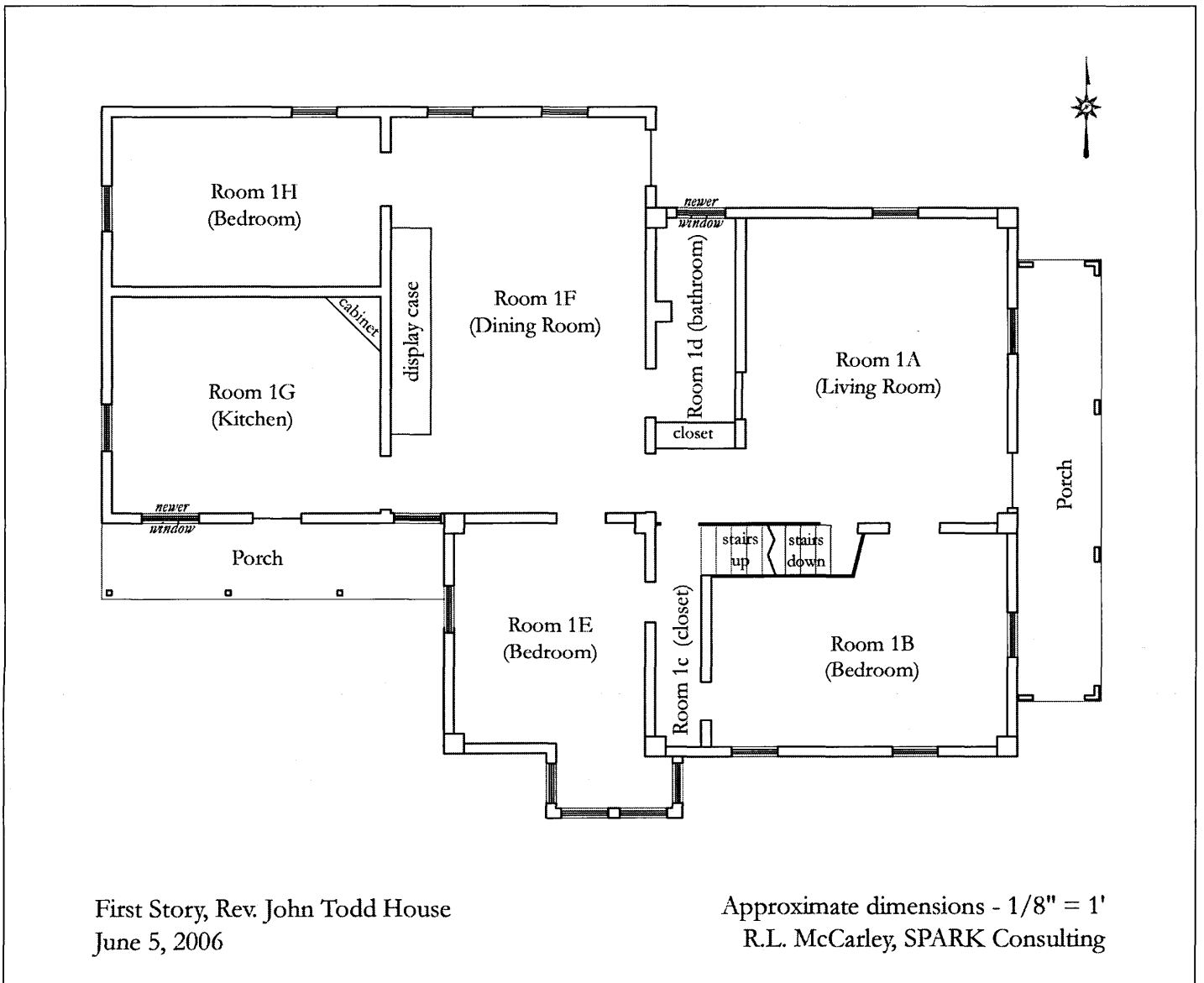


Figure 6. First story of the Todd House.

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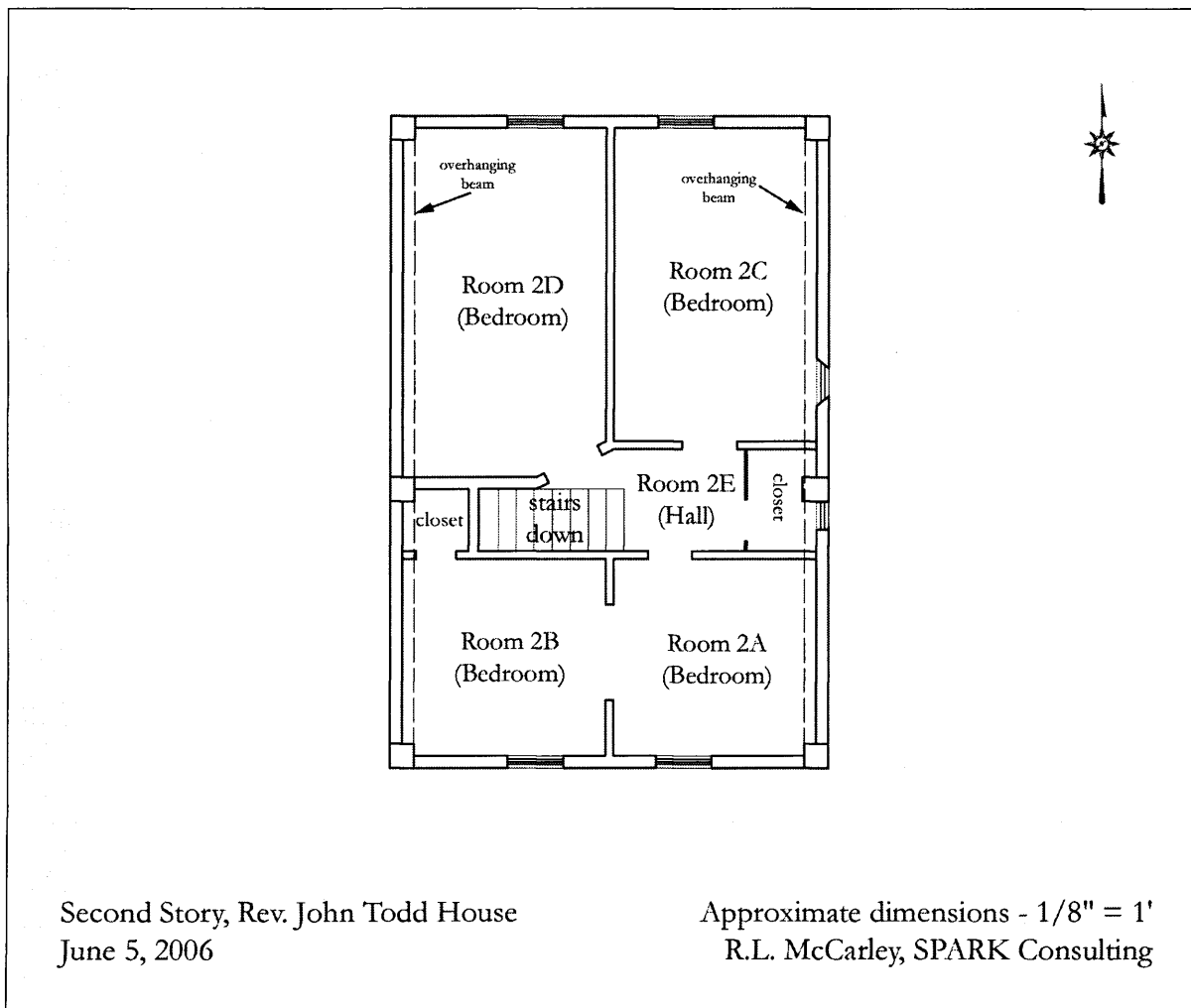


Figure 7. Second story of the Todd House.

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Public Square (Tabor City Park)

From the beginning, the public square in Tabor, currently the Tabor City Park, was envisioned as space for community use. At approximately ten acres, it always has been one of the largest city parks in this section of the state. When the town was officially platted in 1858, the land was designated as the public square, though it had been used for this purpose since 1853 when the first significant settlement began in Tabor. Currently, it is an expansive, open space, mostly covered in grass (Figure 1). Large trees are along the edges of the park and are a hint of a double row once planted. In the far southeast corner of the park is a wood sign that reads "Tabor City Park." Slightly further in on the southeast corner, there is a large concrete marker with a small metal plaque commemorating the association with John Brown, reading:

JOHN BROWN'S
CAMP GROUND 1858-1859
ERECTED BY
THE WOMEN'S CLUB OF TABOR
1910

The dates of 1858 and 1859 are likely intended to reflect Brown's well publicized final journey through Iowa rather than the fact that Brown had also been in Tabor during 1856 and 1857. A bush is planted on the west side of this marker. To the north of this area, there is a grass volleyball court, a basketball court, and a tennis court. On the west side of the park, across from the Reverend John Todd House, is small seating area with a hexagonal flower bed and benches facing it on the north and south sides. In the west half of the park, near the center, are three open shelters with picnic tables. A playground area with some modern plastic equipment and some older play equipment is found to the south of the shelters. The northwest, and extending into the northeast, quadrant of the park is utilized as a ball diamond. A low fence extends around the outfield, with a higher fence behind home plate and in front of the metal bleachers. Dugouts are found on either side, and a scorekeepers' stand is near the south dugout. A concession/storage building, constructed around 1976, is located behind home plate. A newer restroom facility is located to the south of the south dugout and the gravel parking area. A gravel drive leads in from Park and Elm streets to this small parking area. At the far northeast corner of the park is a power substation. Overall, the park is large enough that these features are well spaced and separated by grassy, open areas.

During the time of the 1856 Kansas emigrant trail and John Brown's stays in 1856 and 1857, the public square was an open field. The open space was particularly conducive to the camping and drilling exercises that occurred here. An article on the history of the park notes that there were "in the beginning only a few patches of plum trees for one-half mile in any direction from the town. All was rolling prairies except along the creeks and here and there a marshy place in the low lands" ("Our Town Park," *Cardinal*, March 23, 1925, Vertical files, Tabor Public Library). The first committee to survey the town plat was established in 1854, though the formal plat was not filed until 1858. This land was under the private ownership of town founder George B. Gaston during this period. However, it was utilized as a public square through this time. By March 1858, most of the plat was agreed upon, and one condition was attached: "The land designated as public square is appropriated as such on condition that it is fenced by the people of Tabor within one year from May 1, 1858." A committee of three - M.L. Carpenter, Solomon Jones, and J.L. Smith - was designated to fence the square, taking up a subscription of materials and labor. The committee

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soon decided to also seed the square and plant trees (Farquhar 1943: 366; "Our Town Park," *Cardinal*, March 23, 1925, Vertical files, Tabor Public Library). Thus, when John Brown came through town in February 1859, it was likely that the park was fenced.

Many of the current features of the park date to the late 19th or early 20th century. Reportedly baseball was first played in the park in 1886, though the current ball diamond has late 20th century features. A bandstand was once located in the center of the park. It dated to the 1880s but was demolished for shelter house in 1934. Apparently, the original fence fell into disrepair, and controversy arose in the late 1890s over ownership of the park between Tabor College and the city. On April 1, 1898, the town was given complete control and ownership over the park, with assurance that the college would still be able to use it for their same purposes (Tabor Park, Vertical files, Tabor Public Library). The Women's Club of Tabor announced in early 1910 that they planned to purchase a tablet in memory of John Brown, though with membership limited to 15, it required some fundraising. By December 1, 1910, they had erected a durable cement block with an inclined upper face to receive an inscription in the near future. Apparently, the metal tablet was placed on it soon after this time (*Tabor Beacon*, Tabor Park, Vertical files, Tabor Library). In April 1923, it was noted that the original trees – planted so artistically to resemble a natural grove – were in need of replacement. The soft maple trees were replaced by 52 hard maples with 50 in a row around the outside and two inside. With the park used by travelers, a table and camp stove had been installed in 1922, as well as a flower bed ("Prepare the Park for Future Generations," *Tabor Beacon*). Interestingly, in 1924, the stones from the steps in front of the old George B. Gaston House were moved to the park near the bandstand by L.C. Hume ("The Stones in the Park," *Tabor Beacon*, March 27, 1924).

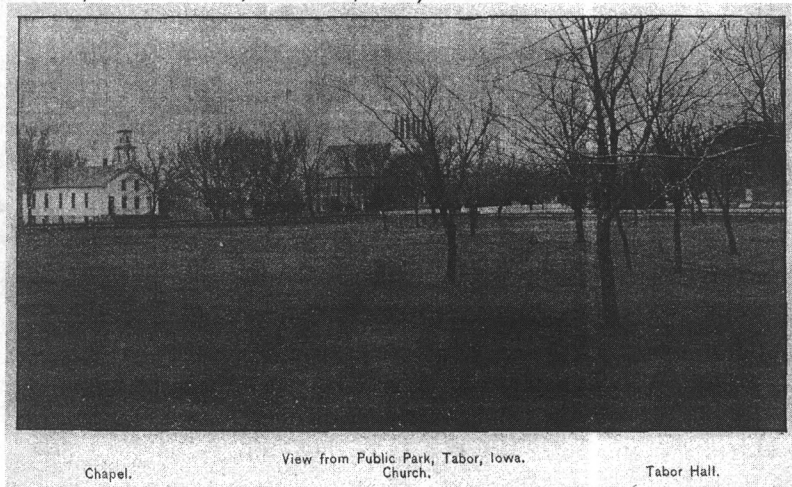
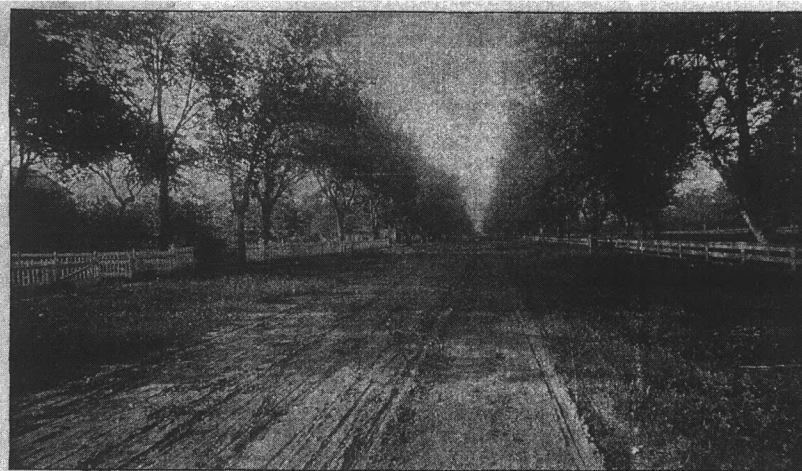


Figure 8. Late 19th century view of the public square from near the center, looking northeast
(From collections of the Fremont County Historical Society, no date, photographer unknown)

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Center street, Tabor, Iowa, looking South. Park on the right, President Brooks' house in the distance at the left.

Figure 9. Late 19th century view of Center Street, with the public square at right, looking south.
Wm. Brooks sold the house at the corner of Center and Orange in 1901.
(From the collections of the Fremont County Historical Society, no date, photographer unknown)

When Tabor College used the park in the early 20th century, it had a ball diamond, tennis courts, band stand, and half mile track, and sports were practiced daily. The college closed in 1927, and the park was converted solely to community use. In the late 1960s, it was used extensively for baseball, picnics, and many events, including the high school reunion and the farmers and merchants picnic. At this time, it was equipped with a drinking fountain, lighted baseball field, picnic tables, restrooms, and children's playground equipment. The concession/storage building to the northwest of the ball diamond was constructed in 1976. Other improvements to lighting and park facilities have been made. A new restroom building was recently constructed.

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Other related properties associated with the events of 1856 and 1857

Three other properties stand out in the history of the significant events in Tabor in 1856 and 1857: the school, the George B. Gaston House, and the Jonas Jones House. One is demolished, and the other two may exist but only in part. A brief account of each is provided here to explain why they were not included in the historic district boundary.

The school was originally located at the northeast corner of Center and Elm streets, diagonally across from the northeast corner of the public square. It was built through community effort in 1854, and thence served as school, church, and public meeting hall. L.E. Webb, who arrived in 1855, described it:

The school house occupied a part of the lot where the Congregational Church now stands. The building was 24 x 30 feet with a ten foot ceiling. This building was, to me, the most modern and home like place in Tabor; and I might say it is so today--what is left of it. This school house was also used as a church, and meetings of all kinds... (Webb 1900)

John Todd later notes that this school stood at this location for about 25 years, or until around 1880 when the parsonage for the adjacent Congregational church was built. At this time, it was moved across Elm Street and to the east by L.E. Webb, who incorporated it into his house (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 579; Todd 1906: 45-46; *History of Fremont County* 1881: 568; Farquhar 1943: 365-66). This house, a tall two-story residence with front cross gable, appears to still stand and is located on the south side of Elm Street near the middle of the block. However, the school portion cannot be determined. With Webb's comment himself in 1900 – "what is left of it" – the school does not retain the physical integrity or appearance that it did in the 1850s, in addition to being moved from its original site. Thus, the house that incorporates the school is not included within this historic district.

George B. Gaston, recognized as the founder of Tabor, built one of the first two houses in town in 1852 on the southeast corner of Park and Orange streets, near the Todd House site and facing the public square. Later photographs of the house indicate it was similar to the Todd House, a one-and-one-half story, side-gable, frame house. This house was located on Lot 5 of Block 14, and it was sold to Henry and Mary Starrett in July 1890, with the lot now known as Lot 1 of Lot 5 of Block 14. A gable-roof addition to the north side (front) was added by Will Starrett in July 1906 (Houses, Vertical Files, Tabor Public Library). The Starrett family continued to own it into the 1970s, by which time the house had fallen into disrepair. On August 18, 1979, the George B. Gaston House was demolished ("127 Year-Old Tabor Landmark; First Home Soon But A Memory," *Beacon-Enterprise*; "Going, Going, Gone!" *Tabor Beacon-Enterprise*, August 22, 1979, Vertical files, Tabor Public Library). A house has been built on this lot since 1979. Thus, this site is not included within the boundary for the historic district.

Finally, the Jonas Jones House was built around 1856 at the northeast corner of Orange and Center streets, facing the park. John Todd reported that this was the first two-story house built in Tabor, as there was concern over the height with the prairie winds (Todd 1906: 47). Unlike the earlier houses, it was a two-story, gable-front, frame dwelling. Its position as the largest house in town may have figured in its involvement in the events over the first few years of its existence. L.E. Webb recollected in 1900 that upon his arrival in May 1855, "Mr. Townsend lived in

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a sod or adobe house where C.A. Barnes' house now stands," which appears to be the Jones property (Webb 1900). Jonas Jones' household in the 1856 Iowa census includes two unrelated carpenters, perhaps indicating the house was under construction. On August 27, 1856, the first mention affirming Jonas Jones residence there is made in connection with the events in Kansas, when Owen Brown writes home and directs his correspondence to Jonas Jones, who served as the local office for much of the emigrant coordination (KSHS - John Brown Collection, #299, Box 1, Folder 17; Item Number: 102546). The Jones' house was later the home of his daughter Adelia and her husband William M. Brooks, president of Tabor College, and it is often referred to in historical accounts of the house of President Brooks. After dividing their property into the Park Place subdivision in 1893, they subsequently moved to Los Angeles and sold the parcel with the house to C.A. Barnes in 1901. According to a note in the *Tabor Beacon* on April 6, 1911: "C.A. Barnes is having his residence property all torn down and remodeled" (*Tabor Beacon*, Houses, Vertical files, Tabor Library). A 1921 letter from Q.C. Todd also notes that people were entertained at the home of "Jonas Jones, original owner of the largest house then in town, then standing where C.A. Barnes' home is now" (Q.C. Todd letter 1921, Tabor Historical Society). Thus, while the existing house is also a two-story gable-front house, it appears to date to construction in 1911 rather than the 1850s. As result, neither this later house nor the site is included within the historic district.

Research has located no other properties in Tabor to be extant and associated with Kansas Free State and antislavery events during the years 1856 to 1859.

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Tabor Antislavery Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the national level of significance. Its importance is based on the property's direct association with the "Free Kansas" movement of 1856-57 and with the activities of John Brown in Kansas before his attack at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Tabor served as a destination for Free State settlers in 1856, as well as a safe harbor for Free State fighters in Kansas and a storage site for weapons and supplies. John Brown used Tabor as a training ground for his men in 1857, working on plans that would conclude in the Harpers Ferry attack in 1859. The role and prominence of Tabor in these events make the historic district nationally significant for its association with western activities of the antislavery movement and Kansas settlement struggle.

The John Todd House has been previously listed as a locally significant building on the National Register of Historic Places. This amended nomination gives recognition to its broader national and regional significance as well and embraces both the Todd House and the Public Square (Tabor City Park) as the key elements of this district. The potential for archeological significance of the public square remains to be examined. This amended nomination replaces the earlier nomination.

The property's historical associations may qualify it for consideration as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) if so recommended by National Register staff. It appears to meet NHL registration requirements contained in the Multiple Property Documentation form completed in September 2000 for the National Park Service on "Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study." Indeed, the Todd House in Tabor is identified on page 49 of the study as a National Register property with significance in the Underground Railroad.

The significant events in Tabor resulted from three converging circumstances: Tabor's location near Missouri's border as a town established by antislavery pioneers, national conflict in the west rising over slavery and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, and John Brown's activities in the Kansas fight against slavery. Consequently, Tabor's southwest Iowa location and its settlers' pronounced antislavery sentiments made the Congregationalist town uniquely positioned to assist in the Free State movement in Kansas.

The first thread: Settlement of Tabor, 1848-1856

The initial settlement of Tabor proper occurred in April 1852, though some of its residents had first settled elsewhere in the county in 1848 and 1850. At the time, and particularly in this southwest Iowa location near the Missouri border, anti-abolitionist sentiment was widespread and Blacks faced strong prejudice even among the residents opposed to slavery in principle. The arrival of this group from Oberlin, Ohio, known for its antislavery stance and inclusion of blacks and females among its college students, invariably brought them into conflict with other settlers. The Congregational Church of Tabor, central to the community, formalized its early policies of antislavery and temperance in October 1853, declaring that slavery should be treated as "any other flagrant sin." Tabor soon became a reputed antislavery community in Iowa.

The town's beginnings traced to Congregationalist missionary activities of the Gaston and Platt families in the late 1840s. In 1837, George Gaston married Maria Cummings, and soon they went as missionaries among the Pawnee

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Indians in Nebraska through the Congregational Church's American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). After serving as a missionary for five years and government employee for two years, health issues compelled them to return to Oberlin Ohio in 1845. But George did not forget the people or potential of the western prairies (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 574-75). Meanwhile, in 1847, Lester and Elvira Gaston Platt (George Gaston's sister), after attending Oberlin College in Ohio, moved to what would be Nebraska to replace Gaston as missionary among the Pawnee Indians on the Loupe fork of the Platte River. Eventually they settled in southwestern Fremont County near the Missouri River.

Meanwhile, plans for a new settlement similar to that in Oberlin percolated in George B. Gaston's thoughts throughout the summer of 1847. He had been impressed with the Missouri River valley and witnessed the good influence of Oberlin on the frontier of Ohio. He began to envision a settlement on the frontier that focused on the combination of religion and education offered in Oberlin. In nearby Clarksfield, Ohio, Gaston found a young twenty-nine year old Congregational minister willing to consider joining the westward bound party. After considerable discussions, Rev. John Todd agreed to participate in the planned frontier colony venture.²

In September 1848, Gaston's assembled group started from Oberlin, Ohio, for Lester and Elvira Platt's homestead in southwest Iowa.³ They arrived at the Platt's home in October near what would be the future town of Percival. There they met some similar minded neighbors in the family of Dr. Ira D. Blanchard who had served at a Baptist mission among the Indians in Kansas, as well as other neighbors from West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 575-76; Todd 1906: 20-27).

The new arrivals settled near the Platt home as being the most desirable. In this hamlet of Civil Bend, Gaston fixed up an abandoned log cabin for the winter, and the settlers worked all winter to cut and hew logs for building construction in the spring (Jacobs, March 14, 1940). The Union Church at Civil Bend was organized over the winter and continued until around 1854 (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 575-76).

Soon, however, the settlers—being near the river—faced mosquitoes and ague (malarial fever) and then a flood that spread through the Missouri River bottoms in 1851. This influenced the decision of the county to locate its county seat at Sidney near the center of Fremont County and prompted John Todd and George Gaston at Civil Bend to look for higher ground as well (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 577; Todd 1906: 42; Farquhar 1943: 347).

In the summer of 1852, the men had acquired a site for the town of Tabor. Samuel H. Adams assembled four poles in a square to signify the foundation of his home and claim preemption status for 160 acres. He then hauled up

² The most complete account of John Todd's life is found in James Patrick Morgans, *John Todd and the Underground Railroad: Biography of an Iowa Abolitionist* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006). See also John Todd, *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa or Reminiscences* (Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1906).

³ The party included George B. and Maria C. Gaston and their children Alexander C. (age 10), Alonzo M. (age 8), and Euphelia (age 5); Samuel H. and Caroline Matthews Adams, Caroline's brother Darius P. Matthews, Josiah B. Hall, and Reverend John Todd. They traveled in wagons to Bellevue, Ohio, and then by train to Cincinnati. They followed the Ohio and Missouri rivers west into and through Missouri, and Todd later recalled getting into a debate over slavery while sailing. Upon landing in St. Joseph, Missouri, they bought horses for the wagon, for Hall, and for Todd, and they continued north to Iowa.

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parts of his house near Civil Bend to complete the dwelling. G.B. Gaston built a new one-and-one-half-story frame house with one-story section on the south (rear). Both houses were complete in July 1852, and the families moved to Tabor. Adams' house would later be incorporated into the barn of James L. Smith, while Gaston's house would survive until demolition in 1979 (Todd 1906: 43; FCHBC 1996: 48; Jacobs, March 14, 1940; Farquhar 1943: 347). Several names were submitted for a post office, and Tabor was selected. In June 1852, the county Washingtonian Temperance Society was organized in Sidney, with mostly people from Tabor and Civil Bend (Todd 1906: 43; Farquhar 1943: 348). Four months later they formed the Congregational Church of Tabor. Eight persons joined—the two Gastons with their two sons, two Adamses, and the two Todds. Church members reserved the first Monday of the month for a prayer meeting on behalf of missions in conjunction with a meeting of American Board of Congregational Foreign Missions, and the last Monday they set aside for an antislavery prayer meeting (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 578; Todd 1906: 20; Farquhar 1943: 348). Thus, from their initial formation, Tabor and its Congregational Church were antislavery at their core.

The next year brought additional families to the town of Tabor. Work also progressed on a house for Reverend John Todd in town, built of native timber. Samuel Adams served as town carpenter, completing the sash and door for the house. Todd moved in during August 1853. The original house consisted of four main rooms, with a rear ell added in 1868. This house continues to stand with the rear additions and 1890s modifications. Church services were held in the northwest room of George B. Gaston's home on the southeast corner of Orange and Park streets. Jesse West became the postmaster and blacksmith, and soon began to build the first hotel (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 578-79; Todd 1906: 45; FCHBC 1996: 48; Letter of Q.C. Todd 1921, Tabor Historical Society; Farquhar 1943: 350).

A strong antislavery policy soon identified this community. On September 2, 1853, Todd, West, and Gates were appointed as a committee for the Congregational Church to "prepare an expression of sentiment in relation to slavery, temperance, and mission boards." Their report, presented on October 5, read:

- I. Believing that the gospel breathes 'peace on each and good-will to men,' and that 'there is no respect of persons with God,' we regard American slavery as essentially hostile to the principles of christianity, and all who in any way uphold it as so far occupying a position inconsistent with christian benevolence.
- II. Cursed as our country is, with the institution of slavery – an institution that has not only *withstood* the indirect application of gospel principles for two hundred years, but has in the meantime extended greatly its bounds and multiplied its victims – we believe the time has come to treat the holding of men as slaves as we would treat any other flagrant sin.
- III. In obedience to the divine injunction 'remember them that are in bonds as bound with them,' we feel constrained to bear testimony in every proper way against this giant sin of our land; and consequently we will not admit slave-holders or apologists for slavery to the privileges of the church, nor will we patronize mission boards that support churches in which slaveholding is not treated as a disciplinable offense.
- IV. We cordially concur in the principles of the American Reform Book and Tract Society, and also the American Missionary Association, and believe them worthy of the confidence of the christian world.
- V. *Resolved*, That this church will admit no persons as members who make, vend, use, or provide intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

(Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 578-79)

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This set the tone of the Congregational Church at Tabor, as well as that of the community. To further the temperance aspects of these activities, the Tabor Washington Temperance Society was organized in Tabor, auxiliary to the Fremont County society, on February 22, 1855 (Todd's history of church in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 585-86).

Though Tabor was not formally established until May 1, 1858, the town's general layout reflected Gaston's educational and religious vision of the community's beginnings in 1854 (Figure 10). Main Street was a north-south route to the east of the center of the platted area, measuring 80 feet in width. The remaining streets were 66 feet in width, with one 16.5-foot alley near Reverend Todd's house. By 1854, Tabor also had the benefit of a location along a stagecoach line (Figure 11). It carried mail and passengers from St. Joseph, Missouri, north through Sidney and Tabor in Fremont County, Glenwood in Mills County, and finally to Council Bluffs (Todd 1906: 47).

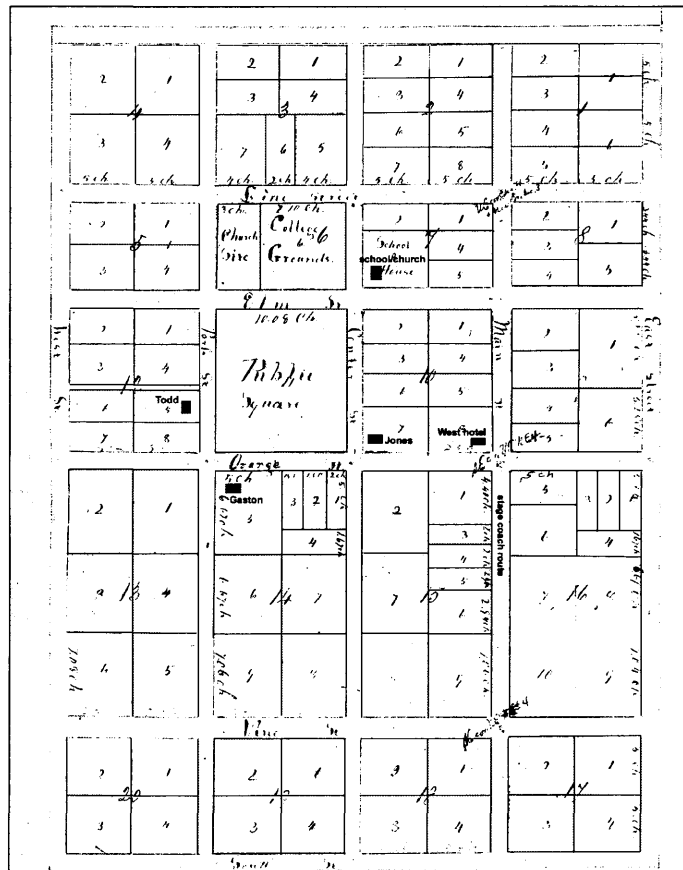


Figure 10. 1858 plat of Tabor, with selected sites present in 1856 identified.

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Figure 11. Southwest section of Parker's sectional & geological map of Iowa, 1856.

On May 1855, when L. E. Webb stepped off the stage in front of Jesse West's hotel, he saw a town "comprised of about a dozen houses, most of them being log huts, while a few were of sod"⁴ These were soon replaced with

⁴ Webb's full recollections of the character of Tabor were: "The town proper at that time was comprised of about a dozen houses, most of them being log huts, while a few were of sod. Mr. Townsend lived in a sod or adobe house where C.A. Barnes' house now stands, while William Madison lived almost directly across the road west in the house built of the same kind of material. Mrs. Webster lived in a log cabin where Mr. W. G. Gregory's house now stands, Old Mr. Matthews lived in the house now owned and occupied by 'Squire Ivory.' The hotel spoken of above had for its landlord Jesse West, who was also postmaster. He was also the village blacksmith. And that is not all—he was the father of 'Squire A. T. West.' W. J. Gates lived across the road (then known as Orange Street, as it is today) from the hotel, in a log house near where Mrs. Reader now lives...Mr. G. B. Gaston lived over on Park Street, in the house now occupied by H. M. Starrett. S. H. Adams was then living where F. M. Laird now lives, altho in quite a different house.

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houses of sawed lumber construction, for in 1891 the newspaper editor commented on how: "The buildings were not hastily and rudely constructed, but were put up for long continued use. Many of the buildings erected thirty and forty years ago are standing today and are a continual testimony to the care and skill used in their erection" (*Tabor Beacon* 1891: 9)

Amid the tasks of community building Tabor residents soon ruffled outsiders with their voiced antislavery convictions. A September 1, 1855 notice states: "A meeting of the Antislavery friends of Fremont County will be held in Sidney on Saturday September 15, 1855 at 11 o'clock A.M. All interested in resisting the encroachments of American slavery are invited to attend. Addresses alternating with appropriate music may be expected on the occasion." What then happened Samuel H. Adams later recalled after he went there with John and Martha Todd and Elvira Platt from Civil Bend. A rowdy group of drunks outside the meeting harassed them and he felt that they narrowly escaped town, but only after he amended the disparaging comments he had voiced about the crowd (Todd 1906: 48; *Tabor Beacon*, November 24, 1905 – vertical files, Tabor Library).

In addition to antislavery meetings, Tabor residents lent direct assistance to fugitive slaves. The first occurrence took place on July 4, 1854. A Mormon family traveling to Salt Lake City from Mississippi stopped at Tabor to camp for the night on the west side of Main between Elm and Orange. At the time, Jesse West's hotel was under construction, and two slaves spoke with the builders as they retrieved water from his well. They learned that five of the six slaves desired their freedom, including a man and family of four. Samuel H. Adams and Jesse West organized the escape, assisted by John Hallam, James K. Gaston, and Henry Irish, an apprentice of West. They and the fugitives escaped across the Nishnabotna River east of Tabor and hid in the bushes while George B. Gaston went to C.W. Tolles' on Silver Creek to make further arrangements. Todd later reported that "On their way out, they had some narrow escapes, but were delivered from all their foes." When the Mormon elder awoke in the morning, he sent out a search party of residents further to the south. However, one antislavery person was included and insured that the fugitives escaped detection. In a day or two, Cephas Case and William L. Clark took the five to

Mr. Todd's house is the same in appearance in front as when I first saw it, and it is the only place that is today owned and managed by the same family that owned it at that time. The title has never been changed to any other since the beginning of things in Tabor. Mr. J. L. Smith was living on the place now owned by H. R. Laird, and, if I mistake not, the old house is now part of Mr. Laird's barn. The next house was that of Origen Cumings, about 80 rods south, the house and land now being a part of the L. A. Matthews estate. The next place was John Rhode's about a mile south of Mr. Cumings' house.

I think I have given a full list of all the houses that were in Tabor in 1855, including those that were outside of what we now call Tabor. The school house occupied a part of the lot where the Congregational Church now stands. The building was 24 x 30 feet with a ten foot ceiling. This building was, to me, the most modern and home like place in Tabor; and I might say it is so today--what is left of it. This school house was also used as a church, and meetings of all kinds - town meetings, arbor and horticultural meetings, township and state elections, and by the debating society. Court also convened in it; and some very important cases were tried in it, contested by the best legal talent of the times--almost equal to some of that profession we have among us at present.

There was a street running east from Main to Park Street, and Orange and Elm Streets were open for travel from Main to Park Street. The only streets running south were Main and Park streets. All south of Orange Street, from Main to about where George Greenlee now lives, and south to Vine Street, was in wheat. It was in this field the first J. H. Manny reaper I ever saw was cutting grain.

There were no stores in Tabor at that time, and Sidney and Glenwood were the nearest trading points.

(Webb, L. E. "Tabor 45 Years Ago," *Tabor Beacon*, May 11, 1900, reprinted as "Memories," *Beacon-Enterprise*, February 21, 1985)

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Reverend George B. Hitchcock in Lewis, and they later escaped across Iowa to Illinois, entering Canada at Detroit (Todd 1906: 60; Berrier, 2001: 54)

Tabor was one of only a few communities in central and western Iowa where its residents shared firm antislavery attitudes. The other main antislavery strongholds during these years were found in southeast Iowa while most elsewhere in the state expressed weak or mixed commitments to antislavery. Across the state, the antislavery cause was only beginning to gain momentum in the early 1850s. The Compromise of 1850, which included the controversial Fugitive Slave Act, was widely viewed to benefit Southern slaveholders and place obligations on Iowans to retrieve for them their escaped slaves. The Compromise did bring about a quiet period of political relief, but then came the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which incited antislavery feeling in Iowa and thrust Tabor into the national spotlight.

The second thread: National conflict over slavery and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854

The debate over the organization of the Nebraska territory in 1853 and 1854 brought slavery front and center in national politics and debate. The desire to create a new territory to the west of the Missouri River was sweeping through the region and western Iowa, partly in hopes to secure a transcontinental railroad route across Iowa. On December 5, 1853, Senator Augustus C. Dodge from Iowa announced his intention to bring in a bill establishing the territorial government of Nebraska and upon introducing it nine days later, the bill was referred to the Committee on Territories, which included Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and George W. Jones of Iowa. The question of slavery's future in these territories at that moment was governed by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery above the southern boundary line of Missouri (Rosenberg 1972: 80-82; Sage 1974: 122).

On January 23, 1854, Stephen A. Douglas, chair of the Senate committee, issued a report. Among other recommendations, it called for the territory to be divided in two – Nebraska and Kansas – at the 40-degree parallel. More importantly, the report ignored the Missouri Compromise by allowing people living in the territories to decide for themselves the question of slavery's status. This approach—termed popular sovereignty—was what had been done for the territories of Utah and New Mexico. At first Douglas downplayed the conflict between this recommendation and the Missouri Compromise of 1820, but northern antislavery Whigs and strong pro-slavery southern Democrats made the bill a testing ground of the slavery question and adherence to past legislation. Missouri and the southern legislators pushed for further assurances that all new territories would be open to slaveholders, creating a proposal that voided the 1820 compromise as inconsistent with the new nonintervention position of Congress as legislated in the Compromise of 1850. Ultimately, Douglas won the support of popular sovereignty for the territories from President Pierce, as well as the southern legislators and enough northern Democrats to pass the bill. After four months of debate and drafting, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was signed into law on May 30, 1854 (Figure 12) and the Missouri Compromise on slavery was gone.

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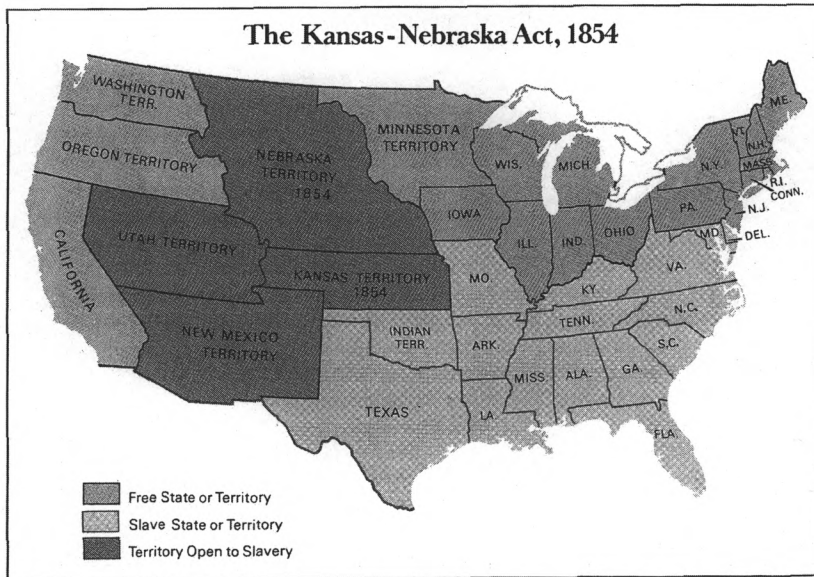


Figure 12. Resulting composition of the United States with the Kansas-Nebraska Act

(Bailyn, et al. 1992: 566).

The question of whether Kansas would become a free or slave state quickly opened the floodgates of national debate. Although Nebraska territory was less conducive to the kind of plantation agriculture typically associated with slavery, Kansas did share a border with slave states or territories on two sides and was well within the typical northern edge of Southern slavery in the United States.

Missourians in particular had a large stake in the outcome of the slavery question in Kansas. If Kansas became antislavery, Missouri would be surrounded on three sides by free states. This situation the politically powerful slaveholders saw as a direct threat to their property (slaves) and to the future of slavery in Missouri. Though roughly one in eight Missouri families owned slaves, which was but half that of those in states of the Deep South, Missouri's some 90,000 slaves in 1855 still comprised a large number (Reynolds 2005: 140).

The stage for confrontation in Kansas was set by the time that the territorial governor Andrew Reeder arrived in October 1854. The first election to send a delegate to Congress was set for November 29, and both sides mounted the "get out to vote" campaign in unprecedented manners. Senator David Rice Atchison of Missouri spoke in Weston, Missouri on November 6, 1854, urging Missouri residents to take action: "If a set of fanatics and demagogues a thousand miles off [in New England] can afford to advance their money and exert every nerve to

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abolitionize Kansas and exclude the slaveholder, what is your duty, when you reside within one day's journey of the Territory, and when your peace, quiet, and property depend on your action?" (Reynolds 2005: 141; Villard 1910: 94). The call was heard by a group of Missourians—soon labeled as "border ruffians" by free state settlers—that crossed the border into Kansas and voted for the proslavery candidate. Overall, 1,729 fraudulent votes were cast, about 60% of the total, and no attempts were made to conceal their effort. As free state sympathizer John Todd of Tabor saw it, this action prevented an "an honest vote of the *bona fide* settlers of the country" (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 588).

And in the territorial government elections in March 1855, border ruffians again did their part to insure slavery in Kansas. On March 30, 1855, over 4,900 votes of 6,307 votes cast (around 80%) came from what free state settlers termed proslavery "invaders." The result was that 38 out of 39 seats went to proslavery representatives. Governor Reeder attempted to reign in some of the fraud, refusing to allow certain men to vote (Reynolds 2005: 141; Villard 1910: 99; Todd 1906: 48, 50)

While Missourians organized Blue Lodges, Social Bands, and Sons of the South groups to promote slavery in the territory, northern states—especially New England—organized Emigrant Aid Societies to promote the antislavery, or "Free State," cause. As emigrant aid companies in the East helped send companies of settlers to Kansas thousands more came from Ohio and Illinois, most traveling through Missouri by way of the river.

Meanwhile, though Governor Reeder declared the fraudulent "bogus legislature" invalid, the representatives continued to meet, passing numerous pro-slavery laws for Kansas, which free state settlers refused to recognize. Numerous attacks on men and property heightened tension and conflict came into full force in early 1856. Free State elections were held on January 15, 1856 with general quiet, except in Leavenworth where the pro-slavery mayor prohibited it. President Pierce affirmed the pro-slavery leadership, proclaimed the pro-slavery legislature legitimate regardless of voting fraud, declared his support for the pro-slavery Lecompton constitution and opposition to the Free State government in Topeka, and he assigned the Congressional seat to pro-slavery J.W. Whitford. Nevertheless, on March 4, 1856, a Free State legislature met in Topeka to choose a representative, act on the constitution ratified by popular vote, and elect James H. Lane and Andrew Reeder as senators (Reynolds 2005: 147-50; Villard 1910: 106-08, 128-32; Dykstra 1993: 132-34. Still, by the end of May, the national administration's endorsement of political measures taken by pro-slavery forces appeared to give them the upper hand, with leaders on the other side left struggling to rally additional support for the Free State cause.

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Figure 13. Map of Kansas and Missouri around 1854, with the addition of southwest Iowa communities.

(Goodrich 1998: 6).

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Figure 14. Detail map of the Kansas-Missouri border and key sites in the Kansas conflict, 1854-59.

(Rawley 1969: 2).

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The third thread: John Brown enters the Kansas fray 1856

John Brown was unknown to many in 1856, but his attack at Harpers Ferry three years later thrust him permanently into national history. Many would condemn his militant actions; others would see him a national martyr for the antislavery cause as Civil War loomed. His antislavery convictions dated back to his childhood and life near Oberlin, Ohio and his desire to attack slavery grew during adulthood. The troubles in Kansas added to his conviction that a physical attack and war would be necessary to abolish the institution. Kansas events created a new avenue for John Brown to pursue his lifelong fight against slavery. Brown's unflinching actions against proslavery incursions brought him support from parties aiding the Kansas cause. In the process, by 1857 he adopted Tabor for what biographer Stephen B. Oates called "Brown's secret headquarters" (Oates 1970: 177).

During fall 1854, John Brown and his family were moving back to his North Elba, New York, farm, following financial reverses, while his sons Owen, Frederick, and Salmon were leaving Ohio for Kansas, driving 11 head of cattle and 3 horses. After wintering in Meridosia, Illinois, the three sons and their families settled in the vicinity of Osawatomie, Kansas around April 20, 1855. Soon after his arrival, John, Jr. wrote to father: "the friends of freedom are *not one fourth of them half armed*, and as to *Military Organization* among them it *no where exists in this territory* unless they have recently done something in Lawrence." He asked his father to inquire of Gerrit Smith or another to loan money for arms until it could be paid back from the free soil of Kansas. John Brown noted that upon receipt of the letter, he "fully resolved to proceed at once to Kansas and join his children" (Villard 1910: 83-84). John Brown arrived just in time for the Free State election on October 9, 1855.

Within a month, following the killing of a Free State man near Hickory Grove and reported preparations to attack Lawrence, a call had gone out for Free State men to come to the defense of Lawrence. John Brown mustered together a company of "Liberty Guards," at Osawatomie on November 27, which included John, four sons, and 15 other men. John, Jr. was sent out as scout, and the company set out for Lawrence, arriving on December 7. With a negotiated agreement worked out by Governor Shannon, however, no fighting ensued. They returned to Brown's Station on December 14, and elections on the Free State constitution followed on December 15 (Villard 1910: 118-121; Reynolds 2005: 146-147).

Five months later, however, when 750 proslavery men attacked Lawrence on May 21 and looted and destroyed property, Brown's anger reached the boiling point. With his sons, John attacked pro-slavery men who were active in politics or had personally challenged his family. By the morning of May 25, James Doyle and his sons William and Drury, Allen Wilkinson, and William Sherman lay murdered. While the event shocked many, this and Brown's subsequent guerilla attacks spread fear of him among proslavery elements (Reynolds 2005: 158-159, 166-175, 180-81; Todd 1906: 51; Villard 1910: 150-185, 193-197). Meanwhile, articles carried by newspapers in the East began to create the legend of John Brown, and the terror he would inflict on pro-slavery men. John Brown used this reputation to his benefit when working with the Kansas aid societies, which then gained him the support of key abolitionists for his broader personal crusade against slavery.

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Iowa, Tabor, and the emigrant trail to Kansas, 1856

The summer of 1856 found Free State advocates reeling from initial proslavery success in organizing the territory and the increased armed conflict against Free State settlers. Missouri forces increasingly stopped new groups of settlers from moving across Missouri, virtually shutting down this river route.

Heretofore, settlers that traveled across Missouri by river steamboat, with a portion being by railroad or stage, had entered Kansas at ferry crossings. While proslavery forces had occasionally forced Free State settlers to turn back to Illinois before they crossed Missouri, with the escalation of conflict in Kansas in May, they also began to block ferry crossings within Missouri to any Free State person (Goodrich 1998: 143; Dykstra 1993: 137; Villard 1910: 214-15). Kansas historian William Connelly noted: "On the 10th of June, the blockade was so completely organized that no boat could reach Kansas without permission of these guards. If arms were found in possession of the passengers, they were seized and the emigrants sent back. Later it was the custom of the Border-Ruffians to seize all property carried by emigrants for Kansas, and all shipments consigned to the people of Kansas" (Connelley 1918: 606). As such, Lane's need for a "line of communication" made Iowa the only feasible route to Kansas. With the railroad to Iowa City and Mississippi River bridge open in late April 1856, Iowa City was now the westernmost point north of the slave states served by railroad from Chicago (Dykstra 1993: 137).

Seeing the difficulties Free State settlers faced crossing Missouri, General James H. Lane, a key leader of the Free State movement, sought and found support for a land route through Iowa from key leaders in Iowa, including Governor Grimes and William Penn Clarke. A Kansas Central Committee of Iowa was formed, with William Penn Clarke as the chair, whereupon they called a mass meeting in Iowa City on June 10. There the committee declared: "we have here pledged *our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honors* to make Kansas a *free State*" and committee-men quickly worked to establish a trail for emigrants across Iowa (Dykstra 1993: 137). Representatives from various towns pledged aid to emigrants (Noble 1977: 31). Meanwhile, a number of emigrants began to gather in Iowa City as the head of the trail, and the newspaper reported that Lane returned on June 14 to coordinate the arrival of a number from Chicago, who would then total around 500. They also had cannons and arms, and they were aided by contributions from Chicago and other places. By June 25, it was reported that the overland route across Iowa was mostly determined (Dykstra 1993: 138).

With designation of the route imminent, emigrants began to travel the anticipated route. Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson of Worcester, Massachusetts, had sent off one party and was organizing another party, raising \$2,000 from Boston merchants on June 21. He received a request from Chicago on June 22 to send the funds "for the relief of a large party of emigrants, detained at Iowa City for want of means" (Dykstra 1993: 138). The Kansas Central Committee of Iowa met again on July 4, 1856 in Iowa City to publicize the route through a circular to be distributed nationally. The route extended from Iowa City to Sigourney to Oskaloosa to Knoxville to Indianola to Osceola to Quincy to Sidney in Fremont County.

But when they discovered the mixed slavery sentiment at Sidney, Free State leaders shifted the western terminus of the route north to antislavery Tabor (Noble 1977: 32). Overall, the "Lane Trail" was "more of a route than a trail since most of it went through or near established communities" and it was named after him in honor of his early advocacy for it (Noble 1977: 30). Portions of the trail were marked by blazed trees, poles on prairie, and piles of

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stone. The route continued through Nebraska into Kansas, crossing the Missouri River at Nebraska City (Noble 1977: 33).

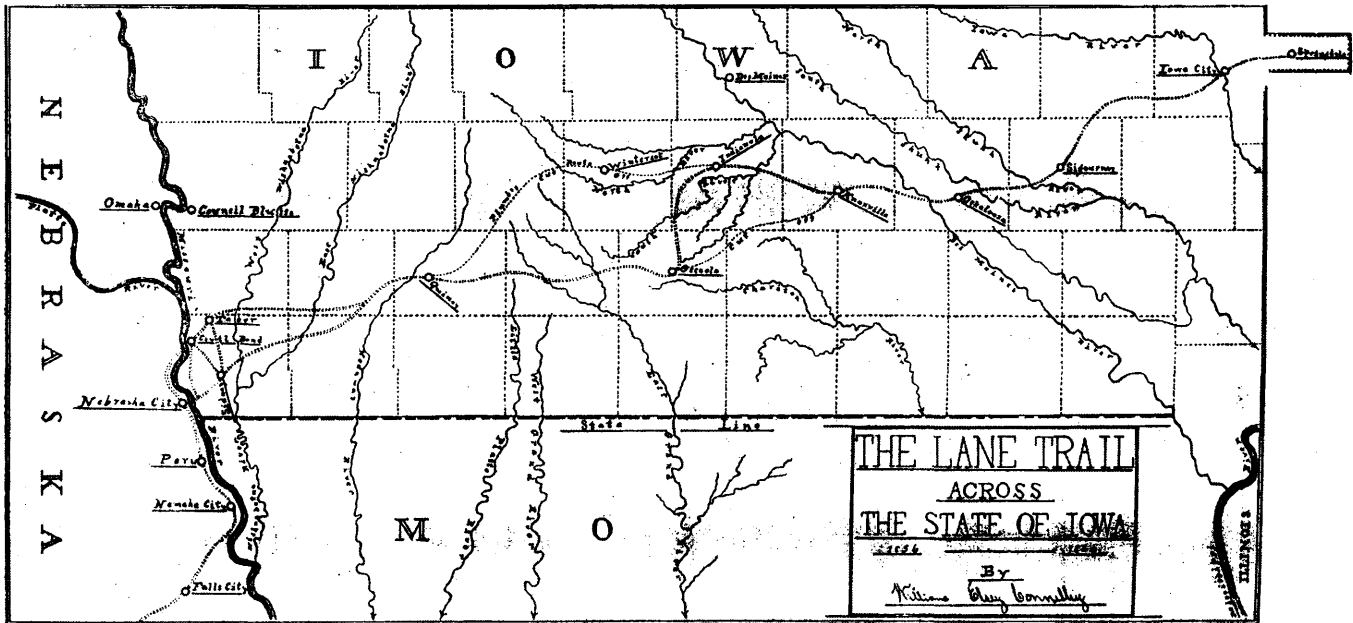


Figure 15. Lane Trail map

(Connelley 1915)

Reverend John Todd later noted Tabor's new role when Missourians closed the river to Free State traffic:

It was in connection with this new [land] route, which lay through Tabor and Nebraska City, that the people of Tabor became involved. The summer and autumn of 1856 was a time of constant excitement in this little village, which then numbered about twelve families in all. Battles, skirmishes, and murders, seemed to be the order of the day, as the forces of the contending parties struggled for the mastery in 'bleeding Kansas' (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 588-89).

The antislavery settlement of Tabor thus became the natural western terminus, serving as a resting point for settlers before embarking into areas of pro-slavery sentiment found in Nebraska City and Kansas. Additionally, it served as a point of retreat and recuperation for Free State men fighting in Kansas. The small community of Tabor played a large role in the fight for Kansas during the summer and fall of 1856 (see Richman 1904: 15; Cook 1993: 62).

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"Tabor, on the route and a western Iowa haven of [John] Brown," writes historian Glenn Noble, "was a staging area for armed companies on the way to Kansas" and the place that "Free state travelers recognized . . . as the last village where sentiment would be fully in accord with their views and where residents would strive to accommodate them energetically" (Noble 1977: 2, 39). To that observation Iowa historian Morton Rosenberg adds that while Iowa City was the eastern focal point, "The little town of Tabor became the headquarters of the northern Kansas forces. Free state men made little or no effort to conceal their trips through Iowa, backed as they were by a Kansas Committee" (Rosenberg 1972: 139). Historian Leland Sage saw Tabor's role as that of "an arms depot for men going to the battles in Kansas, and a hideout and medical aid station for those coming back from the wars" (Sage 1974: 138).

The first large emigrant train, composed of several smaller companies loosely organized by James Lane at Iowa City, left for Kansas on or about July 4, 1856. A total of 396 people were accounted for in caravans, which separated but then congregated in western Iowa to enter Kansas with strength (Noble 1977: 37). In late July 1856, James Lane took his first company into Kansas by way of Tabor and Nebraska City.

John Brown and his sons, on the run since the Osawatomie attack in May and subsequent fight at Black Jack, also made their way north out of Kansas around this same time. The party consisted of sons Owen, Oliver, Frederick, and Salmon Brown, son-in-law Henry Thompson, and Lucius Mills. The sons were injured, in poor health, and tired of the conflict in Kansas. John Brown traveled with them as far as Nebraska City, where he met Lane and his company, and he and Frederick decided to return to Kansas with Lane's group. On safe territory, the rest of Brown's party continued to Tabor. Henry Thompson and Salmon Brown later recalled that they were taken in ox wagon to Tabor, where they were kindly received. Henry's brother William, on his way to Kansas, met the party, and the group bought a double buggy from the "Oberlin people" at Tabor. Oliver Brown, Salmon Brown, William Thompson, and Henry Thompson continued to Ohio and New York, while Owen was nursed in Tabor until he was well enough to return to Kansas (Villard 1910: 222-24, 616; Scott 1993: 208-09; Todd 1906: 53).

As emigrant and military companies came through Tabor in July 1856, town leaders grew concerned about possible attacks on themselves as well.⁵ To prepare for the possibility of the conflict in Kansas expanding to Tabor, the small community of twelve families met at the school on July 29, 1856 to form a military company. Todd led the opening prayer, and then 28 men were enrolled in the company. G.B. Gaston was elected captain and Mortimer P. Clark as 1st lieutenant, and later E.S. Hill was elected 2nd lieutenant. The company included nearly all the men in Tabor, including Todd and Jonas Jones. They then applied to the state for arms and music. The company was called out later in the fall of 1856 when word came of an approaching company from Missouri, but no such incursion materialized (*History of Fremont County* 1881: 570-571; Todd 1906: 52; Farquhar 1943: 353).

Meanwhile, additional detachments of Lane's "Army of the North" entered Kansas in early August, receiving word that they were needed at Lawrence. John and Frederick Brown rode with them into Kansas where they parted ways

⁵ The peaceful, antislavery community of Tabor numbered twelve families, according to Reverend John Todd, though he also accounts for another two dozen that had come to Tabor from 1852 to 1856, apparently settling beyond the outskirts of the town proper (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 588-89; Todd 1906: 45-47). Using names known to have settled in Tabor, roughly 12 households can be determined in the 1856 census of Tabor, including roughly 24 men and 46 women and children (Iowa Census, Scott Township, Fremont County, 1856).

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for Brown to go to Topeka. The news of Brown's return worried proslavery forces: "It was his presence more than his activities, that made him a power—the idea of his being. He was a ghostly influence. No man in Kansas was more respected" (Villard 1910: 230). In July, Pennsylvania politician John W. Geary was appointed as the new territorial governor, which had infuriated pro-slavery forces. They called on citizens from Missouri and other states to take militia action against Free State settlers in Kansas. Numerous attacks occurred in August in Kansas against Free State forces, as there was renewed fighting on both sides.

Additional Free State supporters traveled across Iowa to Tabor in August 1856. Major Searles (Searl) from Lawrence, Kansas, spent several weeks at G.B. Gaston's house in Tabor, as an agent of the Free State cause to assist with the migration, receiving and forwarding dispatches and looking after the commissary stores (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 590). When Free State forces asked for additional arms, the committee for safety in Kansas sent Robert Morrow and S.W. Eldridge from Topeka to Tabor, where they arrived on August 26. They then continued on to Council Bluffs with Captain Searles to buy ammunition and other available supplies along the way. Coming up against some proslavery supporters in Council Bluffs who threatened to stop them, they were aided by an older Quaker man who defied the crowd and helped carry the purchased supplies back to Tabor in his wagon (Noble 1977: 50-51).

In August, when "the report reached Tabor that the entrance to Kansas via Nebraska was barred by a force of 1500 'border ruffians' and that it was unsafe for small companies to attempt to go through," emigrants gathered in Tabor awaiting more arrivals to increase their strength before continuing on to Kansas. Enoch, Everett and Luther Platt from Minden, Illinois were among the first and helped Reverend John Todd build his barn during their stay in Tabor (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 589-90; Todd 1906: 53). Owen Brown, still recuperating, wrote his mother from Tabor on August 27:

There is now at this place a company of volunteers from Maine, Massachusetts, & Michigan, (sic.) about 80 in all. We hear lately that about 3 thousand Missourians have crossed at St Joe & other place & have gone armed into the territory, that Governor Woodson has sent 400 mountainmen on to the frontier to intercept our volunteers & prevent them from carrying in provision & Amunition, which is so much needed now in Kansas.....I have gained strength quite fast, & am now determined to go back into the Territory... We hope that men will volunteer, by the thousands from the states, well armed with plenty of money to buy provisions, which are scarce in KT... If any of our folks write to us, or to me, (I assume an other name, (George Lyman) Direct to, George Lyman Tabor Fremont Co Iowa) Care of Jonas Jones Esqr. Mr. Jones will take them out of the office here & send them on by private conveyance...

(KSHS - John Brown Collection, #299, Box 1, Folder 17; Item Number: 102546)⁶

⁶ The company from Maine was likely that led by Reverend Parsons, whom Reverend John Todd noted to be camped west of Plum Creek on the property that was later owned by John Rhodes'. The Congregational Church at Tabor worshiped with them on August 31, and Todd preached on Numbers 14: 8, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land." James Redpath, Kansas correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, was also in attendance. Dr. Cutter (*Cutter's Physiology*) arrived at Tabor around the same time (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 590). Captain Chambry also arrived with a company from Indiana, and Todd noted that he was an intelligent Christian reformer and an advocate of temperance and freedom (Todd 1906: 54).

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With their strength in numbers growing, a call to "friends of freedom" around Tabor was put out to assemble and form an escort for the group to Kansas. Many in Tabor volunteered to go, and Owen Brown began his preparations to return to Kansas with the group. Todd was proposed as the leader, and he later recalled that he had just found a pair of spurs when word came that way was open and safe for the emigrants to pass into Kansas (Todd 1906: 54).

The cooling force in Kansas at the time was the new territorial governor, John W. Geary, who arrived on September 9. James Lane, preparing for another attack, recalled his forces as Geary moved to quash the conflict. Immediately, Geary released Dr. Charles Robinson and John Brown, Jr., who had been held since May, with bail. On September 14, 1856, when 200 men from Missouri attacked the edge of Lawrence and then joined 300 others fighting in nearby Franklin, Governor Geary arrived and ordered both sides to disarm. He warned proslavery forces that continued fighting was hurting their cause by tarnishing the image of Democrats running in the November election (Villard 1910: 254-55; Reynolds 2005: 202-04).

The day before, as Todd later recalled, the emigrant group gathered in Tabor made ready to leave:

Parsons and Redpath and their companions in travel struck their tents, and left their camps near Tabor, on the morning of September 13, 1856, for Kansas. Several from Tabor joined them. This company met Gen. Lane with fifty mounted men between Nebraska City and Nemaha, who were on their way to Tabor, but passing on, by several days forced marches, they evaded the United States troops, who were intercepting and disarming emigrants, and delivered their stores in safety at Topeka.

(Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 590)

Four days later, on September 17, Reverend John Todd wrote his Congregationalist colleague, Reverend W. Salter in Burlington, from whom he had recently received a letter.

The wants of Kansas constitute the absorbing topic of interest here now. The Kansas forces had been congregating here for more than three weeks until yesterday. Our little village had been their headquarters on this side the river ever since the arrival of Lane's company. You are right in saying that men are wanted. Such was the call for men that it was much feared that our friends in the territory would be reduced to a state of suffering before a sufficient force could be raised to conduct safely to them the provisions which were here waiting to be conveyed. So imperative was the call for help in the shape of men that I myself volunteered & should have gone yesterday with the last of the company, but for the fact that more cheering intelligence reached us on Monday. The road is said to be now open. Several skirmishes have taken place, & Lane is in command of the territory. At Osawatimie 30 Free State men entrenched were attacked by 150 Missourians with a cannon, but maintained their ground, killing 32 & wounding 50, until the enemy managed to get into a position where their Sharps rifles could not reach them, while the Free State men were exposed to the fire of the cannon. They then retreated leaving 4 killed, but there were not pursued. Many interesting particulars were given, which you will find in the papers more definitely than I can give them. I was absent last Sabbath at Lewis attending the funeral of Bro. Hitchcock's oldest son... Messrs. Howe, Hyatt, Higginson &c have been here, & anything which can be done here to forward the cause of Freedom will be done most cheerfully. Br. J.V. Parsons of Barnstable, Mass. - a man of excellent Spirit & conductor of a Mass. company has been with us much of the time for more than a fortnight but left on the 16th inst.

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(William Salter Papers, Box 1, Folder 4)

Maria Cummings Gaston, wife of town founder George B. Gaston, described the effect of Free State migrants on their frontier community.⁷

That summer and autumn our houses, before too full, were much overfilled and our comforts shared with those passing to and from Kansas to secure it for *Freedom*. When houses would hold no more, woodsheds were temporized for bedrooms, where the sick and dying were cared for. Barns also were fixed for sleeping rooms. Every place a bed could be put or a blanket thrown down was at once so occupied. There were comers and goers all times of the day or night – meals at all hours – many free hotels, perhaps entertaining angels unawares. *After* battles they were here for rest – *before* for preparation. General Lane once stayed three weeks secretly while it was reported abroad that he was back in Indiana for recruits and supplies, where came ere long, consisting of all kinds of provisions, Sharps rifles, powder and lead. A cannon packed in corn made its way through the enemy's lines and ammunition of all kinds, in clothing and kitchen furniture, etc. etc. Our cellars contained barrels of powder, and boxes of rifles. Often our chairs, tables, beds, and such places were covered with what weapons everyone carried about him, so that if one *needed* and got time to rest a little in the day time, we had to remove the Kansas furniture, or rest with loaded revolvers, cartridge boxes, and bowie knives piled around them, and boxes of swords under the bed. Were not our houses overfilled?
(Todd 1906: 53-54; Villard 1910: 267-68)

Around this time, another company of armed emigrants arrived in Tabor, followed by James Lane and his troops. Preston B. Plumb had assembled a company at Iowa City who included about 10 "Grizzlies" such as Alfred C. Pierce and Samuel F. Tappan. They left around September 3 and made their way west to Tabor, meeting others along the way that had given up and settled. Their arrival in Tabor drew a welcoming dinner by the community. They continued west to Nebraska City, where they met Lane and his company and Lane delivered an inspiring speech to the emigrants before they resumed their journey on toward Kansas (Noble 1977: 52-54). With the strong pro-slavery sentiment in Nebraska City, Lane moved his troops to Tabor (Noble 1977: 55). John Speer who had joined the group, recalled that Lane stopped the company outside of town, and "admonished the men that in regard for the moral and religious principles of Tabor people, the men of the company were to conduct themselves with utmost decorum." They camped on the public square, drilled daily, and engaged in various sports, but they did not speak profanity or steal chickens (Speer 1896: 128). When they heard the trouble had subsided, they moved to near Archer, Nebraska before re-entering Kansas.

Finally, in late summer the National Kansas Committee gathered another large company of emigrants for Kansas, choosing Mount Pleasant, Iowa, as their starting point. Led by Colonel S.W. Eldridge, proprietor of the Free State hotel in Lawrence that had been burned, this expedition was better funded and well organized than had been Lane's first large group back in July. Now in September, they had 200 volunteers organized into artillery and rifle companies equipped with a field gun and some 20 wagons loaded with small arms, edged weapons, munitions, tents, and provisions. Robert Morrow—a lieutenant of Eldridge—had visited with Governor Grimes about the possibility of making state militia arms available for Free State forces. Morrow was provided with the keys and, on

⁷ From her recollections at the Quarter Centennial of the Tabor Congregational Church on October 11, 1877

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condition that the arms be taken at night and only if Grimes was not implicated, they loaded and took with them 200 stands of arms (Dykstra 1993: 142; Noble 1977: 51-52, 56).⁸ On September 25, they left Iowa City and met Lane's group at Quincy, 50 miles east of Tabor, who accompanied the caravan to Tabor. They reached Tabor on October 1, and spent two days drilling and reorganizing. The Eldridge contingent had been promised Sharps rifles, some first at Albany, then Cleveland, then Chicago, then Tabor, and they insisted they would not leave until receiving them. Lane mounted the cannon in the public square in Tabor and convinced them to move on without the rifles as they were only good at long distance and a weapon with bayonet was better in Kansas (Todd 1906: 58; Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 591-92; Noble 1977: 56-57).

Todd later wrote of these visitors:

Sometime later in the fall, when Col. Eldridge returned from the east with his company of emigrants, Lane again visited Tabor. This company had in procession eighteen or twenty covered wagons, a brass cannon and carriage, tents, etc. – some families and in all about two hundred persons. They camped on what is now the public square, in front of the pastor's [Todd's] house, and but a few rods east of his gate. They placed the cannon in the centre, and on the carriage hoisted the stars and stripes – arranged the wagons in a circle around the national banner – pitched their tents and placed their sentries outside of all, and when the parson [Todd] started across to prayer-meeting that evening, they cried out, 'Who goes there?' The next day they spent was spent drilling on the public square. The stage coach then passed each way daily on the route through Tabor, between Council Bluffs and St. Joe. It was said that the stage passengers carried the story into Missouri that there were two thousand men drilling at Tabor.

(Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 591)

After dismantling the cannon and hiding firearms to get into Kansas, the party left Tabor on October 4 for Nebraska City. Robert Morrow had arrived from Kansas carrying a letter from Governor John Geary that classified the expedition as peaceful settlers. They met John Brown and two sons near Archer on October 9, when they stopped to camp for the night. They learned that troops were stationed across the border and worked to pass as peaceful settlers. The cannon was buried and, to create the impression of family groups of settlers, the seven women of one family were distributed among the wagons. When they crossed on October 10, they still were searched and the arms taken into custody. They chose to be arrested rather than be escorted in order to obtain subsistence along the way through Kansas, and then were released by Governor Geary at Topeka (Noble 1977: 58).

John Brown, on the other hand, was on his way out of Kansas when he encountered the group. With the release of John, Jr. in September and relative peace kept by Governor Geary, they had decided to return East to raise additional funds. Jason later recalled: "The mule team was full of arms and ammunition that father was taking out to Tabor" (Villard 1910: 262). They had with them a fugitive slave seeking freedom, and they split up to narrowly miss federal troops in northern Kansas. Upon regrouping in Nebraska City, where Owen and the fugitive slave remained briefly, John Brown, Jason, John, Jr. and their families moved on to Tabor, arriving on October 10. The sons continued on their way while John Brown—ill with dysentery—spent a week in Tabor recuperating among

⁸ Eldridge noted that in Mount Pleasant "In three weeks we had thirty or forty wagons and teams loaded with powder, lead, provisions, and arms, and 300 men had come into camp, mostly active young men wanting to go to Kansas to make it a free state" (Goodrich 1998: 143).

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friends (Villard 1910: 261-62; Reynolds 2005: 207). Biographer Oswald Villard later wrote of Tabor: "Here he stored arms he had brought with him, and this place he chose as the coming headquarters of the band of one hundred "volunteer-regulars" for whom he now planned to raise funds in the East to the amount of twenty thousand dollars, and here actual training for war-service against forces of slavery was soon to begin." Though momentarily at peace, he anticipated that conflict would again arise in Kansas in spring, and he wanted his force to be ready to fight (Villard 1910: 268). This was John Brown's first recorded visit to Tabor. Samuel H. Adams later recalled:

I first saw John Brown in 1856. He had just arrived from Kansas where he had been driven out by United States troops. These troops were disarming Free State men who had armed themselves for protection while settling upon land claims. I asked Brown if he and his six sons went to Kansas to take claims. He answered: '*I went for the purpose of making Kansas a free state, but my boys went to settle. But,*' he added, '*when they shot down my oldest son in cold blood on the sidewalk in Topeka, I then laid myself on the altar of freedom, and vowed, if it should be found necessary, to spill my blood for the freedom of the slave.*' (Harris 1894: 264-65)

When Brown got to Chicago on October 22 or 23, he learned that his sons Salmon and Watson had joined Dr. J. P. Root's train of freight and goods on its way through Iowa to Kansas, for they intended to avenge the death of their brother Frederick on August 30. John Brown turned back to Iowa to meet the train, and sent word to his sons to wait at Tabor (Villard 1910: 268-270). On October 30, Watson wrote his family from Charles City, Iowa that they were well and "in the company of a train of Kansas teams loaded with Sharps rifles and canon. I heard a report that Father had gone east. The travel very slow. You can write to us at Tabor. On our way we saw Garret Smith, F. Douglas and other old friends. We have each a Sharps rifle" (KSHS, John Brown Collection, #299, Box 1, Folder 17; Item Number: 102557). Watson did stop and wait for John Brown at Tabor, but Salmon went onto Kansas. (Villard 1910: 270).

After Dr. Root's train arrived in Tabor loaded with the Sharps rifles, they decided to store the arms and supplies there, rather than taking them into Kansas at the time. The Massachusetts Kansas State Committee had donated the 200 Sharps rifles to the National Kansas Committee, which the train then hauled along with other donated articles. These articles were added to those in storage by the National Kansas Committee along with those brought from Kansas by John Brown "to await a favorable opportunity for smuggling them through Nebraska City and over the border into Kansas" (Richman 1904: 16). While Governor Geary neutralized the situation in Kansas, arms and equipment from National Kansas Committee and Massachusetts Kansas Committee continued to arrive in Tabor and filled every conceivable storage place (Dykstra 1993: 143). Reverend John Todd later wrote:

As a renewal of the troubles was feared at the elections in the autumn of 1857, an effort was made by the friends of freedom to be prepared for the worst. Hence, late in 1856, necessities were stored in Tabor. Two hundred Sharp's rifles, and ammunition were stored in the parson's cellar that winter – a cannon was in his barn – besides many boxes of sabers, rifles, muskets, accoutrements, boots and clothing. Geo B. Gaston's accommodations for storage were also all in requisition. (Todd's history of Kansas troubles in *History of Fremont County* 1881: 592)

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With arms safely stored and knowing about the 200 Sharps rifles stashed at Tabor, John and Owen Brown left Tabor to return east in November.

In Tabor, life settled back into a more predictable routine, but not without a thrilling December event. On December 25, 1856, Martha Todd wrote to her father in Ohio:

Our little town place has been visited again by a slave catcher from Jackson Co. Missouri, and he expresses great fears for our town. We supposed warrants would be obtained to search all our houses, but they have not appeared a second time as yet. The alleged slaves, who had escaped from Lexington & Kansas City though Kansas, but lost their way in Nebraska, and fell into two slavery hands, and were taken and lodged in Linden jail. By setting fire to the jail they escaped and finally came here, tho they had been warned of this place, as a place 'where the people get rich by selling slave to New Orleans.' We hope they are now safely on their way to a land of freedom tho' some may be base enough to betray them in this state. (John Todd Papers, Box 2, Folder 6)

With the runaways helped on their way, she reported "We feared not their warrants because of finding them, but because of some arms, placed here by authority designed for K[ansas]." Luckily, a bad snowstorm arrived the next day, which she believed kept the slave catchers from returning (John Todd Papers, Box 2, Folder 6). Thus, the arms and ammunition intended for Kansas remained safely stored in Tabor for the winter.

Preparing for the attack on slavery: John Brown and Tabor, 1857

John Brown returned to the East in December 1856 with a single purpose: raising men and volunteers for the conflict he expected to resume in Kansas in the spring. He successfully raised funds from several Kansas and antislavery groups, and he managed to gain rights from the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee to obtain the 200 Sharps rifles Reverend John Todd had stored in his basement for the last ten months.

As John Brown hunted up support for his fight against slavery in Kansas, he continued to use Tabor as his western outpost. Jonas Jones, of Tabor, "who was in official charge of the Free State supplies there," was ordered to retain everything in his hands until Brown had made his choice (Villard 1910: 277). Though delayed and unable to raise the expected force of men, Brown arrived back in Tabor in August 1857. On August 13, he wrote to Frank Sanborn: "I find the arms and ammunition voted me by the Massachusetts State Committee nearly all here and in middling good order – some a little rusted. Have overhauled and cleaned up the worst of them" (Richman 1904: 16-17).

A few days earlier one Hugh Forbes—an adventurer and 1848 fighter in Garibaldi's failed Italian Revolution—had arrived in town. Brown had hired him to drill troops in Tabor. John Brown, his son Owen, and Forbes spent part of their time in target practice with Sharps rifles. Additionally, on the prairie ridge that ran north and south, just north of Dragoon hollow, they dug a hole that held a man safe from cannon fire for firing practice. Inside, they studied Forbes' book *The Patriotic Volunteer*. The studies and practice in Tabor continued from the summer through the fall of 1857 (Todd 1906: 68). On August 17, in his letter to wife Mary, John Brown wrote: "We are beginning to take lessons & have (we think) a very capable Teacher" (KSHS - John Brown Collection, #299, Box 1, Folder 26; Item 102637). William M. Brooks, who arrived in Tabor in fall of 1857 to teach at the Tabor Literary Institute and later

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married Jonas Jones daughter, Adelia, later recounted that Jonas Jones sitting room was used by John Brown as a drill room, and here Colonel Forbes gave instruction to Brown in military tactics. Shortly after Hugh Forbes arrived in Tabor, he and John Brown began discussing a plan for an attack on slavery near Harpers Ferry. They had key differences in opinion that led to disagreements between the two and within two months Hugh Forbes, discouraged over the lack of men to train in Tabor and in disagreement with Brown over future plans, was ready to head back East. On November 2, 1857, the men left Tabor for Nebraska City where Forbes departed for home and John and Owen Brown went to Lawrence, Kansas.

John Brown quietly moved about the state, recruiting men to fight against slavery, purportedly in Kansas. The past conflict in Kansas had given some young men the taste for battle, and they willingly joined Brown's small band. By November 22, they had all assembled in Tabor. No longer seeing a need to be poised for a move into Kansas, John Brown began to break down his western outpost, proceeding "to gather up the free state stores that had been deposited in Tabor and ship them away" (Todd 1906: 68). Though Todd does not indicate where they were shipped, it is likely that the some supplies for settlers such as clothing, and perhaps some arms and ammunition, were sent to Kansas, while others were retained by Brown in Tabor for the time being.

On December 4, 1857 Brown's group, now having procured teams for transport and loaded them with the 200 Sharps rifles, 200 revolvers, and other supplies, left Tabor. The intent upon leaving was to travel to Ashtabula, Ohio, where they would train for the winter. As they crossed Iowa, they camped in the countryside, avoiding communities. Over the campfire, they discussed the Virginia plans, slavery, and the Bible. They traveled slowly in the cold weather, passing Marengo on Christmas. Finally, the group arrived in Springdale, Cedar County, Iowa, among James Townsend and other Quaker friends of John Brown (Villard 1910: 311-12; Richman 1904: 20; Noble 1977: 79; Reynolds 2005: 246)

Once in Springdale, wrote historian Irving B. Richman, Brown thought only "to stop there merely long enough to sell his teams and wagons, and then to proceed by rail to Ashtabula County, Ohio. But the panic of '57 had begun and money was becoming scarce. He was nearly out of funds and unable to raise any" (Richman 1904: 22). After boarding with James Townsend and John H. Painter briefly, John Brown was able to strike a deal with William Maxson on January 11 to take the wagons in exchange for room and board for his men (Reynolds 2005: 246; Villard 1910: 312). On January 15, 1858, having provided for his small group of men, John Brown left Springdale to return to the East and visit supporters about his developing plan for an attack on slavery in Virginia.

Securing the legend: John Brown, 1858-1859

By late April 1858 Brown had found sufficient funds to move his men from Springdale, Iowa. They had trained and drilled here over the winter, and they became good friends with many of the local residents. George B. Gill, Stewart Taylor, Barclay Coppac and Edwin Coppac had been recruited, though the Coppac brothers remained in Springdale until later (Villard 1910: 328-29; Reynolds 2005: 259-60; Richman 1904: 30). John Brown and his men left Springdale, Iowa on April 27, 1858, and they headed on to Chatham, Canada for the antislavery convention that he had organized.

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Within a few weeks, however, John Brown had another problem that would delay his attack at Harpers Ferry for a year. Hugh Forbes, frustrated by Brown and desiring further funds, sent a series of abusive letters about Brown and his plans to various people, including his supporters and antislavery members of federal Congress, demanding money or threatening to publish his plan. On May 24, 1858, John Brown met with his financial backers—Gerrit Smith, Theodore Parker, Dr. Samuel Howe, George Stearns, and Frank Sanborn.⁹ They decided that the plan for an attack in Virginia would be delayed for a year, and that Brown should go back to Kansas to further discredit any plans disclosed by Forbes.

John Brown returned to Kansas, using the name of Shubel Morgan, and kept a low profile from June through November 1858. Then, on December 19, 1858, began an event that would bring national attention and add to the legend of John Brown in Kansas, as well as bring him through Tabor one last time.

On December 19, 1858, Jim Daniels, a mulatto slave of Harvey G. Hicklan in Vernon County Missouri, crossed the border into Kansas. There he spoke with George B. Gill, one of Brown's men from Iowa, about his predicament—he and his family were about to be sold to Texas, and they wished to escape prior to the sale. When told of it, John Brown vowed to help, and they mounted a rescue effort on the night of December 20.

Brown and ten men rode to the Hicklan farm to set free Jim Daniels, his pregnant wife and two children, and they took property used or claimed to be produced by slaves. They then freed five slaves and took two prisoners on the neighboring farm of John B. Larue. Meanwhile, another group comprising eight of Brown's men under Aaron Stephens went to the farm of David Cruise, where Daniels reported a female slave wanted her freedom. They had just entered the house, when Stephens—thinking Cruise was reaching for a gun—shot him. They took equipment and a wagon as they freed a total of four families for return to Kansas: the four Daniels, a widow with three children, two brothers, and the one woman.

Word soon spread of the invasion, bringing outrage over the murder. Likewise, most Kansas newspapers were hostile to the incident as this was no time to stir up trouble when the Free State cause was so close to winning. Some eastern newspapers, however, carried reports in a more glorious light. Rumors spread of rewards issued for Brown's arrest and, as Brown hoped would happen later in Virginia, the incident did provoke panic near the Missouri border and many sold their slaves (Villard 1910: 367-71, 378; Reynolds 2005: 278-79; Todd 1906: 69-70).

The company and eleven slaves hid out for a while in Kansas before making their way north. On February 1, they crossed from Kansas into Nebraska, and by February 4 made their way across the Missouri River to Iowa, spending the night at Civil Bend (Reynolds 2005: 284-85; Villard 1910: 379-83).

The next day, John Brown, his men, and the twelve freed slaves arrived in Tabor, Brown's destination for a period of rest and recuperation. He later wrote his family on February 10: "I am once more in Iowa through the great mercy of God. Those with me & other friends are well... the teams unloaded on the public common that is still the particular attraction of Tabor" (Villard 1910: 383-84). Reverend John Todd later recounted that John Brown first

⁹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a sixth financial backer who opposed the idea of delaying the Harpers Ferry plan, did not attend this meeting.

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stayed at a small house near the school, demolished by 1891, while a cooking stove was placed in the school for the twelve fugitives. He was handed a note on his way into church on Sunday morning (Todd 1906: 70). It read: "John Brown respectfully requests the church at Tabor to offer public thanksgiving to Almighty God in behalf of himself, & company: & of their rescued captives, in particular for his gracious preservation of their lives, & health, & his signal deliverance of all out of the hand of the wicked hitherto. 'Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever'" (John Todd Collection, Box 2, Folder 5). He asked Reverend Dr. H. D. King, also in the pulpit at the time, for advice, as Brown's men had taken life and stolen horses – two major crimes on the frontier. King announced that he had a petition on which no public action would be taken, but people could take private action if they wished. He also announced a town meeting to discuss the incident and allow John Brown to speak the next day (Todd 1906: 70; Villard 1910: 384-85).

On Monday, February 7, 1859, the residents of Tabor held the meeting to hear John Brown's side of the story. Todd was away on a preaching circuit for the week, though he was told of the happenings on his return. John Brown, called to the front to begin his story, noticed the arrival of Dr. Brown of St. Joseph, Missouri, who was passing through Tabor on the stage. Knowing him to be a slaveholder, John Brown required that he be asked to leave as he preferred Dr. Brown to not hear what was said. Members at the meeting responded that if John Brown had done nothing wrong, then he should not have a problem speaking. John Brown, upset and stating "We are not yet among friends," left the meeting and went back to the residence of George B. Gaston (Todd 1906: 70; Villard 1910: 385-86). Mrs. Maria Gaston later recalled:

Captain Brown was sick at this time also, and not finding the same sympathy as formerly, it almost broke his heart. He thought we had sadly lost principle, not realizing that he was in a school with very different teachers from ours. I shall never forget his disappointment and anguish accompanied by many tears, when his men returned from the meeting expressing disapproval of his course. He said he must trust in the Lord alone and not rely on earthly friends. The block was crushing. He had expected so much, it was hard to be blamed. At other times he was welcomed and had received all he asked for, and he could not understand why we should not take this advanced step with him (Farquhar 1943: 357).

Meanwhile at the meeting after John Brown left, the town people adopted a resolution: "*Resolved*: That while we sympathize with the oppressed, & will do all that we conscientiously can to help them in their efforts for freedom, nevertheless, we have no Sympathy with those who go to Slave States, to entice away Slaves, & take property or life when necessary to attain that end" (Villard 1910: 385).

Apparently, accompanying the residents' moral dilemma were fears of a proslavery attack if they showed themselves to be too hospitable (Villard 1910: 386). For recently Tabor had faced Missourians' ire when two fugitive slaves escaped and were believed to be in Tabor. The two female slaves owned by S.F. Nuckolls of Nebraska City had escaped across the river around the beginning of December 1858 with the assistance of a local mulatto trader John Williamson, who sent them to Dr. Ira Blanchard in Civil Bend. Blanchard in turn had brought them to Tabor, where they stayed with the Ladd family for a few days. Friends of Nuckolls searched houses in Civil Bend and Tabor residents anticipated they might face the same fate of having "their dwellings and premises forcibly and illegally searched for fugitive slaves." (*History of Fremont County* 1881: 571).

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John Brown and his group only remained in Tabor until February 11, a much shorter period that he had originally planned. Before leaving he wrote an agent of the National Kansas Committee, Dr. Jesse Bowen in Iowa City, about giving him back materials he still had at Tabor:

I was lately at Tabor in this State where there is lying in the care of Jonas Jones Esqr. one brass field piece fully mounted; & carriage good. Also a quantity of grape and round shot: together with part of another carriage of some value. Also some twenty or over U.S. rifles with flint locks. The rifles are good and in good order, I have held a claim on these articles since Jan 2 1857 that is both morally and legally good against any and all other parties but I informed Mr. Jones that I would most cheerfully; and even gladly waive it entirely in your favor knowing the treatment you have received. I should think these articles might be so disposed of as to save you from ultimate loss: but I need not say to you how important is perfect and secure possession in such cases: & you are doubtless informed of the disordered condition of the National Kansas Committee matters (Villard 1910: 388-89).¹⁰

The party left Tabor and traveled across Iowa, crossing the Des Moines River outside of the city of Des Moines and arriving in Grinnell in late February. With the warm reception they received here, Brown felt compelled to send a letter back to Tabor upon arriving in Springdale on February 26, which recounted everything Grinnell citizens had provided them (Villard 1910: 386; KSHS - John Brown Collection, #299, Box 2, Folder 1; Item Number: 102722). They stayed in Springdale for about two weeks, arriving on February 25 and leaving on March 9. They managed to "borrow" a boxcar from the railroad with the assistance of William Penn Clarke and J. B. Grinnell, loading the fugitives on the night of March 9 in West Liberty, where it was connected to a train on March 10. The group successfully made it through Davenport, Chicago, and on to Detroit, where the fugitives then crossed to Canada (Villard 1910: 387-90).

Plans then turned back to the ultimate goal: an attack on Harpers Ferry. John Brown arrived in the neighborhood of Harpers Ferry, Virginia on July 3, 1859 and rented a farm in Maryland.¹¹ On the night of October 16, 1859, he and 17 of his men attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Ten men died (including two of Brown's sons), seven were captured at Harpers Ferry, and the other five escaped (Villard 1910: 426-456; Reynolds 2005: 310-313; Gue 1897: 112, 271). Taken to Charles Town for trial under charges of conspiracy to incite a slave insurrection, treason against the State of Virginia, and first degree murder, John Brown was found guilty and sentenced to hang on

¹⁰ The field piece is now part of the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

¹¹ The Kennedy Farm, in Washington County, Maryland, is listed as a National Historic Landmark, significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion B.

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December 2, 1859.¹² By the time of his execution, he had excited widespread sympathy in the North.¹³ The funeral party took his body to Philadelphia, then on to North Elba, New York, where he was buried on the farm he had acquired in 1855.¹⁴

A Congressional investigation committee led by Senator James M. Mason of Virginia, concluded that the Harpers Ferry attack was "but an offshoot from the extensive outrages and lawlessness in Kansas" (Villard 1910: 580-81; Reynolds 2005: 332-335; Villard 1910: 508-09).

¹² The Jefferson County Courthouse, West Virginia, where the trial was held, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with a national level of significance.

¹³ The *John Brown Hanging Site, Gibson-Todd House, Charlestown, West Virginia*, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C with a state level of significance.

¹⁴ The *John Brown Farm and Gravesite, Essex County, New York*, is listed as a National Historic Landmark under Criteria 1 and 2.

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UTM References (continued)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
5	<u>15</u>	<u>274592</u>	<u>4530979</u>
6	<u>15</u>	<u>274483</u>	<u>4530979</u>
7	<u>15</u>	<u>274483</u>	<u>4530922</u>
8	<u>15</u>	<u>274440</u>	<u>4530922</u>
9	<u>15</u>	<u>274440</u>	<u>4531006</u>
10	<u>15</u>	<u>274592</u>	<u>4531006</u>

Verbal Boundary Description

The map on the following page depicts the boundary for the Tabor Antislavery Historic District. The boundary follows the current (2006) parcel boundary for the Todd House, owned by the Tabor Historical Society, and extends to the east to the east curb line of Park Street. It then follows the curb lines adjacent to the Public Square (Tabor City Park) of Park, Elm, Center, and Orange streets around the square.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the two main properties in the historic district: the Reverend John Todd House and the Public Square (Tabor City Park). The section around the Todd House reflects the current property associated with the historic property, and the boundary follows the property line. Later construction has occurred on the original property associated with the house, and it is not included in the district boundary. The boundary around the Public Square (Tabor City Park) follows the curb lines of the adjacent streets to encompass all the features and ground currently and historically associated with the public square. The right of way for the streets extends into the land visually connected with the square, as these streets are platted at 66 feet but are less than half of that in current width.

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District boundary



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Location Map



Aerial photograph, 2002
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
From Iowa Geographic Map Server, Iowa State University, cairo.gis.iastate.edu

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Photographs

All photographs of the Tabor Antislavery Historic District, Tabor, Iowa, were taken by Rebecca Lawin McCarley, SPARK Consulting, on June 5, 2006. The negatives for the photographs are on file with the Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa. A sketch map depicting the location of the photographs is found on the following page.

1. Setting of the John Todd House, looking west from the park
2. East elevation of the John Todd House, looking west
3. North elevation of the John Todd House, looking south
4. West elevation of the John Todd House, looking east
5. South elevation of the John Todd House, looking northeast
6. Room 1A (Living Room) of the John Todd House, looking northeast
7. Original cellar (Room 0A) of the John Todd House, looking southwest
8. Original cellar (Room 0A) of the John Todd House, looking north
9. View of the west side of the Public Square (Tabor City Park) from John Todd House, looking northeast
10. South side of the Public Square, looking east
11. East side of the Public Square, looking northwest
12. Plaque commemorating John Brown in Public Square, looking west
13. North side of the Public Square, looking west
14. Southeast corner of the Public Square, looking northwest

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White arrows and black numbers indicate the location of photographs accompanying the nomination.

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Appendix A: List of Property Owners

Reverend John Todd House:

Tabor Historical Society
President, Wanda Ewalt
P.O. Box 417
Tabor, Iowa 51653
712-629-2675

Tabor City Park (Public Square):

City of Tabor
P.O. Box 309
626 Main Street
Tabor, Iowa 51653
712-629-2295