1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **ROKEBY**

Other Name/Site Number: ROBINSON, ROWLAND T., HOUSE

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: US Route 7 Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Ferrisburgh Vicinity: NA

State: Vermont County: Addison Code: 001 Zip Code: 05456

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	__
Public-Local:	__	District:	X
Public-State:	__	Site:	__
Public-Federal:	__	Structure:	__
		Object:	__

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
6	4 buildings
1	___ sites
1	___ structures
___	___ objects
8	4 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 8

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ 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 ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Sub:
Domestic	Single Dwelling
Agriculture	Processing
Agriculture	Storage
Agriculture	Agricultural Field
Agriculture	Animal Facility
Agriculture	Agricultural Outbuilding
Education	School

Current:	Sub:
Recreation/ Culture	Museum
Domestic	Single Dwelling
Agriculture	Agricultural Field

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Federal
Other

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Field stone
Walls:	Weatherboard
Roof:	Steel
	Slate
Other:	Wood

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Rokeby, the historic home and farmstead of four generations of the Robinson family, is located in the rural town of Ferrisburgh on US Route 7, the major north-south artery on the west side of Vermont's Green Mountains. Perched on a gentle rise well back from the road, the imposing Federal style house looks over the Champlain Valley to the Adirondacks beyond. Behind the house and sheltered by it is an intact 19th-century farmyard with eight agricultural outbuildings and associated features. The site includes a tourist cabin (ca 1930), the ell of a now-demolished house (ca 1800), a smokehouse (ca 1850), hen house (ca 1900), creamery/ice house (ca 1850, 1940s), privy (ca 1850), toolshed/slaughterhouse (ca 1850), and granary (ca 1850), all of which relate to the agricultural history of the site, as well as a 1940s garage. Numerous black locust and black walnut trees, both species planted by the Robinsons, dot the farmyard. A path through the woods to the south of the main farmyard leads past the sheep barn foundation and to the sheep dip (ca 1810); to the north of the house is the foundation of the dairy barn. An open field still in production and acres of former orchard and pasture, now returning to forest, stretch east to the hills. An interpretive trail through this land highlights evidence of its previous active life as a farm--a farm lane, stone walls, an old well, a pond, the foundation of a field barn, and a second field still in production. To the north of the farmstead is more abandoned orchard and within it, the foundation of a school once operated by the family.

1. Farmhouse, (ca 1780s, 1814, 1893)--Contributing building
The Rokeby farmhouse consists of the original one-and-a-half-story Cape Cod style house at the back (ca 1780s) and a large, two-story Federal style addition (1814) up front. The 1814 main block was built as a five-bay by two-bay I house with a shallow-pitched gable roof and a simple, gable-roofed porch sheltering the front doorway. In 1893, a one-bay, two-story extension was added to the south end. The entire house is sheathed in clapboards and rests on a stone foundation, field stone in the rear wing and cut stone on front. The 1780s and 1814 sections have a standing seam metal roof (ca 1988); the 1893 addition has slate. All three doorways have ca 1990 storm/screen doors and all windows have ca 1990 storms.

The porch sheltering the doorway is original and the predominant feature on the front facade. Although in the style of a Federal portico, it is much deeper--enough to be used as sitting space. Square posts with beaded corners support the gable roof, which forms a pediment facing west. A simple railing with a rounded cap and square balusters extends from the house to the posts on either side and then turns inward a short distance on the front to create an entryway. Simple wooden benches run inside the areas created by the railings on either side. The porch apron is of solid wood with cut outs. The door is a Federal style "cross and Bible" pattern with flat, flush panels; it has its original, wrought iron latch and a delicate, Federal style swag and urn brass door knocker. The three-quarter sidelights have six-over-six double-hung sash. The fenestration is regular, with one opening per bay, per floor in the 1814 section; windows in the 1893 addition are paired. All windows but the two in the fourth and fifth bays, first floor are one-over-one double hung sash; these are twelve over twelve. All windows and the door are topped by a simple cornice.

The south gable end has a round window at the attic, one-over-one, double-hung windows in each bay of the second floor, and the same, paired and centered, in the first floor. A hooded,

round-topped window with a fanlight in the upper sash in the north gable end is flanked by rectangular vents at the attic; one-over-one double-hung windows are centered in each bay on the first and second floors. The 1780s section obscures most of the rear facade of the main block. The portion that is visible has a one-over-one double-hung window in the second story of the fourth bay and a pair of twelve-over-twelve double-hung windows below it. Narrow one-over-one double-hung windows step up the rear facade of the 1893 section to light the staircase.

The original, 1780s house is a story-and-a-half, five- by two-bay Cape with irregular fenestration. A lean-to porch along the north side, a massive central chimney, and gable-roofed dormers with one-over-one double-hung windows are prominent features. The south side--the original front facade of the house--has a central doorway and a trio of twelve-over-twelve double-hung windows ganged together to the left and a single twelve-over-twelve double-hung window to the right. A single roof dormer is centered above the three windows on the left, and a window made up of two six-light sliding sash is set just below the eaves above the single window to the right.

The north facade is dominated by the roof, which sweeps down to enclose the lean-to porch, and is pierced by the dormers in the second and fourth bays. The porch roof is supported by three simple, square posts. Fenestration on the first floor of this facade is quite irregular; the first bay has no openings, the second has two windows spaced about 20" apart, the third has two windows paired, the fourth holds the doorway, and the fifth another window. All windows have six-over-six double hung sash, but the last; it is one over one. The wide door has six panels, three over three, and four small lights along the top. The east facade has a twelve-over-twelve double-hung window just below a triangular vent set into the gable and a ganged pair of twelve-over-twelve double hung windows in the south bay.

Interior. Both the 1780s and 1814 sections of the house have simple plans. The older section is entered through a door on the south facade that leads into a small vestibule with access to the right and left. On either side of the central, massive chimney are two rooms, one large and one small. To the left is the original kitchen, with cooking hearth intact. The small room on this side was remodeled into a modern kitchen by the family. To the right is the original parlor, which has a smaller fireplace with mantle, and behind it is a small bedroom. The second floor has an open, large chamber over the kitchen and a smaller one over the parlor. The Federal style addition has a central hallway leading straight back to the old part of the house, with one room on either side, both up and down. This part of the house was built to be heated with woodstoves and so, has no fireplaces. It is lacking the interior detailing and ornament found in other Federal houses of this era in Vermont. It does have chair rail at the height of the sidelights that starts at the front door and runs around both first-floor parlors and the hallway. The 1893 addition consists of one room down and one up.

Alterations. Several changes were made in 1893 when the final addition was made to the house. In addition to clapboard repair and painting, most of the windows were replaced with one-over-one double-hung sash. The twelve-over-twelve windows currently in the house were salvaged from other old buildings and added by museum volunteers in the early 1970s. The ganging together of three sash on the south facade and two sash on the east facade of the 1780s section represents another deviation. Several phases of work, including a new roof,

numerous structural repairs, basement drainage, window repair, and painting, were completed between 1988 and 1992.

2. Tourist Cabin (ca 1930)--Noncontributing building, outside period of significance
South of the farmhouse sits Rokeby's tourist cabin, a one-room, one-story, gable-roofed building that once housed summer visitors. The 9.5' x 12' one-bay by one-bay wood frame cabin is of plank construction covered with wood shingles. It rests on concrete blocks at the four corners and the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. The west-facing, gable front entrance has a central, four-panel door with small screened vents cut out at the top and simple trim. A large, roughly cut stone serves as the entrance step. Centered in the south facade is a nine-light awning window set just below the eaves. A small vent, opened from the inside, nestles in the peak of the roof gable on the east facade. The north facade has no openings. The sills and some lower sheathing/shingles were repaired/replaced and the roof was replaced in 1996.

3. Old House (ca 1800)--Noncontributing building, lack of integrity
The "old house," as it was called by family members, is now only the kitchen and woodshed ell of what was once a complete structure. (The main block of the original house stretched to the west and was demolished around 1905.) The timber-framed, two-room ell is a one-and-a-half story structure resting on a dry-laid limestone foundation. Although they probably once sheathed the entire building, wooden shingles now cover the exterior of the kitchen only (the western ends of the north and south facades and the western facade). The remainder is sheathed in horizontal planks, with a small area of clapboards at loft level on the east facade. The gable roof is also covered in wooden shingles. Entrance to the kitchen (west room) is through a four-paneled, Federal style door with a cast iron latch in the north facade. A six-over-four, double-hung window is to the left of the doorway and to the left of that, in the woodshed section, is a pair of 5' wide barn doors. The eastern gable end has a one-over-one double-hung window centered at loft level. The southern facade has a second, single barn door, approximately opposite those on the north, and a single one-over-one, double-hung window to their left. There are six-over-six, double hung windows centered in each story of the western facade. The interior of the tiny kitchen has a cooking hearth with iron crane and bake oven intact and a Federal style mantel; they are on the interior wall to the left of the door as you enter. The split lath above the mantle is completely devoid of plaster and the remaining walls have lost their lath as well as plaster. Around the side of the chimney wall to the left is a small upper cupboard with door, and straight ahead a heavy, double battened door to the woodshed. This door is of beaded tongue-and-groove planks placed horizontally on the kitchen side and vertically on the woodshed side; it has wrought iron strap hinges held with pins and a cast iron thumb latch. The woodshed has a dirt floor and loft space above in the east and west ends. The back of the beehive chimney is visible through an opening in the west wall of the woodshed. This building was demolished and rebuilt in 1990.

4. Smokehouse (ca 1850)--Contributing building
A rather large, (10' x 10') stone smokehouse lies north of the old house. It is of Monkton quartzite with a brick chimney in the north wall and a gable roof clad in gray slate. Wooden batten doors with wrought iron strap hinges held with pins in the west and south facades

provide access to the lower and upper chambers respectively. The door to the upper chamber has a wrought iron latch and a crude lock. The fire was kindled in the lower and the meat hung in the upper chamber. A cast iron clean out door is located at about waist height in the chimney and a post extending up from the peak of the roof on the north facade holds a birdhouse.

5. Hen House (ca 1900)--Noncontributing building, outside the period of significance
Northeast of the smokehouse and southeast of the house is a south-facing, 18' x 12' shed-roofed hen house. It is sheathed in clapboards, has asphalt roll roofing, and a concrete and field stone foundation and a concrete floor. Three large, evenly spaced windows on the south side are minus sash or any historic glazing. Small square openings under the first and third windows once provided access for fowl. Entrance is via a four-paneled, Federal style door with a cast iron latch on the extreme left of the west facade. A two-seater privy in the northeast corner is entered by another four-paneled, Federal style door. The north and east facades have no openings.

6. Out House (ca 1850)--Contributing building
Straight north of the hen house is a 6'x 5' wood frame out house with a gable roof; the walls are sheathed in clapboards and the roof in gray slate. The small building rests on a roughly laid stone foundation, and there is no pit under it. The vertical plank batten door is on the south gable end and has one small window cut in at the top and large iron hook and eye latches inside and out. There is also an iron box lock on the inside. Three seats, one set lower for a child, run along the right side from front to back, two of which retain their bread-board-end wooden seat covers. The entire seat structure retains its original gray/blue paint. The interior was papered over in many layers, some of newsprint, but many of scrap 19th-century wallpaper. Hinges attached to the bottom trim boards on the east side once secured a catch box, which could be removed for emptying.

7. Creamery/Ice House (ca 1850, 1940s)--Contributing building
A combination ice house and creamery is located west and within a foot of the privy. Apparently built from salvaged materials, the 12.5' x 22.5' two-bay by one-bay building rests on a cut stone foundation, is sheathed in clapboards, and has a gable roof covered in gray slate. The wide plank batten door is slightly off center in the north (eaves) side and has a cast iron thumb latch; there is a single four-light sash to the right of the door. A large stone marked "RTR 1824," a cornerstone from one of the Robinson's demolished mills, now serves as entrance step. On entering, the ice house is to the left; an opening gives access to a pit where blocks of ice were once stored. On the right, a ca 1940s refrigerated room fills the back half of the space. It has a heavy, insulated door and is built as a room within a room sheathed in tongue-and-groove bead board. A metal plate on the door says "Equipped with Kelvinator Electric Refrigeration." The only other window is a four-light sash in the far right of the west facade; it is hooded with a small wooden awning supported by wide curved brackets, perhaps intended to keep sun out of the refrigerated room.

8. Toolshed/Slaughterhouse (ca 1850)--Contributing building
To the east of both the out house and hen house is a long, multipurpose outbuilding. The three-bay by one-bay timber frame structure rests on a field stone foundation, is sheathed in clapboards, and has a gable roof of standing seam terned steel. This building is in three parts; relatively large toolshed and slaughterhouse spaces in the south and north ends

respectively, are separated by a small room entered from the slaughterhouse. The entrances are on the west (eaves) side, with double barn doors set into an opening and up a step from the ground in the toolshed (south) end and somewhat larger double barn doors set flush with the wall in the slaughterhouse (north) end. A twelve-light sash is set into the wall between them. The north gable end has a single twelve-light sash set off center to the right and the south gable end two evenly spaced twelve-light sashes. The east facade has a relatively large, double-door opening near the ground giving access to the small central room, suggesting it once housed turkeys. A pair of twelve-light sashes are evenly spaced in the northern bay. The interior of the slaughterhouse has a concrete floor with a drain and a pulley and hoist for bleeding carcasses. The toolshed has a wood floor and is a completely open space. This building was substantially repaired in 1989.

9. Granary (ca 1850)--Contributing building
The granary is located east of the toolshed/slaughterhouse and somewhat away from the rest of the "contained" farmstead. This simple, timber frame 16' x 24' one-and-a-half story building rests on stone piers (three on each long side) and has a gable roof sheathed in red and gray slate. The north, west, and south facades are sheathed with vertical board and batten, while the east facade has clapboards shimmed to allow air circulation. Sheathing reflects function; a corn crib runs the length of the east side with the remainder open for work or grain storage. Entrance is through a vertical plank batten door with wrought iron strap hinges held with pins and centered in the north facade. A second, smaller door provides access at loft level and above it a small hood projects from the gable, sheltering a hook used to hoist sacks of grain. A first-floor, batten hatch door is centered in the south facade. On the interior, a central staircase gives access to the loft, and the movable slat walls of the corn crib, grain bins, and cloth chutes for grain removal are all intact. Repairs to the floor and foundation of the granary were made in 1993.

10. Garage (ca 1940)--Noncontributing building, outside the period of significance
Built on the foundation of a larger carriage barn that burned, the garage is north of the house and separated from it by a small parking area. The wood frame, one-and-a-half story, 30' x 23' building is three bays wide by two deep and has a gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles; rafter tails are exposed under the roof overhang. Access for two vehicles is through a pair of sliding doors in the two eastmost bays of the south facade; a one-over-one double-hung window is centered in the third bay. On the east (gable) end is a four-paneled door at the southern corner and a nine-light sash centered in the facade; a wooden door directly above it provides access to the loft. The west facade has a six-over-six double-hung window centered at loft level and a pair of single-pane sliding sash directly below. The garage occupies only about half the low, concrete foundation, the remainder stretches behind it to the north; this facade has a single, four-paneled door in the east bay.

Note: Resources 11, 12, 14, and 15 are included as part of the overall site and are not counted individually.

11. Dairy Barn Foundation (ca 1820, 1880)
To the north of the garage is the stone foundation that marks the location of the dairy barn, which was demolished in 1995. The outline shows smaller ells extending from the central block to both the east and west. Still extant on the west end is a shallow pit and beyond it an

extensive, brick and stone lined, vaulted cistern.

12. Sheep Barn Foundation (ca 1810)
Some of the stones that formed the foundation of the sheep barn can be seen in an area to the south of the farmstead that has begun to grow up in woods. The four corners are marked with stakes. The sheep barn burned in the early 20th century.

13. Sheep Dip (ca 1810)--Contributing structure
A path from the head of the current visitor parking lot leads south away from the farmyard to the sheep dip. Built by the Robinsons to take advantage of a natural rock outcropping, the sheep dip formed a dam that once held a pool of water to the east. When the sheep needed to be cleaned, or "dipped," prior to shearing, they were led down below the dam and washed in water that flowed over it.

14. Field Barn Foundation (ca 1850)
Off the hiking path that heads east from the house, several foundation stones of a field barn are visible. The site is part of an interpretive trail at the museum and is marked. An aerial photograph from ca 1940 shows a simple, wood frame, one-and-a-half story barn with a gable roof. It would have been used to store hay.

15. School Foundation (1839)
Rowland Thomas Robinson built a two-story, three-bay by four-bay, brick school house on family property north of the farmstead in 1839. A bell tower projected above the gable roof on the north, front entrance. He operated the school, which counted black children and, possibly, fugitive slaves among its students, from 1839 to 1846. It was later used for storage of apples and other farm produce and implements. The building was razed in the 1940s and the brick sold to be reused. The stone foundation is still partly intact and can be seen from another trail that loops through an abandoned orchard.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:_ Locally:_

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B_ C_ D_
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G_
NHL Criteria:	1
NHL Theme(s):	II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements 1. reform movements
Areas of Significance:	Social history Ethnic heritage/Black Religion
Period(s) of Significance:	1830-1865
Significant Dates:	1835, 1837, 1842, 1844, 1851
Significant Person(s):	NA
Cultural Affiliation:	NA
Architect/Builder:	Unknown
Comparative Categories:	XXXI. Social & Humanitarian Movements D. Abolitionism

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Rokeby is significant for its role in the national effort to aid fugitive slaves commonly known as the Underground Railroad. The house, farmstead (consisting of a cluster of outbuildings and other structures surrounded by fields and abandoned orchard and pasture), and family collections retain their historic integrity and contribute to our understanding of abolition and the Underground Railroad in Vermont and nationally from 1830 to 1865. Key to Rokeby's historic significance is its extensive--and rare--contemporary documentation. Family letters not only validate Rokeby as a stop, they actually add to our knowledge, correcting and sharpening our understanding of the Underground Railroad and providing insight into how "the legend outgrew the reality." It is unlikely that another site matches Rokeby for this combination of documentation and completeness and historical integrity of site and collections. Certainly there is not one like it in Vermont. Rokeby is eligible under NHL criterion 1 and is being nominated as part of the Underground Railroad theme study.

Historical Background

Rokeby, as the family called it, was home to four generations of Robinsons from 1793 to 1961. Quaker emigres from Newport, Rhode Island, Thomas (1761-1851) and Jemima Robinson (1761-1846) moved to the family homestead just after Vermont became a state in 1791. Although Thomas was an active member of the Vermont and Ferrisburgh Anti-Slavery Societies, it was his son Rowland Thomas Robinson (1796-1879) who made abolition the cause of his life and sheltered fugitives at Rokeby. Both Thomas and Rowland T. Robinson managed the family's grist and saw mills and built up one of Addison County's largest sheep farms during the early decades of the 19th century. Rowland Thomas's son Rowland Evans Robinson (1833-1900) was an artist and author; he wrote a series of folktales, published by Houghton Mifflin, that were enormously popular in Vermont at the turn of the century as well as several Underground Railroad stories. Of his children, Rachel (1878-1919) became a successful commercial artist, Mary (1884-1931) worked as a botanical artist before becoming a wife and mother, and Rowland Thomas (1882-1951) tended the family farm, now converted from sheep to dairy. "Rowlie," as he was known, and his wife Elizabeth did not have children, and when she died in 1961, she left the site to be operated as a museum.

Rokeby is very fortunate to have incredibly rich paper documentation in the form of 10,000+ family letters as well as account books, diaries, newspapers and pamphlets, and other records dating from the late 18th century to the mid-20th. Of the letters to Rowland T. Robinson, approximately 300 date from 1830 to 1865, and from 1830 to 1850, abolition was the most common theme. His regular abolitionist correspondents during this period included Joseph H. Beale, Oliver Johnson, Charles Marriott, Orson S. Murray, and Charles C. Burleigh; he also received letters from such national figures as Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, and Isaac T. Hopper. Reading through this correspondence shows how thoroughly Rowland Thomas Robinson's Quaker and anti-slavery beliefs were entwined. The majority of his regular correspondents were Quakers. Joseph H. Beale, Oliver Johnson, Charles Marriott, Isaac T. Hopper, and Lucretia Mott along with Rowland Thomas Robinson and others were part of an anti-slavery vanguard in the New York Yearly Meeting, who were constantly pushing for action--and complaining to each other about the opposition. Quakers

were universally opposed to slavery, but much divided over what their course of action--if any--should be.[1] Oliver Johnson, a most regular and frequent correspondent, wrote from his various postings as agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, reporting on the politics, progress, and workings of the movement at large; asking for information on the cause in Vermont; and agonizing about the state of the New York Yearly Meeting. It is clear that Rowland Thomas Robinson's advice was valued and that he was regarded as a dear friend; many letters close with greetings to "Rachel," his wife, as well as other members of the household.

Several letters in the Rokeby Collection provide specific and detailed information on fugitive slaves. It is primarily from them that we can piece together a detailed picture of how one "stop" on the Underground Railroad (UGRR) operated. For example, an 1835 letter from Oliver Johnson,[2] a fellow Vermonter (Peacham) and agent for the New England and American Anti-Slavery Societies, mentioned "the colored boy, William." Rowland Thomas Robinson had evidently asked about Johnson's success in placing William in Montpelier.

In 1837, Johnson wrote again, this time from Jenner Township, Pennsylvania,[3] located just 30 miles from "the line." Being so near Maryland, the area had "at all times no small number of runaway slaves, but they are generally caught unless they proceed farther north." Johnson wrote to interest Rowland Thomas Robinson in hiring one of those runaways, Simon, for whose capture a reward of $200 had been posted. "He is 28 years old, and appeared to me to be an honest, likely man," said Johnson. "He is trustworthy, of a kind disposition, and knows how to do almost all kinds of farm work. He is used to teaming, and is very good to manage horses. He says that he could beat any man in the neighborhood where he lived at mowing, cradling, or pitching." The farm operation at Rokeby was at its height during these years, and the Robinsons had quite small families, so the need for hired hands was probably constant. Johnson's knowledge of that need--and the relative safety of Vermont--no doubt brought Rokeby to mind as a likely place for Simon. He went on to inform Rowland Thomas Robinson that Simon had "intended going to Canada, but says he would prefer to stay in the U.S., if he could be safe. I have no doubt he will be perfectly safe with you."

Johnson was concerned about more than Simon's safety, however. He expressed his fear that if he were to go to Canada, he "may fall into bad company; but if he is under your guardianship, he may become a useful man." It was his hope that "everything will be done to promote his happiness, and where the 'laborer' will be considered 'worthy of his hire,' instead of being regarded as a mere chattel compelled to toil without hopes of reward."

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[1] See chapter 11 in Hugh Barbour, et al, *Quaker Crosscurrents: Three Hundred Years of Friends in the New York Yearly Meeting* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 183-197.

[2] Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, March 27, 1835, Montpelier, Vermont, Rokeby Collection, Sheldon Museum Archive and Research Center, Middlebury Vermont.

[3] Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, January 27, 1837, Jenner Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania, Rokeby Collection.

Johnson proposed furnishing Simon with the names of abolitionists "on whom to call upon the way," and said that while "it will be a great way for him to walk," it would be no worse than going to Canada. He asked Rowland Thomas Robinson for an immediate reply so that he could make the necessary arrangements. Johnson's second letter, written four months later in April,[4] provided some detailed information on how fugitives travelled. He had given Simon directions to Philadelphia, "where he will put himself under the direction of our friends, who will give him all needful information concerning the route to New York." From there, the members of the Vigilance Committee would take over. In a long letter sent much later in the year, Johnson asked whether "the black man [had] arrived yet from Pennsylvania?"[5]

A similar, though less detailed, letter from Joseph H. Beale was sent from White Plains, New York on July 12, 1844.[6] Beale wrote about "a poor hunted fugitive" named Jeremiah Snowden, who, he thought, would be safer in Massachusetts or Vermont "if work is to be had for him." Although they "had an abundance of work for him at this busy season," the Beales were "unwilling to risk his remaining." Beale offered by way of reference that his "Brother John Nickolson thinks Jeremiah can be very useful to a farmer needing such a man." Beale announced his plan to "send a little Box by the Tow Boat . . . directed to care of H. Bright, Vergennes . . . it contains his clothes."

Perhaps the most interesting of these letters are those between Rowland Thomas Robinson and Ephram Elliott, a slave owner in Perquimans County, North Carolina. Exchanged in the spring of 1837, they concern the former slave Jesse. Rowland Thomas Robinson wrote Elliott on Jesse's behalf to negotiate the cost of a freedom paper, "the most anxious wish of his [Jesse's] heart." In his reply,[7] Elliott admitted that Jesse's "situation at this time places it in his power to give me what he thinks proper," but went on to state that he did "not feel disposed to make any title for him for less than Three Hundred Dollars which is not more than one third what I could have had for him before he absconded If I had been disposed to sell him." Rowland Thomas Robinson wrote back presenting a counteroffer:[8] "Since leaving thy service he has by his industry and economy laid up 150$ & he is willing to give the whole of this sum for his freedom . . . If Jesse was in possession of a larger sum he would freely offer it all for his freedom." Rowland Thomas Robinson also made clear in this letter his own unwillingness to contribute, since doing so "would be recognizing a principle which God forbids." Although he admitted that Jesse "at this time is entirely out of my reach," Elliott held firm on his price.[9] Holding on to a hope that Jesse would return voluntarily, he said, "I don't know how Jesse

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[4] Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, April 3, 1837, South Weymouth, Massachusetts, Rokeby Collection.

[5] Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, October 16, 1837, Rokeby Collection.

[6] Joseph H. Beale to Rowland T. Robinson, July 12, 1844, New York, Rokeby Collection.

[7] Ephram Elliott to Rowland T. Robinson, April 19, 1837, Perquimans County, North Carolina, Rokeby Collection.

[8] Rowland Thomas Robinson kept a copy of his reply to Elliott; it is written in Rowland Thomas Robinson's hand on the back of Elliott's April letter.

[9] Ephram Elliott to Rowland T. Robinson, June 7, 1837, Perquimans County, North Carolina, Rokeby Collection.

could with clear conscience wish me to take any less . . . If he feels disposed to come back I will meet him at any place that he will mention. And no sum of money or no Temptation shall Separate us."

A postscript to a March 1842 letter from Charles Marriott[10] concerned "two who have escaped from the Southern prison house, a man and his wife." They had been with Marriott's sister since the previous fall and work could easily be found for them, "but the recent decision of the Supreme Court as to the unconstitutionality of jury trial laws for them has decided us to send them further north either to you or to Canada." Marriott's phrase, "either to you or to Canada," suggests that he saw little difference between the two. Like Oliver Johnson, he was leery of sending them to Canada, where "they [fugitives] are too numerous to obtain profitable employment. If they could be taken in by thee, we should think them safer." He described them as "about 30 years of age. He is a good chopper & farmer & she is useful and well conducted in the house. Their names are John and Martha Williams."

The case Marriott referred to was *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*. Pennsylvania, like Vermont and many other northern states, had passed a personal liberty law to circumvent the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. These state laws required masters or slave catchers to seek warrants before apprehending fugitives and guaranteed runaways a jury trial before a certificate of removal would be granted. The *Prigg* decision found Pennsylvania's law--and all others by extension--unconstitutional because it conflicted with a master's right under the federal act.[11] Of course, *Prigg* would have had the same effect on Vermont law as on New York's, so Marriott's desire to move the Williamses indicated his belief that they would not be subject to recapture in Vermont.

The final letter of this group was addressed to Rowland Thomas Robinson's father Thomas and sent by a fugitive who had made his way to Canada.[12] James Temple wrote from Montreal in May 1851 to thank them for their kindness, and reported, "I am at work at my trade getting a living looking through the glasses you gave me for which I never shall forget to be thankful. I think that I shall soon be able to send for my family if I conclude to stay here." The glasses Temple referred to had belonged to Thomas Robinson's recently deceased wife, of whom Temple said, "I am happy to say that I [am] now looking through those glasses that her happy eyes were once accustomed to look through[.] I rejoice to think that you shall see her again after death where parting will be no more." He was effusive in his gratitude to Robinson, "I am happy to testify the pleasure I feel in ever becoming acquainted with you and of partaking of your benifits which was so liberally and willingly [tendered?] to me by your beautiful hands."

One more letter--not in the Rokeby collection--documents another fugitive aided by the

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[10] Charles Marriott to Rowland T. Robinson, New York, March 3, and 17, 1842, Rokeby Collection.

[11] William M. Wiecek, "Slavery and Abolition Before the United States Supreme Court, 1820-1860" *Journal of American History* 65 (1978):34-59.

[12] James Temple to Thomas R. Robinson, May 11, 1851, Montreal, Canada, Rokeby Collection.

Robinsons.[13] The letter was written by Chauncy L. Knapp, Vermont's Secretary of State and an active abolitionist, to Mason Anthony of Saratoga, New York on August 20, 1838. It concerned Charles, a young fugitive, whom Anthony had taken to Rokeby. Knapp wrote "to inform you that the lad who is indebted to you and your father's great kindness for a safe arrival at my friend R. T. Robinson's, is now sitting in my office in the State House." He went on, "By my friend Robinson's earnest request I have assumed the office of guardian to Charles . . . if he should make such proficiency as I have reason to hope, it is my purpose to place him in a good family, ere long, as an apprentice to the art of printing." Also in the Rokeby Collection is an undated clipping of a short article written by Knapp and published in the *Gazette and Standard* that related the full story. Charles was travelling as manservant to his master who was honeymooning in upstate New York. Leery of bringing Charles too near Canada, Campbell, the master, left him in the care of a hotel keeper in Schenectady while he and his bride visited Niagara Falls. Local abolitionists offered to help Charles make his escape, and he was transported that night all the way to Rokeby. Although a search was made, Campbell was unable to locate his missing slave and returned home to Vicksburg. Charles apparently lived up to Knapp's hopes, for the article concluded, "Charles continued to reside in Vermont, much beloved by all who knew him. He is now doing a flourishing business, in his line, not far from the forty-fifth degree of north latitude--a practical refutation of the pro-slavery fallacy that 'the colored man can't take care of himself.'"

These letters decisively document Rokeby as a place where fugitive slaves were sheltered, and place it firmly in the broad pattern of abolition from 1830 to 1865. But they do more. This rare piece of documentary history actually adds to our knowledge and sharpens our interpretation of the UGRR, showing us where history gives way to mythology. The popular conception of the UGRR in Vermont, as elsewhere, is of brave, white abolitionists taking great risks to transport hotly pursued fugitives in deepest secrecy. As "agents" moved the "dusky strangers" along the "route" from "station" to "station," they were well concealed in secret hiding places.[14] It is important not to minimize in any way the danger that *fugitives* faced when they began their escapes or the risks that *fugitives* took in seeking freedom in this way. Yet, the oral tradition of the UGRR in New England--and certainly in Vermont--is more melodrama than history. The key to the popular conception is pursuit. All of the conventions of the popular understanding--the need to operate clandestinely, to communicate in secret, to travel at night, and to create hiding places--arise from the assumption of hot pursuit by a determined, ruthless, and often armed slave catcher. While many fugitives were in precisely such danger in the first days and miles of their escapes, it diminished as they put more and more distance between themselves and the slave south, as two contemporary historians have shown. Larry Gara pointed out that most fugitives had already completed the really perilous parts of their trips *before* making contact with northern

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[13] "Anti-Slavery Action in 1838: A Letter from Vermont's Secretary of State," *Vermont History* 41 (Winter 1973):7-8.

[14] Although the term "underground railroad" was coined sometime in the 1840s, Ray Zirblis points out in his report on the UGRR in Vermont that the terminology we use today was *not* used by contemporary activists. Rather, it was "codified" by Wilbur H. Siebert around the turn of the century. The railroad metaphor and this pervasive language both appear to have had strong impacts on the popular conception of the UGRR. Raymond Paul Zirblis, *Friends of Freedom: The Vermont Underground Railroad Survey Report*. Montpelier: Vermont Department of State Buildings, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, 1996, p. 4.

white abolitionists of the UGRR. And in his book on blacks in Canada, Robin Winks said that "in areas further to the north the Railroad was seldom underground, being well known to local newspapers and law officers alike."[15]

The Robinson letters provide a wealth of detail that begins to separate historical fact from fiction. Oliver Johnson and Joseph Beale both stated flat out that Vermont was safe for fugitives, and Charles Marriott regarded Rokeby as *safer* than Canada. And since all four fugitives they wrote of were being sent to work on the farm, the issue of hiding places or secrecy would seem to have been moot. Ephram Elliott conceded quite frankly that Jesse was "entirely out" of his reach, suggesting that slave owner and abolitionist *alike* agreed that Vermont was a safe haven. More importantly, the correspondence with Elliott was *initiated* by Robinson, who, by writing, revealed Jesse's precise whereabouts--something he would certainly not have undertaken if he thought it would put Jesse at risk.

Were fugitive slaves pursued by slave catchers across the borders of Vermont? There is no reliable evidence of it. Ephram Elliott is only one slave owner, but he clearly considered attempting to recapture a fugitive in Vermont to be out of the question. Vermont historian Ray Zirblis recently completed a research report on Vermont's UGRR activity, in which he stated flatly, "There are no substantiated incidents of organized slave catching in the state."[16] He searched Vermont's antislavery and other newspapers (among other sources) for reports of those incidents passed on in the oral tradition and found none. In the one case he did find reported in *The Green Mountain Freeman*, the slave who attempted escape was, like Charles, travelling with her master, Colonel S. T. Bailey. She absconded to the home of an abolitionist when Bailey left for a few days. He easily found her on his return and was allowed to reclaim her.[17] He, of course, was already in Vermont. The question is: Would he have sent someone from Georgia to recapture her? Zirblis noted that Vermont newspapers often reported on slaves recaptured in other states. It is unlikely that they would have been silent on similar incidents in Vermont, and the attempt to recapture a fugitive slave would certainly have been news.

The Robinson letters also shed light on the paths the fugitives took. Influenced by the railroad analogy, the UGRR has been seen as a series of established stations along which a runaway travelled, in what Zirblis has called the "connect the dots approach."[18] And while there clearly were known friends and helpers along the way, each fugitive probably took a slightly, if not wholly, different route influenced more by his own needs and the ties of family, religion, and friendship of his helpers than by prescription. Oliver Johnson and Joseph Beale were both Quakers, and therefore connected to Rowland Thomas Robinson by

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[15] Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), 61. Although written more than thirty years ago, Gara's book is the most recent revisionist treatment of the UGRR and is essential reading. Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1971), 233.

[16] Zirblis, *Friends of Freedom*, 35.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, 18.

strong religious ties.[19] Johnson was a fellow Vermonter and worker with Rowland Thomas Robinson in both the Vermont and Addison County Anti-Slavery Societies, and Beale and Rowland Thomas Robinson were co-founders of a black aid society organized through the New York Yearly Meeting. Far from sending the fugitives in their care along a predetermined route, they both thought of Rokeby as a possible destination because of the match of work experience and need.[20] If somewhat paternalistically, Oliver Johnson and Charles Marriott both expressed a broader concern for the long-term welfare of the fugitives in their care. Johnson wanted to send Simon to someone whose moral influence he approved of, and Marriott feared for the Williams's ability to find work.

It would be more accurate to envision the UGRR as a web or network of safe homes based on family, religious, and friendship ties than as a linear railroad of anonymous stations. Another letter, though not to Rowland Thomas Robinson nor in the Rokeby collection, supports this notion. In compiling his major tome on the UGRR, Wilbur H. Siebert[21] surveyed any living abolitionists he could locate as well as their descendants--the Robinsons among them. In 1896, Rowland Thomas Robinson's son Rowland Evans Robinson wrote a long letter to Siebert reporting what he could remember of UGRR activity at Rokeby. He noted among those to whom fugitives were passed, Joseph Rogers, who was also a Quaker and a close friend, and Nathan Hoag and Stephen F. Stevens, who were both Quakers and Robinson relatives. He also indicated that at the Hoag and Stevens farms, in East Charlotte and Montpelier, respectively, fugitives sometimes stayed for months working as farm hands, as they did at Rokeby.[22]

Although Rokeby has been well documented by primary sources, it has not been immune to the mythology of the oral tradition. Rowland Evans Robinson (RER) made his living as an author, and in the late 19th century, he wrote several stories with UGRR themes. "Out of Bondage," "An Underground Railroad Passenger," and "The Mole's Path" all feature Southern slave catchers. In the latter two, the clever Yankees outwit their foes just in time to effect a narrow escape; in the former, the desperately sick runaway dies just as his hiding place is discovered.[23] Given RER's family background, these stories were taken at face

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[19] The Quakers were the first organized body of any kind to speak out against slavery as a group, and certainly the first religious denomination to do so. They also lived, worked, and married in close-knit communities, by both preference and rule.

[20] The fugitive's need to find work and support him or herself, seen so clearly in the Robinson letters, is completely ignored in the UGRR legend. It was a motivating factor for Simon, Jeremiah Snowden, and John and Martha Williams, as it was for the famous fugitive Frederick Douglass. This issue deserves scholarly attention.

[21] Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1898).

[22] Rowland E. Robinson to Wilbur H. Siebert, August 19, 1896. Siebert Papers, Volume 41, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[23] Rowland E. Robinson, *Out of Bondage and Other Stories* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1936). Another story, "Our Own Runaway," was published in *The Youth's Companion* on August 31, 1911. This story features a pair of Quaker children, who, in their enthusiasm to contribute to the "cause," harbor and feed a black man who lets them believe he is a fugitive. Their enthusiasm, not the man's dishonesty, was the source of the mix-up. These melodramatic stories are distinctly unlike RER's several books of Vermont folktales and may well have

value. Wilbur Siebert actually cited the stories as fact in his book on the Vermont UGRR, stating that RER "had actually heard most of the anecdotes which he wrote and published, although he made use of fictitious names for his characters."[24] Much as he may have wanted to believe this, Siebert cited no evidence of it, and there is none in the collection at Rokeby. Most tellingly, Robinson related none of these stories in his long, detailed letter to Siebert.

The Robinson stories no doubt provided the basis for the mythologizing of the UGRR at Rokeby. RER's son and daughter-in-law took in summer tourists as boarders from the late 1920s to about 1940 and used the house's UGRR history as a draw. As the site evolved into a museum, this oral tradition informed and was integrated into house tours and programs. From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, visitors were told that fugitives were hidden in the east chamber or "Rokeby Slave Room." Another letter in the Siebert Papers at Harvard provides an interesting clue to the origin of this myth. In preparation for his book on Vermont, Siebert evidently embarked on a second round of surveying. The letter in question is from Mary R. Allen, of the Maclure Library in Pittsford, Vermont, who stated that "The walled off room, where the negroes were sheltered, is still to be seen."[25] The upstairs of the 1780s part of the house consists of one large, open chamber, and a second, smaller one reached through a doorway in the wall separating them. Historic photographs of the house indicate that two walls, at right angles to each other, were erected in the larger chamber, creating an enclosed room and a hallway along the south side of the house. This was most likely done in the early 20th century to create spaces more usable for tourist rental. The east chamber, now at the end of a long, narrow hallway, was the "walled off" room cited by Ms. Allen. Visitors are no longer told that the east chamber is the "Slave Room" where fugitives were hidden, but Simon, Jesse, Jeremiah Snowden, John and Martha Williams, and others whose names are not known probably did sleep in either or both chambers, which we know were used by hired hands and remain unchanged today.[26]

UGRR activity seems to have dropped off at Rokeby after 1850--the year the second Fugitive Slave Law was passed. The only letter relating to fugitives dated after 1850 is the thank you letter from James Temple sent in 1851. RER also verified this in his 1896 letter to Siebert: "I cannot remember seeing a [illegible] fugitive here after 1850, though now and

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been written because he realized there was a market for them. He was, after all, a working author. It is even possible that Siebert's request for information on Rokeby and the UGRR gave him the idea. Siebert contacted the Robinsons in 1896, also the year RER sent his long reply, and "Out of Bondage" appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1897.

[24] Wilbur H. Siebert, *Vermont's Anti-Slavery and Underground Railroad Record* (1937; reprint, New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 75.

[25] Mary R. Allen to Wilbur H. Siebert, May 24, 1935. Siebert Papers, Volume 41, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[26] Once again RER's writing provides evidence. In "Danvis Farm Life," an essay describing the farm year at Rokeby, he said, "Of all the rooms in our farmhouse, the kitchen chamber is probably the least changed. [He goes on to describe it in great detail as it looks today.] To this dormitory the hired man betakes himself when his last pipe is smoked, and soon, in nasal trumpet-blasts, announces his arrival in the Land of Nod." RER's career as a writer did not begin until after the Civil War. The walls erected in the early 20th century were removed in the 1960s by museum personnel.

then an imposter called on us."[27] The index to the Robinson letters also shows that abolition dropped off sharply as the subject of correspondence after 1850. While some retreat from activity is clear, the reason for it is not. An explanation may be found in the changes taking place in the abolition movement nationwide and in Vermont and in the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Rowland Thomas Robinson was a staunch and lifelong Garrisonian. Among the items in the collections at Rokeby is a nearly complete run of *The Liberator*, to which he subscribed from the first issue to the last. A founder of both the Vermont--the first such state auxiliary to be formed--and Ferrisburgh Anti-Slavery Societies,[28] he never abandoned the goal of immediate emancipation or his commitment to moral suasion. This meant that he was left out of the majority when activists began to employ political means after 1840. At the 1839 annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, for example, Rowland Thomas Robinson was the lone member of the Vermont delegation to vote against both the majority and the use of the ballot to further the cause.[29] He and a small group of "pseudo-anarchists" resorted to disrupting meetings of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society as their views became more and more marginal. Finally, in 1843, the majority resigned in disgust. The Liberty Party began organizing political clubs that same year and eventually usurped the place formerly held by the abolition societies.[30] Opposing the use of political means to further what he saw as a moral cause became almost as important to Rowland Thomas Robinson as opposing slavery itself. At least he was willing to let it destroy the anti-slavery societies he had helped found.

Dissatisfaction with the New York Yearly Meeting also seemed to come to a head during this period.[31] Charles Marriott, Rowland Thomas Robinson, and others had been trying for years to send an anti-slavery memorial to Congress, for example, but could not overcome the opposition.[32] Oliver Johnson wrote to Rowland Thomas Robinson in 1839 that "duty will require me before long to renounce as an evil thing my connection with the sect to which I now belong."[33] The New York Monthly Meeting disciplined and then disowned Isaac T.

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[27] Robinson to Siebert, August 19, 1896, Harvard.

[28] John Myers, "The Beginning of Antislavery Agencies in Vermont, 1832-1836," *Vermont History* 36 (Summer 1968):126-141.

[29] David Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 173.

[30] Ludlum, *Social Ferment*, 180-181.

[31] Rowland Thomas Robinson corresponded from 1839 to 1843 with many abolitionist members of the New York Yearly Meeting who shared his dissatisfaction with official inaction, see, for example, Charles Marriott to Rowland T. Robinson, July 27, 1836; January 29, 1839; March 14, 1842; October 15, 1842. John Orvis to Rowland T. Robinson, January 7, 1842; February 5, 1843. George C. Macy to Rowland T. Robinson, September 12, 1843. Samuel Keese to Rowland T. Robinson, June 3, 1843. All Rokeby Collection.

[32] See, for example, Charles Marriott to Rowland T. Robinson, September 9, 1835, Rokeby Collection. Marriott wrote frequently about problems with the New York Yearly Meeting.

[33] Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, Boston, January 5, 1839, Rokeby Collection.

Hopper and Marriott in 1842 for their abolitionist activities "calculated to excite discord and disunity among friends."[34] The loss of these comrades, and the possibility of his own disownment no doubt led to Rowland Thomas Robinson's decision to resign from meeting sometime in the 1840s. This break may explain the lack of abolition-related correspondence after 1850, since most of Rowland Thomas Robinson's correspondents had been other Quakers.

Despite these conflicts, Rowland Thomas Robinson continued to work on a variety of projects during this period. In 1843, he hosted one of the one hundred conventions the New England Anti-Slavery Society resolved to hold that year. The NEASS drafted a group of orators, Frederick Douglass among them, and sent them on the road. In his autobiography, Douglass said of his travels in Vermont, "In the neighboring town of Ferrisburgh the case was different and far more favorable. The way had been prepared for us by such stalwart antislavery workers as Orson S. Murray, Charles C. Burleigh, Rowland T. Robinson, and others."[35] A small broadside announcing the "Great Convention" and signed by Rowland Thomas Robinson remains in the Rokeby Collection and is on display in the house.

Rowland Thomas Robinson was clearly committed to more than just an end to slavery. He worked for education both before the Civil War for former slaves and after it, for free blacks. In 1839 he started his own school, building an impressive, two-story brick building with a bell tower on Rokeby land just north of the house and farmstead. Although not a boarding school, it attracted pupils, many of them Quakers, from out of state. Joseph Beale wrote in 1840 about placing his son Caleb, if a place for him to stay could be found.[36] Another New York Quaker, S. Bowne, wrote from New Rochelle to ask how "Joseph & Eliza get along" and to say that "James & Lucretia" had left their old school and wished to try it for a quarter. The Brick Academy, as it was called, was also an experiment in integration. The two youngest children of a freed slave, a boy and a girl, were the wards of a New York Friend and abolitionist, and he placed them there from 1838 to 1841.[37] An algebra book signed by Henry Turpin, the boy, remains in the collection at Rokeby.[38] Little more is known of this venture, except that it closed in 1846, and the building was subsequently used for agricultural storage.

Also in 1839, Rowland Thomas Robinson worked with Joseph H. Beale and Charles

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[34] Barbour, *Quaker Crosscurrents*, 186. Also see: Isaac T. Hopper to Rowland T. Robinson, New York, January 29, 1842, Rokeby Collection.

[35] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1892; reprint, New York: Collier Books, 1962), 227.

[36] Joseph H. Beale to Rowland T. Robinson, New York, May 9, 1840, Rokeby Collection.

[37] Details on the Turpin children come from the letters of Lydia Maria Child. See *Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 47 and Lydia Maria Child to Deborah Weston, New York City, August 25, 1841, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

[38] An explanatory note written by George Robinson, one of Rowland Thomas Robinson's sons, says "Henry J. Turpin / A colored boy--ward of Joseph Beale--went to the 'Academy' a short time, about 1839 or so, I think. G. G. R." Actually, the Turpin children were the wards of Joseph Carpenter of New Rochelle, New York.

Marriott among others to found the New York Association of Friends for the Relief of Those Held in Slavery and the Improvement of the Free People of Color; he was appointed first clerk of the group. Among various activities, they supported schools for black children and adults in New York City and urged boycotting of slave-produced goods.[39] In an 1835 letter, William Lloyd Garrison said of Rowland Thomas Robinson's wife Rachel Gilpin Robinson, "Not a particle of the productions of slave labor, whether it be rice, sugar, coffee, cotton, molasses, tobacco or flour, is used in her family, and thus her practice corresponds admirably with her doctrine."[40] This, no doubt, was the sort of anti-slavery activity that kept Rowland Thomas Robinson and friends in trouble with the New York Yearly Meeting.

Rowland Thomas Robinson's efforts continued in the postwar period. Immediately after the war, he wrote to the Quartermaster General in Washington, DC, offering shelter and jobs for freedmen.[41] Apparently he was not alone in his desire to help; Barker informed him they had more offers of work than they could supply laborers. He noted, however, that the Freedmen's Bureau might know of "such persons," and he asked Rowland Thomas Robinson to send information about the wages offered.

Rowland Thomas Robinson was still at work more than a decade later. He used his position as executor of the estate of Joseph Rogers, a fellow Quaker and abolitionist, to contribute to freedmen's education, seeking William Lloyd Garrison's advice on which of the several black colleges was most worthy. Garrison replied on July 11, 1878,[42] and suggested Howard, Wilberforce, Hampton, Fiske, and Berea as possibilities. He made a special plea for Berea, which had "triumphantly solved the problem whether whites and blacks can be amicably and advantageously educated together."

A dilemma for many abolitionists was how to end slavery without risking white supremacy.[43] Not so for Rowland Thomas Robinson. He was that rare abolitionist whose commitment went beyond the need to destroy a sinful institution to fully embracing black men and women as brothers and sisters entitled to all the rights and advantages of whites. He knew that there would be no freedom without education and work. This story of the UGRR at Rokeby is not always popular. For many, the romance of the railroad is inextricably tied to notions of danger and secrecy. But taking a new look at the story of fugitives at Rokeby puts Robinson's contributions in a new light as well. Rather than mere shelter for a night, Rowland and Rachel Robinson took former slaves into their home, gave them employment on the farm, taught them to read and write, and gave them the space and time needed to start life anew. Fugitive slaves escaped with little more than their own

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[39] See Charles Marriott to Rowland T. Robinson, New York, January 29, 1839; March 14, 1842; June 2, 1843 and Joseph H. Beale to Rowland T. Robinson, New York, July 16, 1839.

[40] Walter M. Merrill, ed, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, volume I. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 566.

[41] S. Barker to Rowland T. Robinson, Washington, DC, October 31, 1866, Rokeby Collection

[42] William Lloyd Garrison to Rowland T. Robinson, Boston, Massachusetts, July 11, 1878, Rokeby Collection.

[43] Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 264.

courage and determination; at some point they had to leave their old lives behind them and begin new lives as free men and women. This was the opportunity offered by the Robinsons and Rokeby.

Rowland Thomas Robinson was among the first to translate his beliefs into action--helping to found the first state auxiliary of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1834--and continued his efforts on behalf of black men and women after they had been freed. His belief in full equality and civil rights for blacks, from which he never wavered, put him in the vanguard of the movement. A radical even among Quakers--who were well known for their abolitionist stance--he left the Friends over the issue of direct action in the 1840s. He participated in and influenced anti-slavery debate and action at the state and national levels. He worked and corresponded with several national figures. Indeed, reflecting on "days of auld lang syne," William Lloyd Garrison said of Rowland Thomas Robinson in an 1878 letter, "I always placed you high on my list of friends and co-laborers the most esteemed and the truest; and it affords me the greatest satisfaction to know that you have been preserved to hear the ringing of the jubilee bell, and to witness all those marvelous changes which have taken place in our land within less than a score of years."[44]

Rokeby is distinguished among UGRR sites nationwide for its rare and complete documentation. It is also distinguished for its high level of historic integrity. Frugal Yankees, the Robinsons saved anything and everything of value. Thus the house is fully furnished with family belongings, including furniture, clothing, dishes, books, art, and other artifacts dating from the 1790s to 1961. Rowland Thomas Robinson's desk, papers, books, furniture, and clothing are all on view. The chambers where fugitives might have slept while at Rokeby, the kitchen where they took their meals, and other rooms are unchanged and open to the public, as are the outbuildings and fields where they worked. Rokeby may not have a "secret chamber," but it offers an authentic glimpse into everyday life as it was lived by a remarkable family and the fugitives they aided.

[44] William Lloyd Garrison, July 11, 1878, Rokeby Collection.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
X 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:

X State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
X Other (Specify Repository): Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vermont
Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approximately 85 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A:	18	640700	4898130
B:	18	641610	4898180
C:	18	641600	4897840
D:	18	640610	4897790

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the southeast corner of Town Highway 22 (Robinson Road) and US Route 7, proceed east along the southerly right of way of Town Highway 22 3,075 feet to the intersection with former Town Highway 23 (Buckwheat Street), now abandoned, then proceed south 1,030 feet to a pin, then proceed west 3,170 feet to a pin, then proceed north 186 feet to a pin, then proceed west 122 feet to a pin at Route 7, then proceed along the easterly right of way of Route 7 1,262 feet north to the place of starting.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes all land owned by Rokeby Museum, all of which was historically part of Rokeby, the Robinson family farm. The farmhouse, outbuildings, features, fields, former orchards and pasture, and forest that are included in the nominated property were all part of the farm as it developed from 1793 to 1961. It is sufficient to convey the historic significance of the property.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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RR #1
Ferrisburgh, Vermont 05456

Telephone: 802-877-3406

Date: 1/13/97

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
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