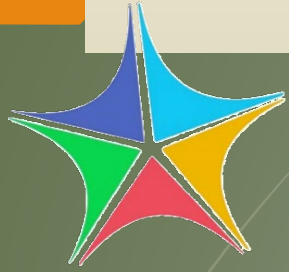


THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN OAKLAND COUNTY

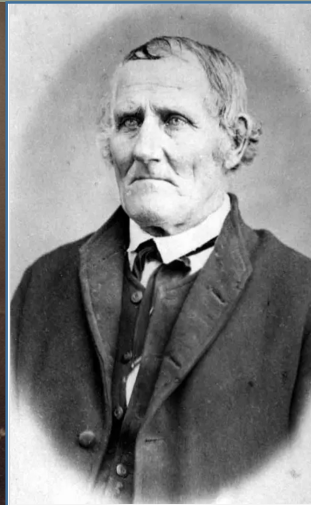


2023 Michigan Humanities grant-funded pilot project to research and create

- A 3-year traveling exhibit
- An educational interactive web map

Study areas:

Birmingham
Farmington
Pontiac
Royal Oak
Southfield



A MULTI-COMMUNITY PROJECT TO RESEARCH AND DOCUMENT ANTI-SLAVERY ACTIVITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES
FUNDED IN PART BY MICHIGAN HUMANITIES, AN AFFILIATE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

EARLIEST ANTI-SLAVERY “HOT SPOTS,” 1830S - LATE 1840S & BEYOND

- Pontiac (county seat)
- Birmingham
- Farmington

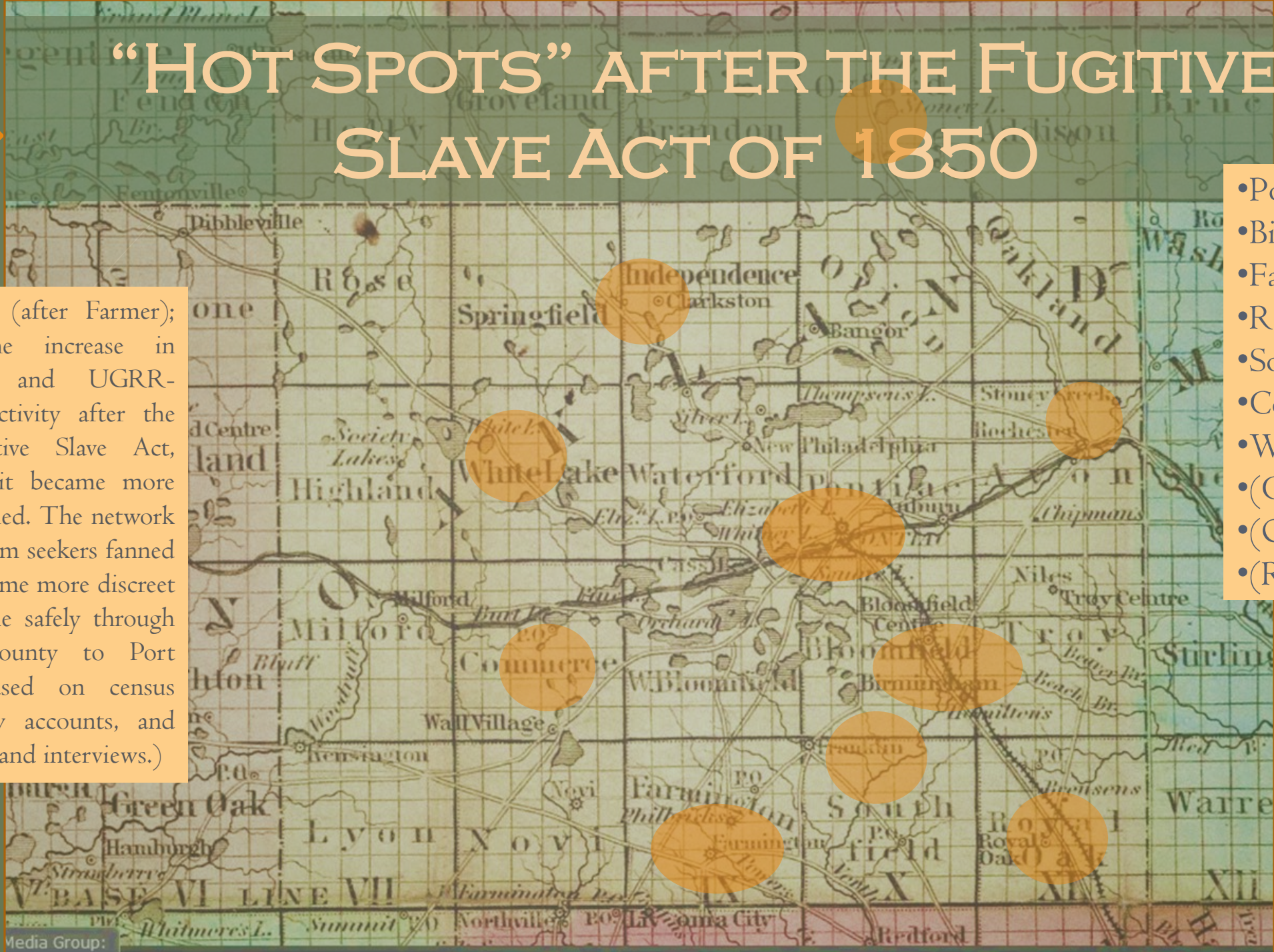
Map, 1849 (after Farmer); showing early organized abolitionist areas in Oakland County. Settlements with similar political, cultural, and religious interests were more involved in state and county efforts to establish policy and rule of law.



“HOT SPOTS” AFTER THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT OF 1850

Map, 1849 (after Farmer); showing the increase in abolitionist and UGRR-associated activity after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, when Detroit became more closely watched. The network to aid freedom seekers fanned out and became more discreet to get people safely through Oakland County to Port Huron. (Based on census records, new accounts, and later reports and interviews.)

- Pontiac
- Birmingham
- Farmington
- Royal Oak
- Southfield
- Commerce
- White Lake
- (Clarkston)
- (Oxford)
- (Rochester)



FARMINGTON AREA ABOLITIONISTS

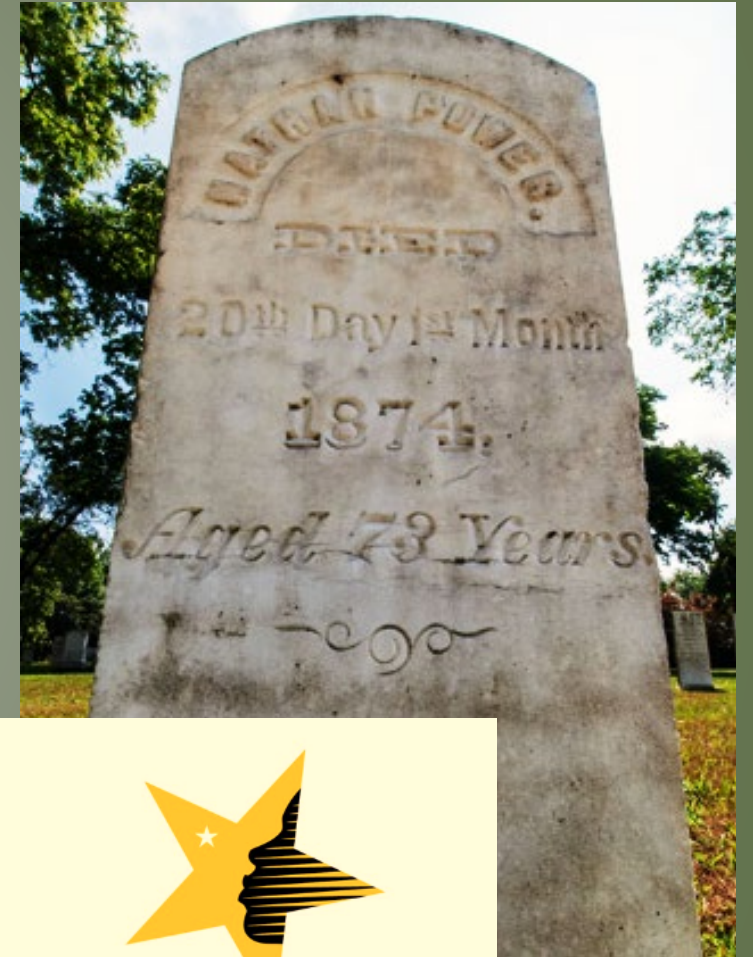
Nathan Power

- Well-documented
- National Park Service UGRR Network to Freedom (2012)
- Site: Quaker Cemetery

Abram Power

- Recently documented
- UGRR research project

Others (in process)



FARMINGTON AREA FREEDOM SEEKERS

What Makes the Wilsons Unique

Verified UGRR connection

- Published primary sources
- Family information-oral traditions
- Property information/survival of descendant's home

Inspiring Story

- Their connection to Farmington & return by choice
- Contributions of family to shaping of Farmington
- Relevance of story to wide audience
- Intact family occupation and preserved sense of place

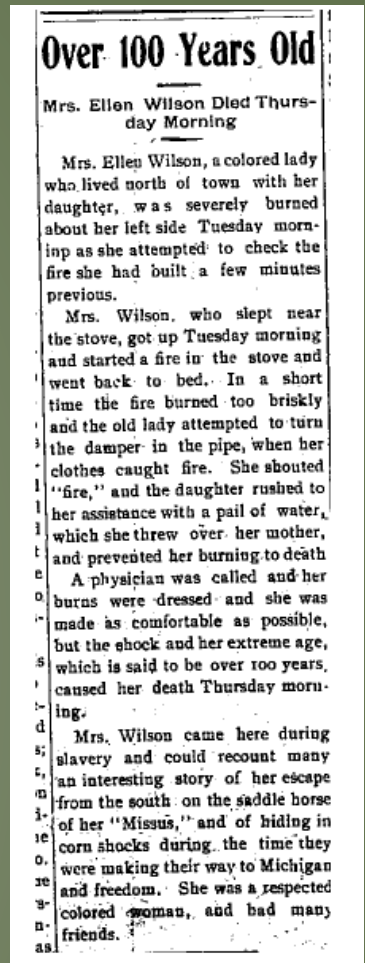
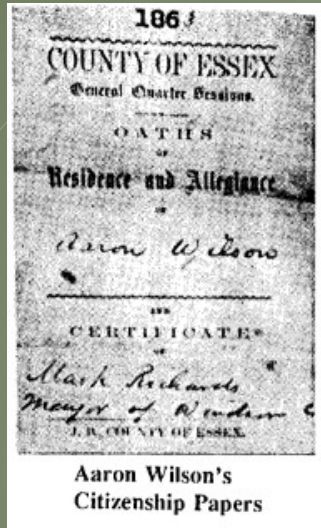
FREEDOM ACRES

Upon this land, for over 100 years, lived descendants of slaves who fled the South before the Civil War.

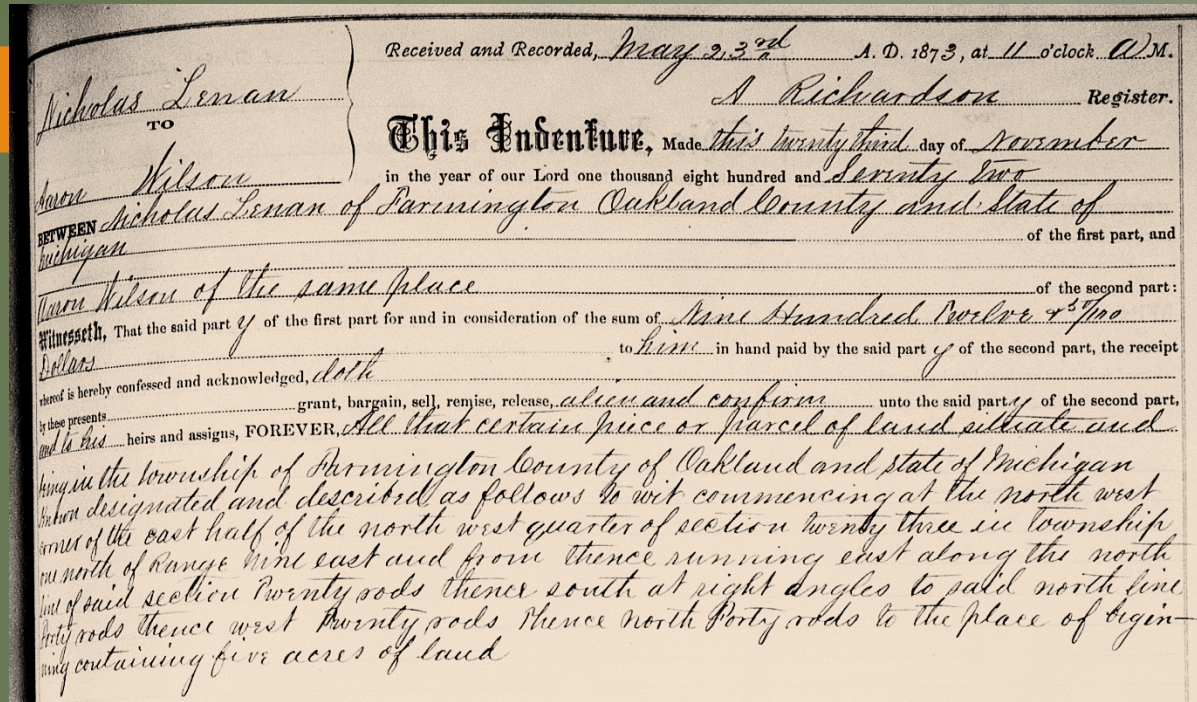
Aaron and Ellen Wilson came from Virginia to Farmington via the Underground Railroad in the early 1850s. Going on to Canada, they became Canadian citizens to secure their freedom. After the Civil War they returned to Farmington, where "people had been so friendly," to make their home. Here four generations were respected members of the community, the only black family in Farmington, including Claude Wilson, a grandson, the first black deputy sheriff of Oakland County, and Wellington Hullm, known for years as Pete, the TV Man.

FARMINGTON HILLS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
1987

ELLEN JOHNSON (1836 -1915) AND AARON WILSON (1832-1906)

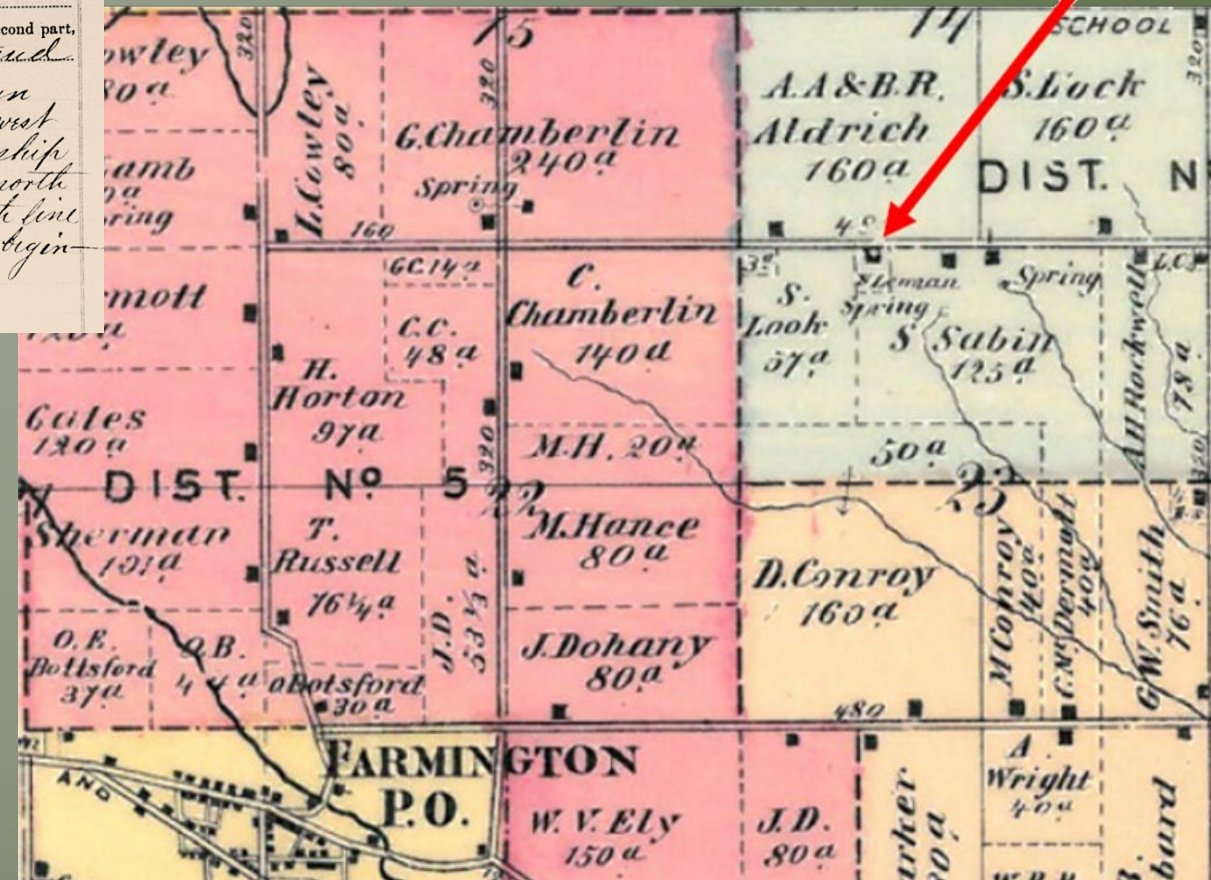


- Fled enslavement in (West) Virginia, c1855
- Assisted via UGRR in Farmington (likely by Power)
- Remained in Farmington area; had three children before 1860
- By 1864, had relocated to Ontario, where son John was born
- Stayed in Ontario until after the war; Aaron paid income taxes (1865)
- Returned after the war; purchased 5 acres of land in 1872; "Freedom Acres"

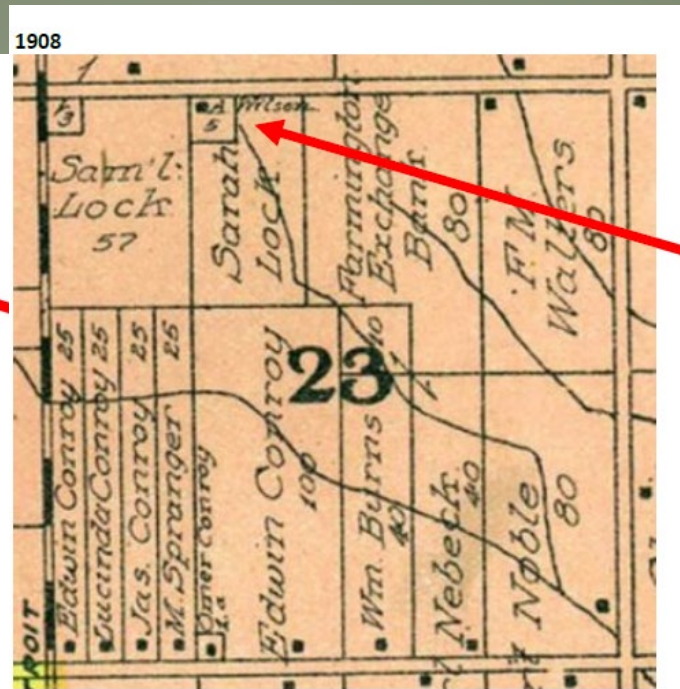
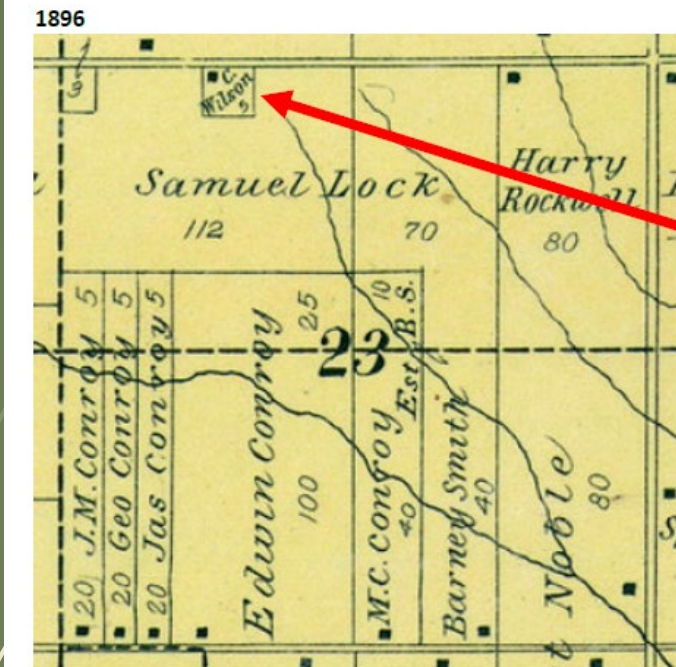


PROPERTY DEED: 1872

Dated 23 November 1872, sale/deeded to Aaron Wilson by Nicholas Lenan [Lenon] for \$912.50: five acres in NW corner of E half of NW quarter of Section 23 Twp 1 N Range 9 E, with a dwelling. Courtesy Carol Bacak-Egbo



DOCUMENTED OCCUPATION

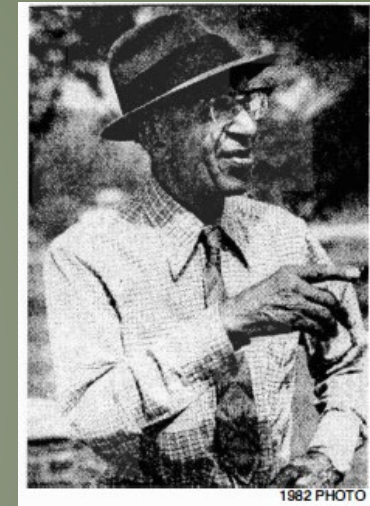


Wilson 5 acre property with same dwelling marked labeled C Wilson (son Charles) in 1896 map and A (Aaron) Wilson in 1908. In 1947 map, it is labeled W. Hullm (Wellington-grandson) in 1947, with a new dwelling in a different property location. Property records show MJ (Mary J.) Wilson probate issue in 1976, although she died in 1939. (Property currently appears to be owned by Tracey Hullm.) *Courtesy Carol Bacak-Egbo.*

DESCENDANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY



Grandson Claude (Claudell) Wilson was the son of Charles Wilson, and was the first Black Oakland County sheriff. He died in the line of duty in 1935.



Great grandson Wellington ("Pete") Hullm was the grandson of John Wilson, Ellen and Aaron's eldest son. His mother was Emma Wilson Hullm. He was born in Canada but came to live at the house in Farmington while still a child, went to school in Farmington, and had a TV and radio repair business for many years. His son Dwight was a talented athlete and well known at Farmington High (graduated 1969)

WILSON FAMILY UNMARKED GRAVESITES



Ellen, Aaron, and their unmarried daughter Mary J. Wilson are all buried in Oakwood, aka Farmington Cemetery. The exact location of the graves was verified with information provided by the research project.

There is no marker.

AARON & ELLEN WILSON SITE

- Family/descendant interest
- Identified with signage by Farmington Historical Commission
- UGRR Network to Freedom: possible future designation

