

Moses McKay

By Rosalie Yoakam

In 1818 **Moses McKay**, a Quaker from Virginia, brought twenty-two just-freed slaves to Warren County near the town of Harveysburg to make bricks and build a house. The house is today inhabited by descendants of **McKay** and is located at 9363 New Burlington Road. The transitional Greek Revival house is on the *National Register of Historic Places*, recognized as a station on the *Underground Railroad*.

Howard Doster, the great-great-great grandson of **McKay**, pointed to a large fireplace as he related the location of a hidden room. “*The hearth was moveable and a room that could hold eight people was under it*,” he said. “*The room is filled in now*.”

Doster suspects there was a second secret hiding place under the floorboards of another room.

Besides the mysteries of the house, **Doster** wonders about the implications of a contract he was shown. “*Cousin Harry Feike’s widow, Helen, gave me a contract written on sheepskin*,” he said. “*I copied the words and then gave the contract back to her*.”

The contract is dated April 4, 1818 and was made in Virginia before **McKay** left for Ohio. The contract wording follows:

“Arvenea Gaskins a free woman of color and her four children, to wit; Nace, fifteen years old the third day of last June; Harry, nine years old the fifteenth day of last April; Alexander, eight years old the third day of September next; and her daughter, Clerif; hereby agree and promise on her and their parts that they will move out to the state of Ohio this ensuing spring with Moses McKay and his family; provided the said McKay will procure and furnish their passage which said Moses McKay hereby promises to do. And further that when they arrive there, he will furnish the said Arvenea with a good, comfortable house and land sufficient for a good garden which she shall hold



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and possess during her natural life free from rent, and further to find and furnish her with ample and sufficient support of clothes, bred, meat, and all the common plane necessaries of life during her said life- free and clear from charge.

In consideration of which agreement, the said Arvenea promises on her part, ... that as soon as they arrive in the state of Ohio, that she will put and place in the use and servitude of said McKay her three sons before mentioned...Nace, Henry, and Alexander to remain with him in the capacity of apprentices until they separately arrive to and attain the age of twenty-one year, ... The said McKay to support them as apprentices of their description are treated by good masters; and the said Clerif, thirteen years old the twentieth day of February past, is also to serve until she is eighteen years old.”

“I’m not sure why this was done,” **Doster** said. “*It may have been to protect the family.*”