

# Glendale

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the local historical society. The latter type was the most common, Ross said. It could look like an empty room, with the entrance perhaps covered by a bookcase to fool slave catchers.

When evaluating a site for probable Underground Railroad connections, Ross made sure it met at least two of four criteria:

- It was referenced in writings by Siebert.
- The space was owned by an abolitionist.
- A descendant of the owner confirmed its use in the movement.
- It had a visual cue, such as a hidden room or closet with locks on the inside.

Wells inaccurately described as tunnels could be immediately disregarded, and if an underground space was behind iron chute doors, it was probably used for coal, Ross said.

In the end, he identified 27 Underground Railroad safe houses in his town.

At first, people doubted Ross’ research.

“There were a lot of naysayers,” he said. “It was too dramatic and too historically sensational to have happened because they don’t relate this little farming community, which we were back then, with anything so sensational.”

However, Ross and the society’s research led Springboro to be nationally designated as a Historic Underground Railroad Site, with walking tours and landmark plaques.

### Claims cause tension

In February, Parrish began connecting with residents whose homes he believes were used in the Underground Railroad.

Michael and Kaitlin Holbrook’s home was built for banker H.W. Hughes in 1854. When they bought the house in 2022, they discovered a large crawl-space underneath, loosely blocked off by bricks.

“It goes out under the porch,” Michael Holbrook said. “And it seems like it doesn’t end immediately.”

The couple was excited to hear from Parrish that their home might have been used in the Underground Railroad. “You get chills,” Michael Holbrook said.



Bill Parrish, author and director of the Eckstein Cultural Arts Center, stands in a tunnel in Glendale, Ohio, that he said was used for the Underground Railroad. The Glendale Heritage Preservation group is less sure. CARA OWSLEY/CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Kit and Bill Morrison’s home next door has a brick-sealed opening underneath. However, a historic plaque on the house says it was built in 1869, and village archives say it was built in 1865. Because of its architecture, similarities to Hughes’ house and the presence of the underground space, Parrish and Kit Morrison think the house was built earlier, but there’s no evidence of that.

Connecting with residents and creating a walking tour, which starts Wednesday, has sparked tensions between Parrish, Glendale Heritage Preservation as well as the village. He says the heritage group isn’t interested in preserving this history. They say he doesn’t have enough proof.

“If we could substantiate that Glendale was involved in helping people escape to freedom, I think that’s great,” Mayor Besl said. “But we don’t have evidence of it that we can point to.”

Glendale’s historic district received special National Historic Landmark District status in 1977. Because of this, Glendale Heritage Preservation holds itself to a high standard for accuracy, Sinnott said.

“It’s important that history is told correctly,” he said. “That’s the biggest worry I have about what Bill is trying to establish, is that it’s an alternative history that my organization cannot confirm.”

However, Parrish says Glendale Heritage Preservation’s denial of his claims follows a larger pattern of Black history not being preserved.

The 1876 Mt. Zion Baptist Church was torn down in the 1970s to make way for a larger church, even though it was a historic structure within the Glendale Historic District.

Eckstein School was in danger of being demolished. Parrish wanted to buy

it, and was supported by some residents. But the village had to put the property up to auction due to state laws, Besl said, and Parrish was outbid.

In 2021, the Cincinnati Preservation Association purchased the school from a developer who planned to demolish the building. The association plans to partner with Parrish to make the building the new home of his Eckstein Cultural Arts Center.

Besl said the village has made an effort to recognize Black history through Glendale Heritage Preservation Museum exhibits and historic plaques, two of which describe Van Zandt and the Eckstein School.

To Parrish, it’s not enough. “We could be like Williamsburg if they would just embrace the history,” he said. “I’m trying to do this work for the village to embrace who it is.”



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The Kingdom Sanctuary

As a visionary, the Kingdom of Heaven Ambassador Joshua Chronicles who leads the Kingdom Sanctuary of Eden is implementing a community credit improvement course and training to increase the purchasing power of individuals and their family members. Joshua’s efforts continued by establishing a Kingdom of Heaven community marriage enrichment in the ministry to strengthen the foundation of Christian marriages. A community clothing ministry closet was established within the Kingdom Sanctuary of Eden to assist with clothing needs. Amongst his future vision, one is to establish a community “food bank” that will feed families in time of necessities for children and their family members.

