

Underground railroad stopped in Bloomington

What did Thomas Smith, a Presbyterian congregation in South Carolina and a Bloomington cemetery all have in common?

The connection was a one-time legalized form of inhumanity practiced in the United States — namely, slavery.

IN THE EARLY 1830s in South Carolina the group of Scots-Irish Presbyterians known as Covenanters were doing considerable soul-searching about the moral question of slavery. Just prior to the actual split of the denomination in that state, several of its members emigrated to Indiana and ended up in Monroe County.

Among them was one Thomas Smith, who built himself a two-story brick house at what is now known as 1326 Pickwick Place in 1828. Actually there was a nucleus of the Reformed Presbyterian Church

Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

denomination in the county. Their pastor was a Rev. James Faris, who built his house in about 1840 at 2001 E. Hillside, which was then a couple of miles from the budding community of Bloomington. The rural isolation of the Smith and Faris houses had bearing on a high-risk cause that both men were to engage in.

By the 1850s Indiana had become a major route for runaway slaves from Ten-

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