

Elisha H. Greene

The homes of Henry Hiatt and his brother-in-law, Edwin Smith, were apparently the western-most points in Douglas County for the dropping off of slaves before they were taken to Colonel Ritchie's home in Topeka. The primary focus of Martha Parker's Underground Railroad research has been limited to sites within Douglas County, and particularly along the Wakarusa River and its tributaries, being difficult to keep from exploring relevant people in the bordering counties of Osage and Shawnee. After all, those involved in the transport of slaves did not restrict their activity to county lines.

An abolitionist, Elisha H. Greene, brought his family to Kansas in 1857, starting from Illinois about the 8th or 9th of April. On Monday, May 18, they arrived on their claim just a few miles west of Henry Hiatt and Edwin Smith near Elk Creek, on the southwest quarter of Section 4, Township 14, Range 17, in Osage County. The family at the time consisted of Elisha, Lucy, their two sons, Henry M. and Albert Robinson, a daughter, Anna, and an adopted daughter, Margaret Mary Monogue, who had been brought to them in 1856 by the agent of a foundling asylum in New York City. The claim was called "Valley Farm," in honor of a popular novel of the time, and by this name it was known up and down the settlement. To the east of their claim stands a hill that can be seen for miles around. This hill (or pair of mounds) is known as Twin Mound(s), and from its summit can be seen today the lights of Lawrence, Topeka, and other nearby towns. When the Greene family established Valley Farm, every cabin in the valley could be seen from the top of Twin Mound, and thus it was that a pile of stones loosely thrown together there would become a monument to the tragic days of war to follow.

The record of the Greene family in America is a most honorable one. Direct descendents of Nathaniel Greene of Revolutionary renown, Elisha's father, Rowland Greene, was an itinerant Quaker preacher who journeyed to the wilderness of Ohio and aided in establishing Quaker churches and missions on the frontier. Elisha was born in Seituete, Rhode Island on June 29, 1800, and devoted a large part of his life to the cause of religion. He later renounced his Quaker upbringing and joined the Congregational Church.

In 1837 he became a pioneer in Illinois, where he was associated with such men as Own Lovejoy, Levi Spencer and other devotees of Abolition. His enthusiasm in the cause of freedom brought him hardships and persecution, but his ardor never diminished. Even at peril of his life he maintained his firm principles. He became active in the Underground Railroad and in other ways endeavored to aid the cause of liberty. His son Albert recorded an incident that left a vivid impression on his young mind; the sight of a party of slave-hunters near his home in Illinois. His mother, Lucy, took him stealthily to a window and pointed out to him three rough-looking men on horseback. He knew that they would kill his father if they could find him, and that furthermore he was not to answer any questions if they spoke to him. "Father was one of the 'conductors' on the Underground Railroad," wrote Albert, "and was away with a load of passengers at the time."