Biography written by:

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abolitionist (n): . . . a person who wanted to end slavery; abolish means to end or do away with

Drinking Gourd (n): seven of the brightest stars in the constellation Ursa Major; slaves followed it north to find freedom

foreman (n): . . . . the leader of a group of workers

freedman (n): . . . . a person who has been freed from slavery

Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 (n): . . . . a law that said all runaway slaves had to be returned to their masters

immigrant (n): . . . . a person who comes to live in a new country and stays there

Underground Railroad (n): . . . . a series of homes and businesses where escaped slaves could stop while traveling to freedom

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Imagine that you are hiding in a boat. You are trying to get out of the country. You can’t make a sound. You don’t want anyone to find you.

How would you feel?

Joshua Glover might have felt the same way. He was a slave who escaped to Canada so that he could live in freedom. Joshua’s life story helps tell how slavery ended in the United States.

Joshua lived the rest of his life in Canada as a freedman. He died around June 4, 1888. His actions show how bravery can help you make it through hard times.

Joshua Glover’s story tells how slaves and abolitionists worked together to end slavery. The people who helped him escape kept fighting slavery laws in Wisconsin and the rest of the country. Slavery finally ended in 1865 when the U.S. passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.
Joshua began living a free life in Canada. He rented a house and started his own farm. He also played cards and went to the fair. Joshua had never dreamed he would be able to do this.

Joshua married a woman named Ann around 1861. She was an Irish immigrant. Sadly, Ann got sick and died in 1872. Joshua was very sad.

He fell in love and got married again around 1881. His new wife’s name was Mary Ann. Joshua never had any children.

Joshua Glover lived in two states and two countries during his life.

Joshua Glover was born in Missouri around 1824. He was born a slave.

Joshua had a very hard life because of slavery. Slave children were sometimes taken away from their parents and sold to different masters. Kids were about eight years old when they began working in the fields. Owners would sometimes beat or kill slaves if they did something wrong.
Joshua was sold to a new master on New Year’s Day in 1850. He was probably about 36 years old.

A man named Benammi Garland bought Joshua to work at his home called Prairie House Farm. There were five other slaves there. Joshua was very strong. He was also a leader. So he became the foreman.

Joshua ran away from the farm in 1852. He did not know where he was going. But he knew he should follow the Drinking Gourd north to find freedom.

The crowd wanted to get Joshua out of jail. They broke down the jailhouse doors and walls. The crowd cheered when he was freed.

The abolitionists helped Joshua get out of Milwaukee. He used the Underground Railroad to get back to Racine. Joshua snuck onto a boat in April 1854 and went to Canada. He settled in a small town called Etobicoke.
The jailor took care of Joshua’s wounds. Many people in Wisconsin helped slaves and wanted them to be free. They were called abolitionists.

Some of these people decided to protest Joshua’s arrest. They did not think it was right. Hundreds of people showed up to listen to speeches against slavery.

It was a hard trip. Joshua may have traveled at night so slave catchers would not find him. People along the Underground Railroad likely gave him food and a place to sleep. Joshua said he once went three days without food.

He got to Racine, Wisconsin after traveling for six or seven weeks. Slavery was not legal in Wisconsin because it was a free state. He got a job at a sawmill and rented a house. He was known as a hard worker.

The Drinking Gourd is a constellation; slaves followed it north to find freedom.
Benammi Garland did not know what had happened to Joshua until two years later. A former slave named Nelson Turner told Garland where Joshua was living. The master planned to go to Wisconsin to get his slave back.

Beaten and Jailed

Joshua was playing cards with two friends at his house on March 10, 1854. One of his friends was Nelson Turner. Someone knocked on Joshua’s door. He told his friends not to answer it. Turner did not listen. He opened the door. Five men ran inside. Garland was one of them. The men beat Joshua and took him to jail in Milwaukee. Turner was given $100 for helping find Joshua.

Fugitive Slave Law of 1850

The United States Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 on September 18, 1850. It declared that all runaway slaves were supposed to be returned to their masters. Anyone found helping escaped slaves could be fined $1000 and put in prison for six months. Some nicknamed this law the “Bloodhound Law” because dogs were used to track down escaped slaves.