

# The Jerry Rescue

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### *Mexico His Hiding Place,*

The Syracuse Herald of Sunday last contains a very interesting account of the "Jerry Rescue" which occurred at Syracuse forty-eight years ago last Sunday. The rescue of this poor fugitive slave from the authorities of the United States Government at that time created a tremendous excitement throughout the whole nation. The arrest of Jerry was a test case to see whether or not the obnoxious Fugitive Slave Law could be enforced in this state. Now, the actors in those scenes having all departed, the inside history of the rescue is given. After Jerry was rescued from the U. S. Marshals in Syracuse he was hidden for a week or two somewhere before he turned up in Canada and it has always been a profound mystery with the historians of this important event as to where Jerry was concealed and how he was carried to Canada. The U. S. Government brought its

Article in

The Mexico Independent

October 3, 1899, page 2, Mexico, NY

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whole power to bear on catching Jerry after he was rescued, and every road leading from Syracuse and all the shipping points to Canada were patrolled and watched, but Jerry got away, nevertheless. It will be seen from the following extract from the story of the rescue as now fully written up by the Herald that Mexico had a hand in the matter and that Jerry was hiding in this village:

"On the Sunday following the rescue, as the bells were ringing for evening service, Caleb Davis drove out into the country to collect beef, as was his custom. He stopped at the Syracuse House for a cigar and drove on without exciting suspicion. But in the bottom of the cart, covered with sacking, lay Jerry, armed and anxious. The team was a span of very fleet horses furnished by ex-Mayor Jason C. Woodruff, a Hunker Democrat. James Davis, on horseback and disguised as a negro, rode out twelve miles to see and instruct the tollgate keepers. Jason S. Hoyt also joined the party later.

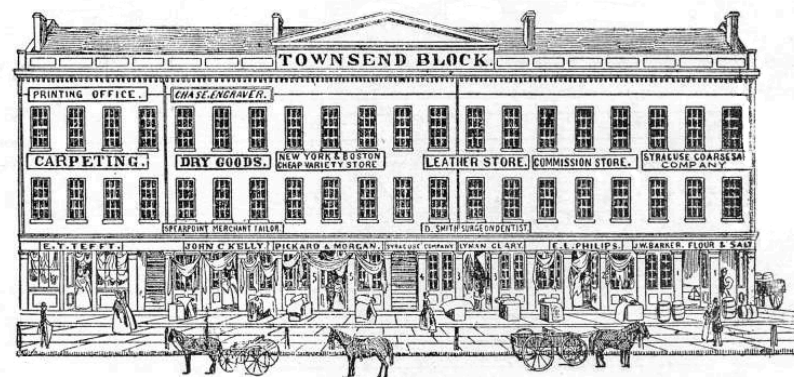
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The Townsend Block.

William "Jerry" Henry was rescued from this building by a crowd who rushed the building to free Mr. Henry who had been arrested under the Fugitive Slave Law. This image is the Townsend Building, Clinton Square, Syracuse, NY, 1897 and is in the public domain. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syracuse\\_1897\\_townsend\\_block.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syracuse_1897_townsend_block.jpg))

Source: The Jerry Rescue, article in The Mexico Independent, October 3, 1899, page 2, Mexico, NY  
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in rousing the gatekeepers, who consumed much time in making change. At Brewerton Bridge Jason Hoyt was left to drive on to Mexico alone with Jerry. After this the pursuers gained on them and for seven miles they raced with the horses at the utmost speed consistent with safety until Hoyt's team left them so far behind that they gave up the chase.

"Following the route of the "underground railroad," Jerry was taken as far as Mexico the first night and left at the home of Orson Ames. He remained there a week; then Star Clark, Orson Ames and Solomon Peck took him to Mexico Point. It was some time before passage to Canada could be secured, as all the vessels were closely watched, but finally a British lumber skipper was induced to take Jerry on board one dark night, from a deserted part of the shore and carry him to Kingston. Here Jerry was sent to the home of Joseph George, a friend of the oppressed, who is still living. It was Mr. George who wrote letters for Jerry to his friends in Syracuse.

"He soon found work in the city at chair-making with Chester Hatch, but after leaving the latter's employ he was taken ill and on October 8th, 1858, he died at the general hospital and was buried at the Catarqui cemetery, three miles from Kingston."

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1st. *Resolved*, That freedom is the birth-right of every human being, and that all laws that strike down or impair this right, except for crime, are null and void and of no binding obligation.

Above: Excerpt from an article in the Northern Democrat, *The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico*, October 23, 1850. The article notes Starr Clark Esq. as President of a group in Mexico, NY to lead the opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law.

### **Questions based on the article:**

1. Who was Jerry?
2. Why were U.S. Marshalls attempting to capture Jerry?
3. Where did Jerry escape from?
4. Where was Jerry trying to get to?
5. Explain how he got there.
6. Who helped Jerry and how did they help?
7. When did this happen?
8. What did Jerry do for employment once he settled in Canada?
9. When did he die?
10. When was this article written?

### **Questions for further research and discussion:**

1. Why was the Fugitive Slave Law described as “obnoxious” in the article?
2. Why was this event so important at this time?
3. How many fugitive slaves entered Canada during this time?
4. Describe the relationship between all the key participants and how does this impact the outcome of the event?
5. Was there an economic impact to Canada’s willingness to welcome fugitive slaves? Were there other social impacts in Canada?
6. Did Canada’s willingness to accept fugitive slaves have an impact on U.S./Canadian relations?
7. What did Jerry leave behind in Syracuse?
8. Why did so many people protect Jerry?
9. Why didn’t the U.S. Marshals arrest the participants?
10. Locate the areas mentioned in the article and map the path Jerry took from Syracuse to Canada
11. Where did Jerry escape from slavery originally?
12. Who were the participants who helped Jerry? Use census data, newspapers, etc. to explore their lives. Were they mentioned in other abolition activities?