John and Martha Todd's house sheltered visiting ministers, abolitionists such as John Brown, Jim Lane, and Samuel Gridley Howe, and travelers on the underground railroad and the Lane Trail. Today it is the Todd House Museum.

Over time, Todd built his congregation in Tabor to be one of the largest in that part of the state, and he helped to establish Congregational churches in Glenwood and as far away as Sioux City. His revivals in western Iowa assisted his fellow pastors to build their congregations.

During the Civil War, the 45-year-old Todd served in 1864 as a 100-day volunteer chaplain to the 46th Iowa Infantry. He served in Company B, which comprised mostly Grinnell College students and young men from the Tabor area.

After the war, Todd and George Gaston played critical roles in establishing Tabor College, which espoused Oberlin's views on equality and temperance. Continuing their activism, Todd and especially his wife, Martha, sponsored a black student at a Freedmen's Bureau school.

In his later years (right), Todd focused on temperance, having seen the miseries brought on by alcoholism. On January 31, 1894, he was hurrying around Tabor with a petition urging the Iowa legislature to maintain restrictions on alcohol consumption. He climbed a hill outside of town, entered a farmhouse to get a signature, and sat down. The grand old man of the underground railroad let out a gasp and passed on. His work was finally done here on earth. —by James Patrick Morgans

spread regions.” Although he does not mention slavery or the free-state movement, this is obviously the letter's context.

Upon settling in 1853 near Lewis, Hitchcock built a cabin, where he and Caroline and their five sons lived for three years. The crowded cabin also served as a church and an underground railroad station. In 1856 Hitchcock built a larger house of sandstone from a nearby quarry.

Hitchcock knew well that the Congregationalist mission was to found schools as well as churches. “The course of education is beginning to interest the people,” he wrote, “and there is some talk of founding two colleges in the Western part of Iowa, the Methodist and Congregationalist.”

For Hitchcock and his fellow missionaries, their “great work” was fighting slavery—and temperance as well. “There is a steady change working in the minds of the people which gives promise of a better state of society,” he observed in 1856. “The great moral questions of the day are more prominently before the minds of the people than ever before, and truth is gaining ground as fast, perhaps, as the capacity will permit.

“The temperance question is felt to be one of great importance, and has many ardent advocates. The free state question is the all absorbing subject just now and it is very difficult to interest the people with any other subject.”

What is often ignored in the accounts of Hitchcock’s life is the role that his wife, Caroline, must have played. She certainly shared the legal danger posed by harboring fugitive slaves as well as providing shelter and sustenance to them.

The role of the Hitchcocks’ children is also largely undocu-mented except for one tragic episode involving their son Leang (named in honor of the first Chinese converted to Congregationalism). In September 1856, Leang and another young man named Chapman from Lewis volunteered to serve as armed escorts for a free-soil emigrant company traveling along the Lane Trail to settle in Kansas. The two young men were on their way to Tabor to meet up with the company. About to cross a creek one morning, Chapman playfully aimed what he thought was an unloaded gun at Leang and pulled the trigger, delivering a fatal shot.

Congregationalist minister Julius Reed visited the Hitchcocks shortly after Leang’s death and found the family “in deep affliction.” He also recorded in his diary: “Two fugitives from Missouri came on their way eastward."

A biographer later summed up Hitchcock “as a man of fine ability and force of character; with a fund of ideas and suitable language to express them; with dreams and visions which he can interpret and tell how to bring them to pass; with brains to formulate and hands to execute. He could build cabins and meeting houses, even better than he could preach. He could tell things that were to be and how to bring them about. He was a missionary, always a pioneer, always at the front, with the passion and genius for laying foundations.”

—This article is based on Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernek, “National Register nomination of the Reverend George B. Hitchcock House”