

Testimony on HB 2070

Senate Transportation Committee

Presented By

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Good morning Chairman Petersen and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, My name is Mason Clark and you should consider this bill, for passage, because of Armstrong's influence in establishing the Underground Railroad in Topeka as well as his work as a station conductor on the Underground Railroad.

John Armstrong's establishment of the Underground Railroad in the state of Kansas impacted and assisted the state in being admitted into the Union as a free state. In the tumultuous times pre-dating the Civil War, John Armstrong's efforts involving the Underground Railroad helped stoke the free state fervor in the territory. One of Armstrong's encounters with escaped slaves in Topeka came when a slave woman by the name of Ann Clarke escaped from her captors in Lecompton and was brought to Armstrong to be taken to Iowa and then further north to Canada. While in Topeka, she stayed at the house of the Scales', this house later came into the hands of Armstrong. That house at 429 Quincy Street in North Topeka was in the perfect location to link up with John Ritchie and the stations south of the river. Armstrong and Ritchie's efforts in the fight for the abolition of slavery was the impetus for starting the Underground

Railroad in the Topeka area. Armstrong would lead escaped slaves north using the Lane Trail to travel up through Nebraska and into Iowa where the next station was located. In 1910, Armstrong said that he “kept three hundred slaves in the house” and that “every one of them was taken north and eventually reached Canada.” Armstrong’s convictions and commitment to the cause were strong as he not only aided those people in moving along the railroad but by risking his own life to move them north to their next stop. The proposed legislation closely follows the route that Armstrong would take when aiding escaped slaves to the north. Thank you for your time.