because Charley's owner, Chauncey Durkee, had sent a group of men into the Quincy area in hopes of retrieving his runaway slave, who was valued at eight hundred dollars. Eells was well known for his abolitionist views, and Barnett knew he would help.

Dr. Eells acted quickly after answering the knock on his door late Sunday night, August 21, 1842. He grabbed some dry clothes and instructed Charley to stow away in the back of his carriage and change clothes. After hitching the horse to his carriage, Eells started south towards State Street. Eells turned the carriage east on State and traveled past the John Wood home as he moved toward the edge of the city to the Mission Institute. Eells knew the runaway slave would find refuge there. Eells didn't know he was driving into an ambush.

Quincy's Mission Institute was developed by Dr. David Nelson after he was forced out of Missouri for his "religious" teachings. Known as the Theopolis Branch of the Mission Institute, the Quincy school was intended to prepare young men for life as foreign missionaries. However, during the 1830s under the eye of Congregationalist Dr. Nelson, the Institute became the local center for abolitionist thought, and as one old abolitionist noted later in 1882, it "soon became the special object of hatred by the slaveholders of Missouri." Eells taught medical courses at the institute and knew that the escaped slave could find refuge on his route to freedom.

Having heard that an escaped slave was in Quincy and would likely head to the Mission Institute, several of Chauncey Durkee's men and others decided to lay in wait along the route. As Dr. Eells turned north from State Street and drove rapidly towards the institute, he was spotted. The *Quincy Whig* of August 27, 1842, stated that "it soon became evident to the minds of those who were in waiting, that this carriage contained the negro they were in pursuit of, and accordingly they put spurs to their horses, and succeeded in passing and heading the carriage." However, Dr. Eells, refusing to stop, drove up to the nearby cemetery (a site now occupied by Madison Park), "when lo! and behold! the head of a negro disclosed itself from beneath a buffalo rug which was in the buggy, and before the pursuers could get within reach of him, he had sprung out, and was over the fence and across the fields with the speed of a deer."

Darting from tombstone to tombstone, Charley ran towards an open field, eluding his captors. His freedom was short lived. He was caught a little while later, less than a mile away, in the stables of Samuel A. Pearson. Brought back into the city, Pearson delivered Charley to the brother of the owner. Meanwhile Dr. Eells, knowledgeable of the city, used a combination of driveways and alleys to avoid being captured as he drove rapidly towards his home.

When the sheriff arrived at Dr. Eells home later that evening he discovered the doctor and his wife relaxing in the parlor. In the carriage house, however, investigators found the still-lathered horse and a set of wet clothes under a blanket in the buggy. Two days later a warrant was issued for Dr. Eells's arrest on the charge of harboring, secreting, and assisting a slave to run away from his rightful owner. Justice of the Peace Henry Asbury examined testimony for nearly two days, including statements from eyewitnesses to the failed escape who positively identified Dr. Eells. The Justice ordered Eells to post bail pending his appearance in circuit court. In covering those first days of the ordeal, the *Quincy Whig* described Dr. Richard Eells as "an old and respectable physician of this city, a well known abolitionist; in fact one of the principal head men of his misguided sect in this county, and one of their candidates for the Legislature at the late election."

Between the time of his arrest and his trial, a group of slave owners pressed Missouri Governor Thomas Reynolds to petition for Dr. Eells's extradition. Though Illinois Governor Thomas Ford initially refused, he relented and signed the extradition papers after additional pressure was applied by pro-slavery advocates in Illinois. Forced into hiding, Dr. Eells headed to Chicago through the Underground Railroad network. Delegates from both Quincy and Chicago met with the Governor, who then cancelled the order.

Finally, in April 1843 Dr. Richard Eells and his attorneys, George C. Dixon and James H. Collins, appeared before Circuit Court Judge Stephen A. Douglas. On the second day of the trial the case went to the jury, and after just a few hours of deliberation, the verdict was sent back—guilty. Jurors confirmed that Eells had violated Section 149 of the Criminal Code of Illinois—harboring a slave—and not of the more serious charge of grand larceny, for stealing a slave. At the later sentencing, Douglas fined Dr. Eells four hundred dollars, but did not sentence him to jail. According to Douglas biographer Frank Stevens, the "Little Giant" was particularly severe in his judgment, not merely upholding the jury's verdict, but sitting *en banc* in affirming the judgment.

Eells's attorneys appealed the case to the Illinois Supreme Court to test the validity of the law prohibiting the harboring of slaves. On a writ of error (the defense claimed Eells was charged inappropriately) the case appeared during February 1844 before the Illinois Supreme Court, with J. A. McDougall, Attorney General, as counsel for the state. The state's higher court concurred with the lower court in a 6-3 decision.

Many considered the split vote something of a victory, however, since it indi-

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This brick addition to the Eells house complements the original construction, although lintels above the windows are brick rather than stone. (Photo courtesy Bryan J. Butts)