

## David Bonner

David Bonner was born in Juniata County, Pennsylvania in 1776. David was an expert wool carder, cotton spinner, farmer, millwright, and engineer. He moved to Chillicothe, Ohio in 1798.

He then moved to Greenfield where he and his wife were among the earliest permanent settlers. David began negotiating in land at an early date and succeeded in putting over one of the largest land deals ever to take place in Greenfield. In 1813 he purchased 50 inlots in the eastern section for \$2.00 a lot. Within four years he sold four of the lots for \$750. For that era it was a tremendous land deal.

David acquired the lot next to Harper Hotel where he erected a carding mill. The farmers around Greenfield brought wool here to be carded, saving a somewhat longer trip to Chillicothe. The machinery was run by a horizontal treadmill run by horses and oxen.

In 1834 in Greenfield, Ohio, David Bonner replaced the horse and ox drawn power with the first steam engine known in the area. This factory was completely destroyed by fire in the summer of 1837.

He immediately started construction of a new three story stone building on the northeast corner of Fifth and Jefferson (later known as the Odd Fellows building). He added a pair of millstones to grind corn and burrs to make wheat flour.

Two years after this he also constructed a beautiful manor house on Jefferson Street, between Fourth and Fifth. He later gave up the mill and opened a bookstore around 1840 in a new brick building at 297 Jefferson Street.

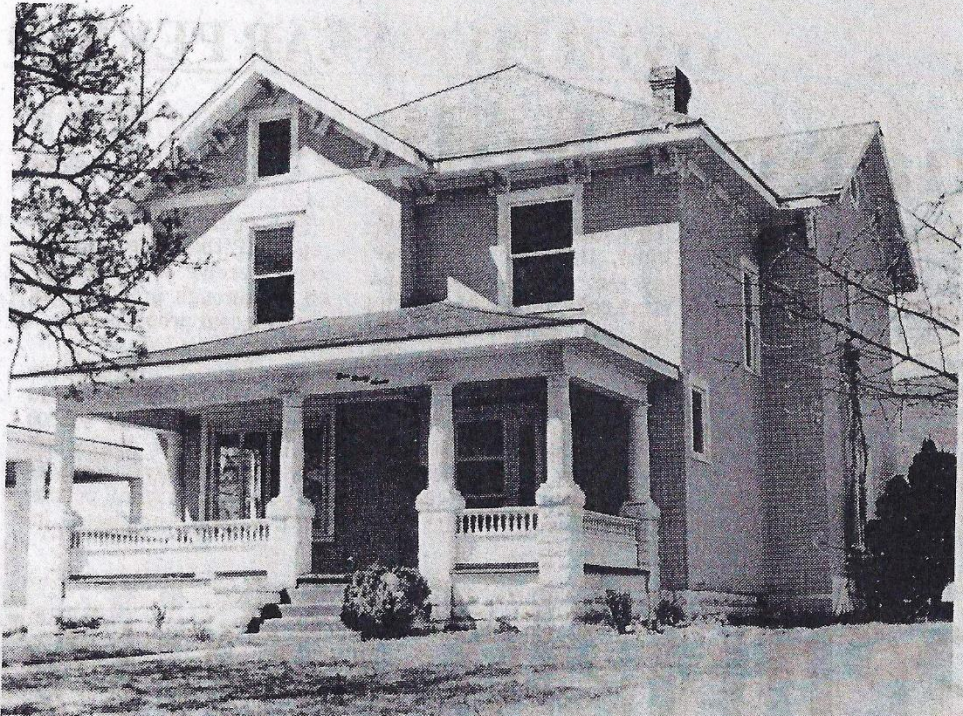


### David Bonner Was Town's First Real Estate Dealer

On December 27, 1813, David Bonner consummated an important real estate deal. He purchased fifty in-lots from Duncan McArthur for one hundred dollars. They included some of the best building sites in the eastern end of the town including the new Post Office building. Within four years Mr. Bonner had sold six of the lots to Humphrey Fullerton for \$750 which any real estate dealer would consider a nice profit. On the lot just east of the present Harper House, Mr. Bonner started a wool-carding shop in 1814. He had the only wool-carding machine within twenty-five miles of Greenfield. The machinery in Mr. Bonner's establishment was run "by means of a horizontal tread-wheel forty feet in diameter, upon which were worked horses, oxen and even cows."

David died on 31 March 1853 at Greenfield, Highland Co., OH. His body was interred at Greenfield, Highland Co., OH, at Old Burying Ground.

*Apr 21, 1978 Helen Taylor*



THE DAVID BONNER HOME, 427 Jefferson st, is considered one of the few authentic "underground railroad stations" in Greenfield. Remodeling work done in 1975 uncovered an apparent secret hiding place used to house slaves during their escape to Canada.

## Local House Was Part of The Underground Railroad

One of the few apparently authentic "underground railroad stations" in Greenfield is the old David Bonner home, 427 Jefferson st, now owned by Helen Taylor.

The home was built in 1839 and extensively remodeled about 1895. The original house is believed to have been confined to the center of the present structure, with a gable roof line. The front rooms and porches were added at a later date. An addition was also added to the rear of the house.

In 1975, owners of the house decided to construct a doorway between the present

bathroom and an adjoining room. When work began, contractors discovered a two-foot wide opening between the rooms which lead to the basement tunnel. The secret tunnel has since been sealed by cement blocks and the opening made into storage space.

David Bonner and his wife Eleanor were among the first permanent settlers of Greenfield. In December 1813 Bonner purchased 50 lots from Duncan McArthur, the largest real estate transfer in the history of Greenfield. The lots included many of the best business sites in the village.

In 1815 Bonner built a wool-carding factory, improving the business in 1834 by replacing the horse and ox powered-machinery with that powered by steam. The plant was destroyed by fire in 1837; Bonner then built a three-story building at the site of the present First United Presbyterian Church.

About the same time, he built his residence and retired from the wool-carding business. He later rented a part of the Nathaniel Pike building, 297 Jefferson st, and started a book and stationary store. The store was later moved and became the Gossett Co.