

# Jackson Ranch Church and Martin Jackson Cemetery Site Recognized

The Network to Freedom Accepts New Listing

**Date:** April 22, 2024

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**Church Creek, MD** - The National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom accepted the Jackson Ranch Church and Martin Jackson Cemetery site in San Juan, Texas, as one of 19 new listings, from the 47th round of applications, representing sites and programs in 10 states across the United States. These new listings, alongside more than 780 sites, facilities, and programs already in the Network, provide insight into the diverse experiences of freedom seekers who bravely escaped slavery and allies who assisted them.

The Jackson Ranch, founded in 1857 along the US-Mexico border, was a known location of Underground Railroad-like traffic as well as a destination site for settlement for self-emancipators who, according to Jackson family oral tradition, sought respite and assistance on their quest for freedom in Mexico. The Jacksons were a mixed-race family that journeyed 900+ miles overland from Alabama in search of a peaceful life, far from discrimination and marginalization. Led by Nathaniel Jackson, a white farmer, and his life partner Matilda Hicks, a formerly enslaved black woman, this caravan included their mixed-race children, grandchildren, and extended family members in search of a new life along the newly established international border. After purchasing over a league of land adjacent to an existing ferry landing, Nathaniel Jackson established a religious congregation on the property that included family cemeteries. The Methodist church currently standing on this site functioned as a continuance of the Jackson family's faith and was awarded a Texas Historical Commission marker in 1983. The family graveyard at the site includes burials of original Jackson caravan members such as Martin Jackson (b.1837/d.1913) and Columbus Jackson (b.1830/d.1896), who, as children of Nathaniel and Matilda, assisted freedom seekers at the Jackson Ranch.

"For the past 25 years, our national program has been devoted to safeguarding and documenting stories of freedom." says **Robin Krawitz**, acting National Program Manager. "Today, we stand at a pivotal moment that signals the dawn of a fresh chapter in our quest to honor the courage and tenacity of countless known and unknown freedom seekers across a myriad of sites, programs, and facilities. In this latest round of nominations, we shine a spotlight on 14 distinctive locations and 5 new programs, illuminating the brave odysseys of those who pursued their freedom and the allies who stood by them. Welcoming these 19 new additions to our extensive collection of over 780 listings, we are reminded that the pursuit of freedom is a mosaic imbued with bravery, resilience, and interracial solidarity. Together, we persist in unraveling and

commemorating the profound heritage of the Underground Railroad, inspiring future generations to champion the principles of liberty and justice for all."

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom serves to honor, preserve, and promote the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, which continues to inspire people worldwide. The Network currently represents over 780 locations in 40 states, plus Washington D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada. Through its mission, the Network to Freedom helps to advance the idea that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression.

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