

## Code Words in the Underground Railroad

These are some code words and phrases that the escaping slaves used to secretly discuss heading for the North without tipping off their owners. You may have heard these phrases in songs such as "Follow the Drinking Gourd" and "Go Down, Moses.

### Code Words

- Baggage: Fugitive slaves carried by the Underground Railroad worker
- Forwarding: Taking escaping slaves from one
- Heaven: Canada. It was called Heaven because when they got there, they would escape all slavery, and it would be like Heaven to them.
- Moses: Harriet Tubman. She was Moses because, like Moses, she helped her people escape slavery on the Underground Railroad

### Code Phrases

- Drinking Gourd: The North Star. They knew they should always follow the Drinking Gourd because it led the way to the North where they would be free.
- Freedom Train: The Underground Railroad
- Gospel Train: The Underground Railroad
- The River Jordan: The Mississippi River
- Load of Potatoes: Fugitive slaves the farmers would hide under the crops in their wagons.
- "The wind blows from the South today": This told UGRR workers that there were fugitive slaves in the area.
- "When the sun comes back and the first quail calls": This refers to early spring, which was a good time to escape on the Underground Railroad.
- "The river bank makes a mighty good road": This told slaves that if they were to try and escape, they should walk in the river because dogs couldn't track their scents through water.
- "The dead trees will show you the way": A reminder to slaves that, if the North Star wasn't visible, moss grew only on the north side of dead trees, so they could tell which way to walk.
- "Left foot, peg foot": Footprints left by a wooden-legged UGRR worker as guidelines to the path to freedom.
- "The river ends between two hills": Visual directions to the Ohio River

Copied 1.30.2013 from <http://www.angelfire.com/me2/ugrrmania/lingo.html>