

# Underground Railroad

## Wilton



Cedar County  
Eastbound at I-80 at milepost 270  
Artist: David Dahlquist  
Completed: December 2002

While the architecture gives the feeling of an early train depot, the artwork ushers travelers into the world of the Underground Railroad in Iowa.

During the Civil War, Cedar County was home to 15 stops on the Underground Railroad bringing southern slaves to freedom in the north. Visitors are encouraged to view each stop as it is shown on a map on the floor of the structure.

Communication to the runaway slaves was accomplished by a number of different patterns sown into quilts, and displayed in yards and windows. Some of the patterns from this "language of quilts" are shown in the wall art at this rest area.

In continuing with the railroad depot theme, the seating is back-to-back just like in an old train station. Wall murals show locomotives, from both side and head-on views. The night sky shown in tiles on the upper wall gives an idea of what slaves might have seen as they navigated by the stars.

The trip through time can be finished with a walk around the observation deck circling the structure. With elevation differences at the site, this deck serves an engineering purpose, as well as giving visitors a full view of the surrounding landscape.

