

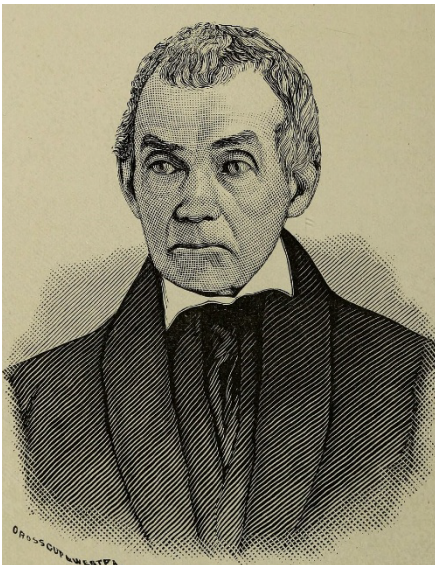
## John Vickers – Potter and Abolitionist

Though the Barnards usually took freedom seekers to ‘stations’ in Downingtown, sometimes circumstances required immediate alternatives. A story in R. C. Smedley’s book “History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania” relays the need to travel to the home of John Vickers in Lionville.

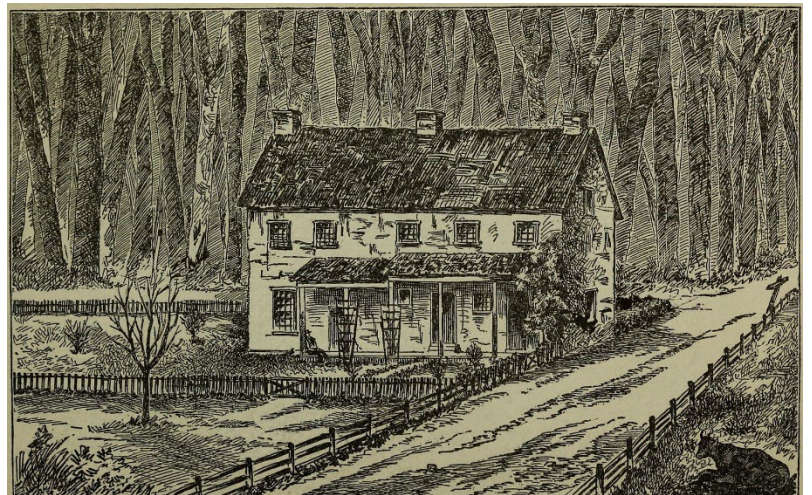
“On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, 1855, while a number of Friends were assembled at Longwood to level the ground and make arrangements for building sheds, a party of eleven came there from Wilmington; they were kept until evening, when Eusebius took them home with him, gave them supper and lodging, and at two o’clock next morning sent Eusebius R. with them to Downingtown. To avoid suspicion which so many in one gang at that place would excite, he was directed to divide the party before reaching there, to take those in the dearborn to Zebulon Thomas, and send the others on foot to Dr. Eshleman. Arriving at a wood near town he separated them as directed. When he arrived at Zebulon Thomas’s house and Zebulon saw the number he had, he advised him not to stop a moment, but to keep on toward John Vickers. Eusebius remarked that he thought he had gone far enough, but Zebulon, knowing the risk of delay just then replied “We cannot talk now, this is a very dangerous pro-slavery place; keep on and I will gear up and overtake thee soon.” He drove on some distance to a suitable place, where he waited until Zebulon with his colored men came up with the others, and took them on toward John Vickers’ place.”



**Zebulon Thomas's house**



John Vickers was a potter whose family was active in the abolitionist movement going back to the late 1700s. In 1823 he moved his pottery business to five acres of land he purchased near Lionville. The Vickers home was a much frequented and well-known station on the Underground Railroad. When sending escapes to the next station, he often gave them a letter of introduction signed “Thy friend Pot.” Decades later the pottery shut down and the Vickers name faded.



This changed in 1972, when his homestead was restored and turned into Vickers Tavern. The Tavern operated until 2021 at which time it was sold to the White Dog Café franchise.