PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-49

John B. Howe at the Indiana convention of 1850–51, the opening of Howe Grammar School in 1884, and the renaming of Lima in 1909

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SUMMARY

Three records correct the printed story of John B. Howe (1813–1883) and the town that bears his name. At Indiana's constitutional convention he argued on 18 November 1850 that free Black citizens of New York and Massachusetts, "under the Constitution of the United States, cannot be debarred of the privilege of entering into any other State of the Union," and on 23 January 1851 he was among the 36 who voted against engrossing the section that barred Black people from the state. The county history of 1882 put this correctly, saying he advocated measures "identical with those afterward adhered to by the minority of Justices in the Dred Scott decision"; the *History of Northeast Indiana* of 1920, reprinting the sketch, changed "minority" to "majority." Howe Grammar School, later Howe Military School, opened on 2 September 1884 "with two pupils proper, and with two young men who were to pursue theological study," as its rector reported in 1886; the bishop's report of 1885 counted "four pupils, two of whom were candidates for the ministry." And in 1909 the move to rename the Lima post office was argued for in honor of the school: a paper of January wrote of changing the name "to Howe in honor of the school of that name," and in March a "red hot contest" had gone on for months, "because the Howe Military institute is the chief asset of the town." In April Senator Beveridge declined to approve the change.

THE RECORD

1. ***Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850*** **(Indianapolis, 1850), vol. 1, p. 576, Monday, 18 November 1850**

   > *Black men "may therefore become citizens of those States; and under the Constitution of the United States, cannot be debarred of the privilege of entering into any other State of the Union, or of the right of acquiring and holding property there."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/bwb_Y0-DXC-382)

2. **The same, vol. 2, p. 1788, Thursday, 23 January 1851, the engrossment of the section**

   > *"yeas 94, nays 36"; Howe among the nays.*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/bwb_Y0-DXC-374)

3. ***Counties of LaGrange and Noble, Indiana: Historical and Biographical*** **(Chicago: F. A. Battey, 1882), p. 318**

   > *"as a Whig, advocated measures regarding the slave, identical with those afterward adhered to by the minority of Justices in the Dred Scott decision."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/countiesoflagran00infaba)

4. ***History of Northeast Indiana*** **(Chicago: Lewis, 1920), vol. 2, pp. 448–49**

   > *"as a whig, advocated measures regarding the slave, identical with those afterward adhered to by the majority of justices in the Dred Scott Decision."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofnorthea02ford)

5. **Bishop D. B. Knickerbacker's address,** ***Journal of the Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Indiana*****, 1885**

   > *"The Boys Boarding School … was opened in September, at Lima, with four pupils, two of whom were candidates for the ministry. It has enrolled nine pupils during the year."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journalproceedi01churgoog)

6. **The Rev. C. N. Spalding, report on the Howe Grammar School, ibid., 1886**

> *"This school was opened on the 2d of September, 1884. ... It opened with two pupils proper, and with two young men who were to pursue theological study, under the guidance and instruction of its rector."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journalproceedi01churgoog)

7. ***Fort Wayne Sentinel*, 22 January 1909**

> *"Agitation has been stirred in Lagrange county over the suggestion that the name of the town of Lima be changed to Howe in honor of the school of that name located there."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/fort-wayne-sentinel-1909-01-22)

8. ***Lake County Times* (Hammond), 4 March 1909, p. 7**

> *"For months a red hot contest has been in progress over a proposed change in the name of the postoffice of Lima, Ind. One faction of the town wants the name changed to Howe because the Howe Military institute is the chief asset of the town."*

Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn86058242/1909-03-04/ed-1/?sp=7)

9. ***Plymouth Tribune*, 8 April 1909, p. 9**

> *"Senator Beveridge has declined to approve the application for the change of the name of the postoffice at Lima to Howe. ... In refusing to sanction the change the senator was governed largely by the advice of the influential business men of the town."*

Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87056244/1909-04-08/ed-1/?sp=9)

WHAT IT CHANGES

Howe's stand at the convention of 1850–51 is restored from the 1920 history's reversal of it: he argued against excluding Black citizens and voted against the exclusion

section. The opening of Howe Grammar School is dated to 2 September 1884 and its first four students identified as two schoolboys and two divinity students, which reconciles the “four boys” and “two boys” of later accounts. The renaming of Lima in 1909 is shown as a contested change argued for in honor of the school, which the senator at first refused.

LIMITS

Howe’s speech is known from the convention’s official report, which printed the delegates’ speeches from its reporters’ notes. The 1885 and 1886 school reports were written by the bishop and the rector who ran the school. The date on which the post office was renamed is taken from Baker (1995), as cited in the article.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

The county histories of 1882, 1893, 1920 and 1936; the convention *Debates* of 1850–51; the diocesan journals of 1881–87; Baker (1995); Wikipedia; the diocesan archive’s and community association’s histories; Chronicling America and the Internet Archive for 1883–1909; web searches for Howe and the Dred Scott comparison.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Ronald L. Baker, *From Needmore to Prosperity: Hoosier Place Names in Folklore and History* (Bloomington, 1995). https://archive.org/details/fromneedmoretopr00bake
2. "Howe Military Academy," Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howe_Military_Academy

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in Who was John B. Howe? (projectscroll.com/news/john-b-howe/). In the discoveries register:

- `howe-dred-scott-minority` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#howe-dred-scott-minority)
- `howe-school-opening-1884` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#howe-school-opening-1884)
- `howe-rename-1909` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#howe-rename-1909)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

Michael Urbanski, “John B. Howe at the Indiana convention of 1850–51, the opening of Howe Grammar School in 1884, and the renaming of Lima in 1909,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-49, version 1 (5 November 2026), https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-49/. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23968734.

BibTeX

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  institution = {Project Scroll},
  type        = {Project Scroll Research Note},
  number      = {2026-49},
  year        = {2026},
  month       = {nov},
  url         = {https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-49/},
  doi         = {10.5281/zenodo.23968734},
  note        = {Version 1}
}
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