

PROFILE



Harriet Tubman (left with pan) was best known conductor for Underground Railroad.

HARRIET ROSS TUBMAN

1821-1913

"The Moses of Her People"

Risked Her Life

She risked her life many times, but she was fearless. She could neither read nor write, but she was intelligent and shrewd. Small in stature, she was strong and tough.

Harriet Tubman was born in 1821 to Harriet Greene and Benjamin Ross in Dorchester County, Maryland. Her parents were not allowed to be married under the laws of slavery. Her childhood was brutal. As a slave, she worked hard in the fields. Harriet was often beaten. On one occasion, at age 13, she was injured by a rock thrown by her master. The rock struck her head. This resulted in her suffering fainting spells for the rest of her life.

Longed for Freedom

She thought of freedom as she labored on the plantation. Around the age of 25, she and her two brothers planned an escape. Her brothers turned back, but she kept going. This woman of enormous physical strength and endurance finally made it to the North!

Like others who escaped, Harriet was not satisfied to be free. She longed for all slaves to be free men and women.

Conductor of the Underground Railroad

More and more slaves began running away. They traveled at night so as to hide from the cruel slave catchers. They rested during the day. The routes to freedom became known as the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman helped over 300 slaves to

escape. They walked through swamps, up creeks and over hills. She used her determined spirit to push them along. She carried a pistol and was known to threaten to use it when a tired slave wanted to return to the plantation. Making 19 trips back to the South, this "conductor" of the Underground Railroad took the slaves to Canada. Many people, Black and white, helped her by hiding the runaway slaves in their homes, barns, churches and woodsheds. They provided food and clothing. During harsh weather, these helpers sometimes hid the slaves in their wagons with false bottoms. Riding in wagons was much easier than walking.

Never Lost A Passenger

Harriet Tubman was so successful that angry slave masters offered a huge reward of \$40,000 for her capture. She eluded them every time. She prided herself on never losing a passenger.

In 1857, Harriet Tubman bought property in Auburn, New York, and this became her home. She brought her parents to live with her.

Served With the Civil War

When the Civil War started, this little woman served as a cook for the Union troops. Later, she was a scout for them and even a spy and a nurse. Harriet never lost her drive for freedom. Her energy seemed boundless.

Helped Her People 'Til the End

After the war ended, she bought and established a home for older African Americans. Giving it her money, time and energy, she cared for former slaves who were aged and sometimes ill. Despite her fame, her last years were spent in poverty.

As one of the most famous women Abolitionists, Harriet Tubman left a memorable legacy.

In 1978, a postage stamp was issued in her honor.