

harriet tubman

harriet tubman remains one of the most iconic figures in American history, renowned for her courageous efforts as an abolitionist, humanitarian, and spy. Born into slavery in the early 1820s, Tubman escaped to freedom and dedicated her life to liberating others through the Underground Railroad. Her work went beyond helping enslaved people reach freedom; she also served as a scout and nurse during the Civil War. This article explores the life, legacy, and lasting impact of Harriet Tubman, shedding light on her extraordinary contributions to the fight against slavery and the advancement of civil rights. Readers will gain insight into her early years, her missions on the Underground Railroad, her wartime activities, and the recognition she has received posthumously. The following sections provide a comprehensive overview of Harriet Tubman's remarkable journey and enduring influence.

- Early Life and Background
- Escape from Slavery and the Underground Railroad
- Role in the Civil War
- Later Life and Activism
- Legacy and Honors

Early Life and Background

Birth and Childhood

Harriet Tubman was born Araminta Ross around 1822 in Dorchester County, Maryland. She was born into slavery and endured harsh conditions from an early age. Her exact birth date remains uncertain due to the lack of official records, but her early life was marked by physical labor and frequent exposure to violence. Tubman suffered a severe head injury as a child when an overseer struck her with a heavy metal weight, an injury that caused lifelong health issues, including seizures and visions.

Family and Upbringing

Tubman was one of nine siblings in a family enslaved by the Brodess plantation. Her parents were also enslaved, and the family lived under the constant threat of separation through sale or relocation. Despite these hardships, Tubman developed a strong sense of resilience and faith, which later fueled her determination to gain freedom and help others escape bondage.

Escape from Slavery and the Underground Railroad

Decision to Flee

In 1849, Harriet Tubman made the daring decision to escape slavery after learning that she was at risk of being sold further south. She traveled nearly 90 miles on foot to Philadelphia, utilizing knowledge of safe routes and relying on assistance from abolitionists and sympathizers. Her successful escape marked the beginning of her lifelong commitment to freedom.

Missions to Rescue Others

Following her escape, Tubman became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a secret network designed to help enslaved African Americans reach free states and Canada. Over approximately a decade, she made an estimated 13 trips back to the South, leading around 70 enslaved individuals to freedom. Her missions were characterized by careful planning, stealth, and a fearless resolve to face danger.

Methods and Strategies

Harriet Tubman utilized various methods to evade capture during her rescue missions, including traveling by night, using coded songs, and employing disguises. She worked closely with other abolitionists and safe houses along the Underground Railroad. Tubman's deep knowledge of the terrain and her ability to inspire trust were crucial to her success.

- Traveling mostly by night to avoid detection
- Using natural landmarks as navigation aids
- Employing coded language in songs and conversation
- Maintaining strict secrecy to protect escapees and allies

Role in the Civil War

Service as a Spy and Scout

During the American Civil War, Harriet Tubman served the Union Army in multiple capacities. She worked as a nurse, cook, and scout, gathering valuable intelligence on Confederate positions. Her knowledge of the Southern landscape and covert operations proved indispensable to Union forces.

Military Engagements

One of Tubman's most notable contributions was her involvement in the Combahee River Raid in 1863. As a guide for Union troops, she helped lead a successful mission that freed over 700 enslaved people. This operation demonstrated her tactical acumen and commitment to emancipation through direct action.

Challenges Faced

Despite her significant contributions, Harriet Tubman faced challenges during the war, including skepticism from military leaders and persistent racial and gender discrimination. Nevertheless, her perseverance and effectiveness gradually earned her respect and recognition.

Later Life and Activism

Post-War Activities

After the Civil War, Harriet Tubman continued her advocacy for African American rights and women's suffrage. She worked with organizations dedicated to helping freed slaves adjust to freedom, including establishing schools and providing aid to impoverished communities.

Involvement in Women's Suffrage

Tubman joined prominent suffragists in campaigning for women's right to vote. She spoke at rallies and events, emphasizing the intersectionality of race and gender in the struggle for equality. Her activism helped raise awareness of the need for inclusive civil rights reforms.

Personal Life and Challenges

Throughout her later years, Tubman faced financial difficulties and health problems related to her earlier injuries. Despite these hardships, she remained dedicated to her causes until her death in 1913. Tubman's home in Auburn, New York, became a symbol of her lifelong commitment to freedom and justice.

Legacy and Honors

Recognition and Memorials

Harriet Tubman's legacy has been commemorated through numerous memorials, statues, and historical sites. Her life story is included in educational curricula across the United States, highlighting her role as a key figure in the abolitionist movement.

Impact on American History

Harriet Tubman's impact extends beyond her direct actions; she symbolizes resilience, courage, and the enduring quest for human rights. Her example continues to inspire social justice movements and serves as a reminder of the power of individual and collective action against oppression.

Honors and Awards

- Induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame
- Designation of Harriet Tubman National Historical Park

- Appearance on U.S. currency and commemorative stamps
- Numerous schools and institutions named in her honor

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Harriet Tubman?

Harriet Tubman was an American abolitionist and political activist who escaped slavery and then helped hundreds of enslaved people gain their freedom via the Underground Railroad.

What role did Harriet Tubman play in the Underground Railroad?

Harriet Tubman served as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading many enslaved people to freedom by guiding them through a network of secret routes and safe houses.

When and where was Harriet Tubman born?

Harriet Tubman was born around 1822 in Dorchester County, Maryland, USA.

How did Harriet Tubman contribute during the American Civil War?

During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman worked as a nurse, cook, and spy for the Union Army, and she also led an armed expedition that freed over 700 enslaved people.

What impact did Harriet Tubman have on women's suffrage?

Harriet Tubman was an advocate for women's suffrage and worked alongside prominent suffragists to promote voting rights for women after the abolition of slavery.

Why is Harriet Tubman considered an American hero?

Harriet Tubman is considered an American hero for her bravery in escaping slavery, her relentless efforts to free others, and her contributions to the abolitionist movement and civil rights.

Are there any monuments or memorials dedicated to Harriet Tubman?

Yes, there are several monuments and memorials dedicated to Harriet Tubman, including the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park and planned recognition on U.S. currency.

What challenges did Harriet Tubman face during her missions on the Underground Railroad?

Harriet Tubman faced extreme danger, the threat of capture, harsh weather, and the constant risk of betrayal during her missions to rescue enslaved people.

How is Harriet Tubman's legacy preserved today?

Harriet Tubman's legacy is preserved through historical sites, educational programs, literature, films, and ongoing recognition of her role in American history and civil rights.

Additional Resources

1. *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*

This biography by Catherine Clinton offers a comprehensive look at Harriet Tubman's life, from her early years as an enslaved child to her courageous work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. The book delves into her daring missions to rescue enslaved people and her role as a Union spy during the Civil War. It provides historical context and highlights Tubman's enduring legacy in the fight for freedom.

2. *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*

Written by Kate Clifford Larson, this detailed biography explores Harriet Tubman's extraordinary achievements and her deep faith that guided her throughout her life. Larson draws on extensive research to paint a vivid portrait of Tubman's resilience and leadership. The book also discusses Tubman's later years and her efforts toward women's suffrage.

3. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*

This classic children's biography by Ann Petry introduces young readers to Harriet Tubman's bravery and determination. Through simple yet powerful storytelling, the book highlights Tubman's escape from slavery and her relentless work helping others find freedom. It's an inspiring entry point for readers new to Tubman's story.

4. *Harriet: The Moses of Her People*

Sarah Hopkins Bradford's 19th-century biography provides one of the earliest accounts of Harriet Tubman's life. The book captures Tubman's heroic spirit and the challenges she faced during her missions on the Underground Railroad. It remains an important historical resource and a testament to Tubman's impact.

5. *Hidden in Plain View: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*

Written by Kenneth and Pamela B. Freeman, this book combines historical narrative with photographic evidence to shed light on Tubman's secretive work on the Underground Railroad. It explores the risks she took and the networks she built to aid escaped slaves. The book also includes maps and archival images that enrich the story.

6. *Harriet Tubman: Freedom's Road Warrior*

This engaging title by Lesa Cline-Ransome focuses on Tubman's courage and tactical skills during her missions to free enslaved people. The book highlights her unyielding spirit and the strategic planning behind her journeys. It also touches on her contributions during the Civil War and her post-war activism.

7. *Mary Had a Little Lamp: Harriet Tubman and the Fight for Freedom*

By Angela Johnson, this poetic biography celebrates Harriet Tubman's life in lyrical prose. The book captures the emotional depth of Tubman's struggles and triumphs, making it accessible for younger audiences. Rich illustrations accompany the text, enhancing the storytelling experience.

8. *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*

Written by William Still, a key figure in the Underground Railroad, this book offers firsthand accounts and insights into Tubman's work. Still's documentation provides a unique perspective on the operations of the Underground Railroad and Tubman's pivotal role within it. It serves as both a historical record and a tribute.

9. *She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman*

Bettina L. Love's vibrant biography presents Harriet Tubman as a revolutionary figure who fought systemic oppression. The book explores Tubman's activism beyond the Underground Railroad, including her involvement in women's rights and civil rights movements. It frames Tubman's life within the broader context of social justice struggles.

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Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman is a biography of Harriet Tubman, written by Sarah Hopkins Bradford in 1869, four years after the end of the Civil War. The book describes life and adventures of Tubman, an escaped slave, who had helped many escaped slaves travel to the northern States and Canada before the Civil War, using the Underground Railroad. Bradford wrote this book, using extensive interviews with Tubman, to raise funds for Tubman's support. Harriet Tubman, born Araminta Ross, (c. 1822 - 1913) was an American abolitionist, humanitarian, and an armed scout and spy for the United States Army during the American Civil War. Born into slavery, Tubman escaped and subsequently made some thirteen missions to rescue approximately seventy enslaved people, family and friends, using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. Sarah Hopkins Bradford (1818 - 1912) was an American writer and historian, best known today for her two pioneering biographical books on Harriet Tubman. Bradford was one of the first Caucasian writers to deal with African-American topics, and her work attracted worldwide fame, selling very well. Contents: Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman Some Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman Extracts From a Letter Written by Mr. Sanborn, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities Statements Made by Martin I. Townsend, Esq., of Troy, Who Was Counsel for the Fugitive, Charles Nalle Essay on Woman-whipping Harriet, The Moses of Her People

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valor and justice. Born into slavery, Harriet Tubman knew the thirst for freedom. Inspired by rumors of an “underground railroad” that carried slaves to liberation, she dreamed of escaping the nightmarish existence of the Southern plantations and choosing a life of her own making. But after she finally did escape, Tubman made a decision born of profound courage and moral conviction: to go back and help those she’d left behind. As an activist on the Underground Railroad, a series of safe houses running from South to North and eventually into Canada, Tubman delivered more than three hundred souls to freedom. She became an insidious threat to the Southern establishment—and a symbol of hope to slaves everywhere. In this “well-written and moving life of the ‘Moses of her people’” (The Horn Book), an acclaimed author makes vivid and accessible the life of a national hero, soon to be immortalized on the twenty-dollar bill. This intimate portrait follows Tubman on her journey from bondage to freedom, from childhood to the frontlines of the abolition movement and even the Civil War. In addition to being named a New York Times Outstanding Book, *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* was also selected as an American Library Association Notable Book.

harriet tubman: *Harriet Tubman* Jean M. Humez, 2006-02-06 Harriet Tubman’s name is known world-wide and her exploits as a self-liberated Underground Railroad heroine are celebrated in children’s literature, film, and history books, yet no major biography of Tubman has appeared since 1943. Jean M. Humez’s comprehensive *Harriet Tubman* is both an important biographical overview based on extensive new research and a complete collection of the stories Tubman told about her life—a virtual autobiography culled by Humez from rare early publications and manuscript sources. This book will become a landmark resource for scholars, historians, and general readers interested in slavery, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and African American women. Born in slavery in Maryland in or around 1820, Tubman drew upon deep spiritual resources and covert antislavery networks when she escaped to the north in 1849. Vowing to liberate her entire family, she made repeated trips south during the 1850s and successfully guided dozens of fugitives to freedom. During the Civil War she was recruited to act as spy and scout with the Union Army. After the war she settled in Auburn, New York, where she worked to support an extended family and in her later years founded a home for the indigent aged. Celebrated by her primarily white antislavery associates in a variety of private and public documents from the 1850s through the 1870s, she was rediscovered as a race heroine by woman suffragists and the African American women’s club movement in the early twentieth century. Her story was used as a key symbolic resource in education, institutional fundraising, and debates about the meaning of race throughout the twentieth century. Humez includes an extended discussion of Tubman’s work as a public performer of her own life history during the nearly sixty years she lived in the north. Drawing upon historiographical and literary discussion of the complex hybrid authorship of slave narrative literature, Humez analyzes the interactive dynamic between Tubman and her interviewers. Humez illustrates how Tubman, though unable to write, made major unrecognized contributions to the shaping of her own heroic myth by early biographers like Sarah Bradford. Selections of key documents illustrate how Tubman appeared to her contemporaries, and a comprehensive list of primary sources represents an important resource for scholars.

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escape from slavery, her activities as an Underground Railroad conductor, her involvement in the Civil War, and her role as a champion of women's rights. The book places its heroine in the broad context of her time and the movements in which she was involved, and the narrative shifts between the contextual and the personal to give the reader a strong understanding of Tubman as a woman who was shaped by, and helped to shape, the time in which she lived.

harriet tubman: Freedom Train Dorothy Sterling, 1954 Story of one of the most famous conductors in the Underground Railroad.

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poignant literary style, leveraging personal anecdotes and historical context to immerse readers in Tubman's world. The book serves not only as a biographical account but also as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit amidst the brutality of slavery, thus situating itself within the broader canon of American literature that seeks to illuminate African American history and identity. Sarah H. Bradford, a notable biographer and abolitionist, was deeply influenced by her contemporary socio-political climate, which allowed her to apprehend the significance of Tubman's legacy. Bradford's dedication to documenting Tubman's life was fueled by her own advocacy for social justice and equal rights. Her firsthand interactions with Tubman's contemporaries lend authenticity to the narrative, exemplifying her commitment to portraying the complexities of Tubman's character and the socio-historical milieu in which she operated. This book is not only an essential read for those interested in American history but also for readers who seek inspiration from the stories of individuals who dared to challenge the status quo. Bradford's portrayal of Tubman serves as a powerful reminder of the courage and determination necessary for social change, making it a valuable addition to both academic and personal libraries.

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