Underground Railroad Primary Source Set

Freedom Stairway.
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American Memory.

Light to Signal Slaves.
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Dr. John Rankin House.
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Rankin Hill.
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Reverend John Rankin and Wife.
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Print of Josiah Henson.
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Harriet Tubman.
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African-American History Month:
Featured African-Americans.

Ripley Trail.
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The Fugitive Slave Law.  
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Anti-Slavery Meetings.  
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Caution.  
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Engraving of the box in which Henry Box Brown escaped from slavery in.  
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Ranaway.  
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$200 Reward.  
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Trial and Imprisonment of Jonathan Walker.  
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The Fugitive Slave Law.

The Fugitive Slave Law, was an act of the United States Congress passed in 1850, commonly known as the Fugitive Slave Act, which compelled the return of alleged fugitive slaves to their owners. The act was a key part of the Compromise of 1850, a series of measures aimed at resolving the issue of slavery in the territories acquired by the United States in the Mexican-American War.

The act required all U.S. citizens to assist in the capture of fugitive slaves, and empowered federal officers and local authorities to arrest and return fugitive slaves to their owners. It also provided for the punishment of those who aided or abetted fugitive slaves.

The Fugitive Slave Law was controversial and caused conflict within the country, as it pitted the interests of pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces. It paved the way for more heightened conflicts over the issue of slavery in the years leading up to the American Civil War.
ANTISLAVERY MEETINGS!

Anti-Slavery Meetings will be held in this place, to commence on
in the

To be Addressed by

Agents of the Western ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Three millions of your fellow beings are in chains--the Church and Government sustains the horrible system of oppression.

Turn Out!

AND LEARN YOUR DUTY TO YOURSELVES, THE SLAVE AND GOD.

EMANCIPATION or DISSOLUTION, and a FREE NORTHERN REPUBLIC!
CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and
advised, to avoid conversing with the

Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,

For since the recent ORDER OF THE MAYOR &
ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in
KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING
SLAVES. Therefore, if you value your LIBERTY,
and the Welfare of the Fugitives among you, SHUN
them in every possible manner, as so many HOUNDS
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.

APRIL 24, 1851.
Engraving of the Box in which HENRY BOX BROWN escaped from slavery in Richmond, Va.

SONG,

Sung by Mr. Brown on being removed from the box.

I waited patiently for the Lord;—
And he, in kindness to me, heard my calling—
And he hath put a new song into my mouth—
Even thanksgiving—even thanksgiving—
Unto our God!

Blessed—blessed is the man
That has set his hope, his hope in the Lord!
O Lord! my God! great, great is the wondrous work
Which thou hast done!

If I should declare them—and speak of them—
They would be more than I am able to express.
I have not kept back thy love, and kindness, and truth,
From the great congregation!

Withdraw not thou thy mercies from me,
Let thy love, and kindness, and thy truth, alway preserve me—
Let all those that seek thee be joyful and glad!
Be joyful and glad!

And let such as love thy salvation—
Say always—say always—
The Lord be praised!
The Lord be praised!
$100 REWARD!

RANAWAY

From the undersigned, living on Current River, about twelve miles above Doniphan, in Ripley County, Mo., on 2nd of March, 1860—A MAN, about 30 years old, weighing about 160 pounds; high forehead, with a scar on it; had on brown pants and coat very much worn, and an old black wool hat; shoes size No. 11.

The above reward will be given to any person who may apprehend this runaway. (Name)

APO TUCKER.
$200 Reward.

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Thursday, the 30th of September,

FIVE NEGRO SLAVES,

To-wit: one Negro man, his wife, and three children.

The man is a black negro, full height, very erect, his face a little thin. He is about forty years of age, and calls himself Washington Reed, and is known by the name of Washington. He is probably well dressed, possibly takes with him an ivory headed cane, and is of good address. Several of his teeth are gone.

Mary, his wife, is about thirty years of age, a bright mulatto woman, and quite stout and strong.

The oldest of the children is a boy, of the name of FIELDING, twelve years of age, a dark mulatto, with heavy eyelids. He probably wore a new cloth cap.

MATHILDA, the second child, is a girl, six years of age, rather a dark mulatto, but a bright and smart looking child.

MALCOLM, the youngest, is a boy, four years old, a lighter mulatto than the last, and about equally as bright. He probably also wore a cloth cap. If examined, he will be found to have a swelling at the navel.

Washington and Mary have lived at or near St. Louis, with the subscriber, for about 15 years.

It is supposed that they are making their way to Chicago, and that a white man accompanies them, that they will travel chiefly at night, and most probably in a covered wagon.

A reward of $150 will be paid for their apprehension, so that I can get them, if taken within one hundred miles of St. Louis, and $200 if taken beyond that, and secured so that I can get them, and other reasonable additional charges, if delivered to the subscriber, or to THOMAS ALLEN, Esq., at St. Louis, Mo. The above negroes, for the last few years, have been in possession of Thomas Allen, Esq., of St. Louis.

W. M. RUSSELL.

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 1, 1847.
$150 REWARD

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the 2d instant, a negro man, who calls himself Harry May, about 32 years old, 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, bushy black hair, ordinary color, rather chunky built, on one side, and has it divided mostly on one side, and keeps it very nicely combed. He has been raised in the house, and was in a rate dining-room servant, and was in a tavern in Louisville for 18 months. I expect he is now in Louisville, trying to make his escape to a free state, (in all probability to Cincinnati, Ohio). You may perhaps get him while he's in any capacity as a house servant. Had when he left, a dark cassimere coat, and dark striped pantaloons, new, dark, and about 100 dollars if taken out of this State, and delivered to me, or secured in any jail so that I can get him again.

WILLIAM BURKE.

Bardstown, Ky., September 3d, 1838.
Walker resided in Florida with his family from 1836 until 1841. He then removed to Massachusetts because he would not bring up his children among the poisonous influences of slavery. While in Florida, the colored people whom he employed were treated as equals in his family, much to the chagrin of the slaveholders of that region. In 1844 he returned to Pensacola in his own vessel. When leaving, seven of the slaves who had in former years been in his employ, and were members of the church with which he communed, begged to go with him. He consented. When out fourteen days, a Southern sloop fell in with and seized them. Prostrated by sickness, he was confined in a dungeon, chained on a damp floor without table, bed or chair. He was in the pillory for an hour, pelted with rotten eggs, branded S. S.—slave stealer—in the palm of his right hand, by Ebenezer Dorr, United States Marshal, fined $150, and imprisoned eleven months.

THE BRANDED HAND.
BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.

Welcome home again, brave seaman! with thy thoughtful brow and gray, And the old heroic spirit of our earlier, better day— With that front of calm endurance, on whose steady nerve, in vain Pressed the iron of the prison, smote the fiery shafts of pain!

Is the tyrant’s brand upon thee? Did the brutal cravens aim To make God’s truth thy falsehood, His holiest work thy shame? When, all blood-quenched, from the torture the iron was withdrawn, How laughed their evil angel the baffled fools to scorn!

They change to wrong, the duty which God hath written out On the great heart of humanity too legible for doubt! They, the loathsome moral lepers, blotted from foot-sole up to crown, Give to shame what God hath given unto honor and renown!

Why, that brand is highest honor!—than its traces never yet Upon old armorial hatchments was a prouder blazon set: And thy unborn generations, as they crowd our rocky strand, Shall tell with pride the story of their father’s branded hand!