

Tubman returned to the slave state of Maryland. Bowley delivered Keziah and her children to Tubman in Baltimore, where she hid them before using her contacts to move the fugitives into Philadelphia.

She went south a second time in the spring of 1851 to rescue one of her brothers. Two of his fellow slaves joined their expedition. In the fall of 1851, Tubman returned to Dorchester County to persuade her husband to return north with her. The risk of being recognized by a former master was enormous, and the result, heartbreaking. John Tubman refused to flee with her as he had taken another wife.

Despite her grief, Tubman completely committed herself to the task of freeing slaves. She returned to Maryland in December 1851, rallying a large band of fugitives. Reports indicate there were as many as 11, among them relatives. Tubman led them north to Philadelphia, but the new border of freedom had been pushed still further north by the Fugitive Slave Law. Tubman moved into uncharted territory, guiding her group up through New York to Niagara and into the new promised land of Canada.

It was far easier to lead small groups, or for slaves to flee on their own. But Tubman became a master at organizing large groups. She sent word ahead through the Underground Railroad network of upcoming missions, and she quickly assembled groups of fugitives.

Thomas Garrett, a stationmaster in Wilmington, Delaware, sheltered many of Tubman's groups at a blacksmith shop. While many stationmasters destroyed their records of fugitive slaves to avoid prosecution, Garrett's records remain. A Quaker who believed in the equality of all people before God, Garrett sheltered some 2,500 fugitives, scores of whom had been under Tubman's care.

Starting in 1852, Tubman made one or two trips a year, shepherding fugitives through the night. She famously toted a pistol and was known to point it at fugitives who threatened to turn back and put the entire band at risk. "You'll be free or die," she would say to them.

She often worked in winter when the days were short, facing darkness and bad weather on the exhausting and perilous journey into Maryland and Virginia. The Underground Railroad's path then took her back through stations in Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, and on to the Canadian border. During this time, Underground Railroad members and anti-slavery admirers gave her the nickname "Moses."

### General Tubman

As the numbers of fugitives she rescued swelled, so did her fame. Tubman was a celebrity among the elite abolitionists of Boston and New York.

Southern authorities fumed as they failed at efforts to "end her reign." In 1856, a \$40,000 reward was offered for her recapture in the South. Once, she overheard men reading a wanted poster that mentioned her illiteracy. She cleverly pretended to read a book to avoid being recognized. She not only eluded capture, but later in life she claimed that she never lost a single slave on any of her missions.

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She had become a devout Christian in her childhood. Her strong faith and uncanny ability to avoid capture also earned her a

reputation as a mystic, or person in direct contact with God.

Tubman helped her own family gain freedom. She was able to guide five of her siblings to St. Catharines, outside present-day Toronto, Canada. In 1857, her parents were technically free, but faced penalties for sheltering slaves in their Maryland home. Knowing her parents were in danger but not physically strong, Tubman fashioned a primitive horse-carriage and carried them 80 miles to Garrett's safe house in Wilmington. Garrett supplied them with train tickets to Canada, where they joined their children and grandchildren. Tubman spent time there gathering funds for missions to the South.

In 1859, Tubman got help from Senator William Seward, a high-profile admirer of Tubman's work. Seward, who later became Lincoln's secretary of state, sold Tubman a small piece of land in Auburn, New York, for a home, and Tubman moved her parents and siblings there from Canada. But just as it looked like she might settle down, firebrand abolitionist John Brown sought her out in Canada. He called her "General Tubman." She supported his mission to wage war to end slavery.

Brown's plan involved raiding the U.S. arsenal, or weapons storage, at Harper's Ferry. He wanted to arm slaves to fight their masters. Tubman began to raise money and gather former slaves in Canada to help with the raid, but she fell sick before she could participate herself. Brown's poorly planned mission failed, and he was hanged at the gallows. Brown's execution, however, made him a martyr for the abolitionist cause.

Meanwhile, slave owners complained of a "stampede" of slaves to the North. Abolitionists feared Tubman would be executed, just like Brown, if ever recaptured.