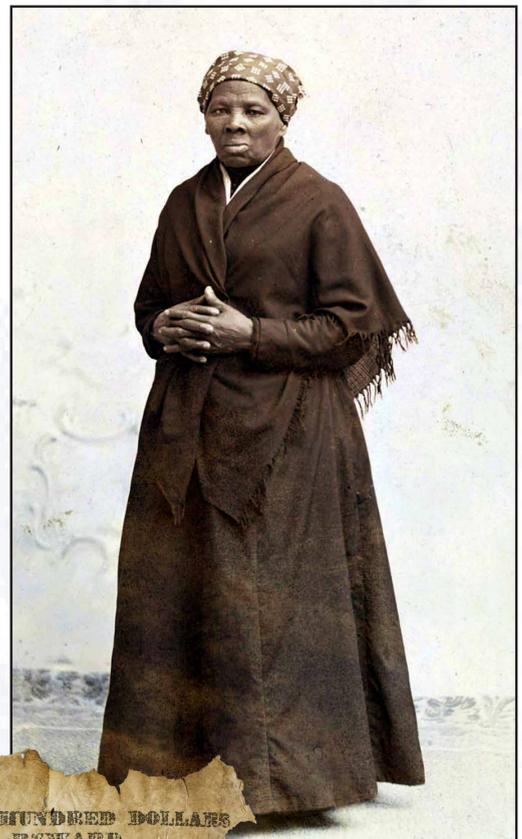


Harriet Tubman

1822–1913



“With her hand held in Ms. Anthony’s, she impressed one with the venerable dignity of her appearance.” Newspaper report on Harriet Tubman’s introduction by Susan B. Anthony at a women’s rights convention, 1896



Turning Point

Abolitionist icon Harriet Tubman also advocated women’s rights and suffrage. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

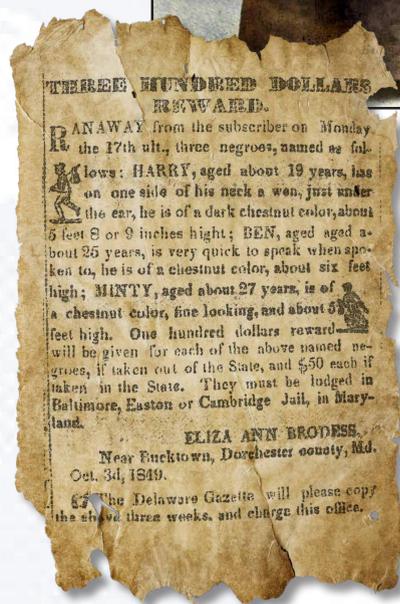
Harriet Tubman grew up enslaved on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Struck by an iron weight thrown by an angry white overseer during her teen years, Tubman nearly died from a skull fracture. Her enslaver tried to sell her, but the head injury deterred potential buyers. She experienced a lifelong history of seizures and vivid dreams that she interpreted as messages from God supporting her pursuit of freedom, equality and justice.

Underground Railroad Days

In 1849, as an adult, Harriet ran away after learning that she might be sold. She began her Underground Railroad activities by returning to rescue family members. In 1851 her husband John refused to go with her, having married another woman. Wearing disguises, often traveling at night, and during winter months, she personally conducted approximately seventy people to freedom and instructed fifty more who made successful escapes.

Harriet Tubman Suffragist

Harriet Tubman participated in suffrage conventions organized by both black and white women. Unlike most black women, she supported the National Women’s Suffrage Association of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. NWSA had opposed the fifteenth amendment granting the vote to black men but not women. Her membership reflected a close friendship with Susan B. Anthony and her own aspirations for suffrage. As Tubman most famously said, she “suffered enough for it.”



This newspaper ad offered a reward for the capture of Harriet Tubman after her escape from slavery. Her birth name was Araminta “Minty” Ross. She changed her name to Harriet and took her husband’s surname of Tubman. COURTESY OF BUCKTOWN VILLAGE FOUNDATION

Harriet Tubman in Boston

Harriet made many visits to Boston, befriending William Lloyd Garrison, Lewis Hayden and other prominent abolitionists and attending women’s rights meetings. Suffering from headaches, she underwent surgery on her skull at Massachusetts General Hospital while biting on a bullet, she said,



rather than having anesthesia.

Massachusetts General Hospital
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“I was the conductor on the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can’t say – I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.” –Harriet Tubman

Civil War Heroism

Harriet Tubman went behind Confederate lines as a Union spy. She was the only woman to lead a military operation, an attack on plantations in South Carolina. She witnessed the 54th Massachusetts Regiment’s famous assault on Fort Wagner, served Colonel Shaw his last meal before the battle, and nursed the wounded. While returning home she sustained a broken arm when ejected from a segregated railroad car.



Suffragist friends: Lucretia Mott and her sister Martha Coffin Wright were abolitionists and leading advocates of women’s rights. Wright, a neighbor in Auburn, NY, and Mott were among Tubman’s earliest supporters. She informed their evolving understanding of the special struggles for black women in a deeply racist society.

A lifelong friend, Susan B. Anthony sheltered Tubman during her Underground Railroad days.