

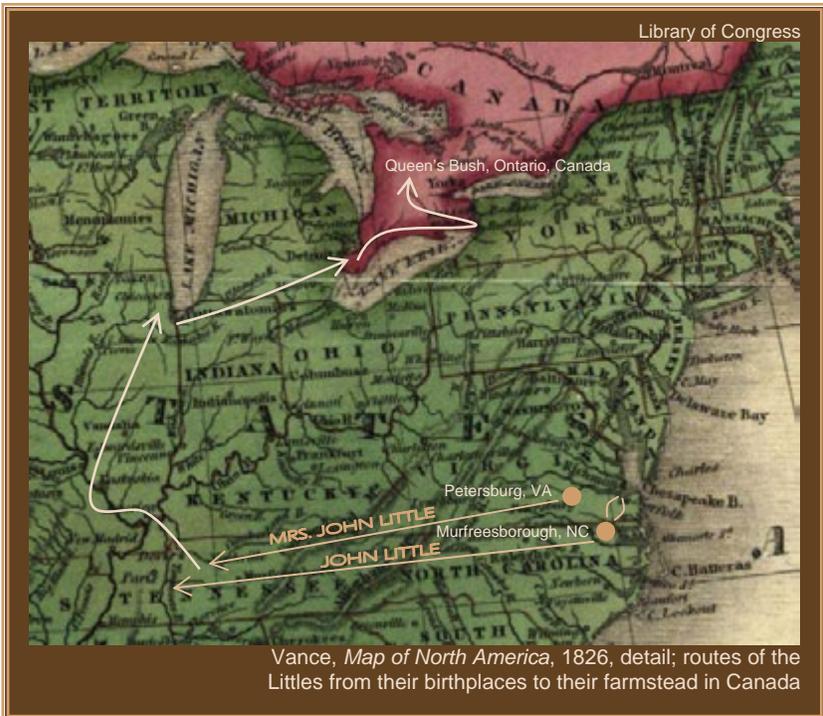


JOHN LITTLE & MRS. JOHN LITTLE

Their Enslavement and Escape from Tennessee to Canada, 1841

in Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side
View of Slavery: The Refugee:
Or the Narratives of Fugitive
Slaves in Canada*, 1856
— Excerpts

John Little and his wife (whose first name we do not know) were married in Tennessee when both were enslaved under the same master. They escaped in 1841, crossing the Ohio River, trekking across Illinois to reach Chicago, traveling by train to Detroit, and then crossing into Canada, where they settled in the backcountry and began farming. Fourteen years later in 1855, a Boston journalist and abolitionist, Benjamin Drew, interviewed them as he visited communities of African Americans in Canada. Selections from the Littles' narratives are presented here, including (since Drew's book was unillustrated) images from the narratives of other fugitive slaves who eventually settled in Canada — Henry Bibb, Josiah Henson, and Moses Roper.



— JOHN LITTLE —

[The hero of the following narrative is much respected, wherever he is known—in Canada West. And in that country of good farms, Mr. Little's is one of the best, and among the best managed.]

I have been bought and sold by several masters. I was born in N. C., Hertford Co., nigh [near] Murfreesboro': I lived there more than twenty years. My first master was just a reasonable man for a slaveholder. As slaveholders go, he used his people very well. He had but seven — my mother and her six children; of the children, I was the oldest. I was never sent to school a day in my life and never knew a letter until quite late in life. I was not allowed to go to meeting [church]. My business on Sundays was looking after the mules and hogs, and amusing myself with running hares and fishing.

My master broke down, and I was taken by the sheriff and sold at public auction in Murfreesboro'. I felt miserably bad to be separated from my mother and brothers and sisters. They too felt miserably about it, especially my poor old mother, who ran all about among the neighbors trying to persuade one and another to buy me, which none of them would promise to do, expecting the traders to give more. This she did on Sundays; week-days, she had to work on the farm.

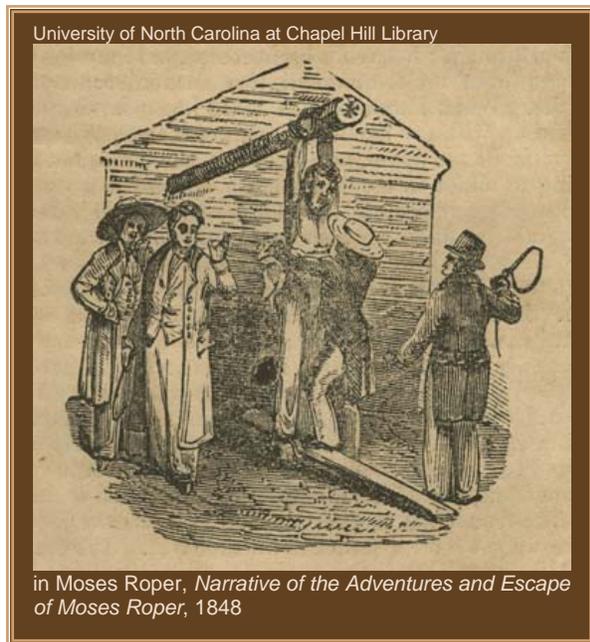
Finally I was sold to a man in the same county, about ten miles from the first place. He abused me like a dog — worse than a dog — not because I did anything wrong, but because I was a “nigger.” My blood boils to think about him, let me be where I will. It don't seem to me that even upon the Lord's day, and now I know that there is a hereafter, it would be a sin before God to shoot him if he were here, he was so bad: he so abused me — he, a wise man — abused me because I was a fool — not naturally, but made so by him and others under the slave laws. That is God's truth, that I was inhumanly abused. . . .

National Humanities Center, 2007: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/. In Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1856). Facsimile reprint by Negro Universities Press, 1968. Full text online in Documenting the American South (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library) at docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/menu.html. Images, bracketed comments, and some paragraphing added; and some punctuation & spelling modernized by NHC. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/imagecredits.htm.

At the time of this sale I was about twenty-three, but being a slave, I did not know my age; I did not know anything. . . .

After being there three weeks, I wanted to go back to see my mother who was broken-hearted at the loss of her children. It seemed as if the evil one had fixed it so — for then two daughters were taken and carried off to Georgia. She had been sold before for the fellow's debts — sold close by at private sale. I asked leave of my master Saturday night. I went to him, pulled off my hat, and asked him if he would please give me a pass to go and see my mother, and I would come back Sunday evening. "No! I don't allow my niggers to run about Sundays, gawking about; I want you tomorrow to look after the mules and the horses along with the rest of the niggers." He was the greatest gentleman in that neighborhood. The white men all looked up to him. He was what is called a "nigger-breaker." If anyone had a stubborn slave, that they couldn't bend just as they wanted to, they would hire him to S—— E—— for a year. I have known them to be sent from as much as fifty miles to be broke, because he had so much cruelty: he was a hard-hearted, overbearing scoundrel; the cries and groans of a suffering person, even if ready to die, no more affected him than they would one of my oxen in the field yonder. This I have seen and known and partly endured in my own person.

His refusing the pass naturally made me a little stubborn: I was a man as well as himself. I started and went without the pass and returned on Sunday evening after dark. Nothing was said until Monday morning — then we went to the overseer and were all told to go to the [cotton] gin-house. As soon as I got there, the overseer and two colored men laid right hold of me and tied me fast to an apple tree with some of the baling-rope, and then sent for the master. He came — "Well, Sir, I suppose you think you are



a great gentleman." I thought, as they had me tied, I would try to beg off as well as I could, knowing that sauciness would not make it any better for me. "I suppose," he went on, "you think you can come and go whenever you please." I told him "No: I wanted to see my mother very bad, and so I ran over there and came back as I told you." Said he, "I am your master, and you shall obey me, let my orders be what they may." I knew that as well as he, but I knew that it was devilishness that he wouldn't give me a pass. He bade [ordered] the overseer hit me five hundred lashes — *five hundred lashes* he bade the overseer hit me! Men have received them down south, this morning since the sun rose. The overseer ordered two slaves to undress me, which they did: they turned my shirt over my head which blindfolded me. I could not see who put on the blows, but I knew. It was not the master — he was too much of a gentleman, but he had a plenty of dogs to set on. What I tell you now, I would tell at the judgment if I were required. 'Tisn't

he who has stood and looked on that can tell you what slavery is — 'tis he who has endured. I was a slave long enough and have tasted it all. I was black, but I had the feelings of a man as well as any man. . . .

At the end of three months, he found I was too stubborn for *him* to subdue. He took off the fetters from my ankles, put me in handcuffs, and sent me to Norfolk jail to be shipped for New Orleans. But when I arrived, the time that niggers were allowed to be shipped to New Orleans was out, and the last boat for that spring had sailed. After two weeks, I had the measles. My master was written to, but neither came nor sent any answer. As the traders were coming there with slaves, the turnkey [person in charge of the keys in a jail] put me into the kitchen to avoid contagion. I soon got better — the turnkey said, "You are well now and must be lonesome — I'll put you in with the rest in a day or two." I determined to escape if I could.

At night I took a shelf down and put it against the enclosure of the yard and climbed to the top, which was armed with sharp spikes, fourteen inches long, and, risking my life, I got over the spikes. Just as I had done this, the nine o'clock bell rung the signal for the patrols. I fell on the outside and made for the river, where I found a skiff loaded with wood. I threw over half a cord in a hurry and pushed off for the opposite shore to go back into the neighborhood of my old place, hoping, by dodging in the bush, to tire out my master's patience and induce him to sell me running. . . .

Having lightened the skiff, I paddled across and went back to North Carolina to my mother's door. I ran about there in the bush and was dodging here and there in the woods two years. I ate their pigs and chickens — I did not spare them. I knew how to dress them [prepare them for cooking] and did not suffer for want of food. This would not have taken place had my master complied with my reasonable request for a pass after I had done my work well, without any fault being found with it. But when I found out by that, and by his cruel punishment, that he was a devil, I did not care what I did do. I meant he should kill me or sell me.

My master did not advertise me when he got the news of my escape, saying it was their loss, as I was placed in their charge. He sued, but was beaten. After this he advertised for me, offering fifty dollars for my capture, dead or alive. A free-born colored man, whom I had known, betrayed me. Some poor white fellows offered him *ten dollars* if he would find out where I was. He put them on my track. At ten one morning, they found me lying down asleep. I partially aroused and heard one say, "Don't shoot: it may be somebody else lying down drunk." I arose with my face towards them; there were six young white men armed with guns. I wheeled and ran; they cried out, "Stop, or I'll shoot you." One of them, a real youngster, hit me, firing first; the others fired and said they shot their best, but did not hit. A bullet and a buckshot entered my right thigh; the shot came out, but the bullet went to the bone and is there yet. It injured a sinew, so that my foot hurts me to this day when I walk. I ran about a quarter of a mile, then my foot all at once gave out and I fell. They came up with dirks [long knives], threatening me with instant death if I even winked my eye towards molesting [attacking] them. They took me in a cart and put me into the county jail.

All that night I lay wishing they had shot me dead. I did not want to face that hyena again. But he was as afraid of me as I was of him. He would not have me, he said, come on his farm again. He kept me in jail until a slave-driver came from Western Tennessee — he took me out to Tennessee to hire out or sell — anything to get rid of me. I was hired out to T—— R—— in Jackson, Madison Co., two years. I did very well; the man who hired me was a pretty fair sort of a man for a slaveholder. During the two years I became satisfied with my condition and, in about a year after, married a young woman belonging to T—— N——: she is living with me yet. . . .

I had heard that if I could get into Ohio and manage to stay there one year, I would, after that, be a free man. I intended to wait for my wife to get smart [mentally

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I was born in Petersburg, Va. When very young, I was taken to Montgomery county [Tennessee]. My old master died there, and I remember that all the people were sold. My father and mother were sold together about one mile from me. After a year they were sold a great distance, and I saw them no more. My mother came to me before she went away and said, "Good by, be a good girl; I never expect to see you any more."

Then I belonged to Mr. T—— N——, the son of my old master. He was pretty good, but his wife, my mistress, beat me like sixty. Here are three scars on my right hand and arm, and one on my forehead, all from wounds inflicted with a broken china plate. My cousin, a man, broke the plate in two pieces, and she said, "Let me see that plate." I handed up the pieces to her, and she threw them down on me; they cut four gashes and I bled like a butcher. One piece cut into the sinew of the thumb and made a great knot permanently. The wound had to be sewed up. This long scar over my right eye, was from a blow with a stick of wood. . . .

I belonged to them until I got married at the age of sixteen to Mr. John Little of Jackson. My master sold me for debt — he was a man that would drink, and he had to sell me. I was sold to F—— T——, a planter and slave-trader, who soon after, at my persuasion, bought Mr. Little. . . .

alert], she being sick at the time. I went into the woods and once more took to living on chickens and geese, which I understood very well. In about two weeks I went for my wife. Another man had agreed to come with us; but he was weak enough to advise with a friend about it, and the friend turned traitor and told his master. They are just the same as white men. I have found out since I have been in Canada that 'tis not the skin that makes a man mean. Some of them will betray another to curry favor with the master, or to get a new coat, or two or three dollars, and I have noticed the same mean spirit among white men. But there are others who would die sooner than betray a friend.

I bade my wife get ready for a start on the next night, and then I took to the bush again. Meanwhile the traitor slipped to our master and asked him if he knew that three of the negroes were going to run away. He told him "No — which three?" He named us. "Where are they going to?" "Ohio State." This aroused my master: he went to the quarters, tied the man and tied my wife, and took them to a swamp. There they uncovered my wife and compelled a girl to whip her with the paddle to make her tell where I was. It so stirred me with indignation to think they should so foully abuse my wife, that I could have run a dagger through their hearts and not thought it wrong: nor have I yet got so far enlightened as to feel very differently about it now. She could not tell him, for she did not know. The man also was punished and put in irons. They had no irons to fit her and sent to the blacksmith's shop to get some made; and had it not been for some craft on her part that night, I should never have got her away.

Old Billy, with whom we were usually left, was the blacksmith; and while he was going to make the irons, she was left with a younger man who was a stupid sort of a fellow. It was then nearly noon, and she had had no food for the day. She was then at the quarters. She said to one of the girls, "Maria, you go to the turnip-patch and get some salad, and I'll go to the spring, get some water, and put on the meat." She expected the fellow would stop her, but he did not. She carried the pail to the spring, about a quarter of a mile, then dropped it and made for the bush. It was a downhill way at first, but by and by, there was a rise and then they saw her. Out came master, overseer, and many slaves, in full run to catch her; but she was now nearly half a mile ahead and ran very fast. She got into the woods which were very thick. Master then ordered a halt — he had found from the other slaves that I had a pistol, powder, and ball. I had, indeed, and would have used it, rather than they should take me or her. But I was in another place at the time.

I had appointed a place where she was to come to meet me; when I went she was not there. I then drew near the house to ascertain what had happened and heard a loud laughing and talking in my cabin. I tried to hear what it was about. I heard one of them say, "Lord, how she did run across that field! ha! ha! ha!" She had baked cakes for our journey, and they were making merry over the flour cakes. Presently, I saw a colored man and whistled to him. He came up and I learned what had happened, and that all were then out on a hunt for me, being stimulated by a promised reward of ten dollars. All this set me into a

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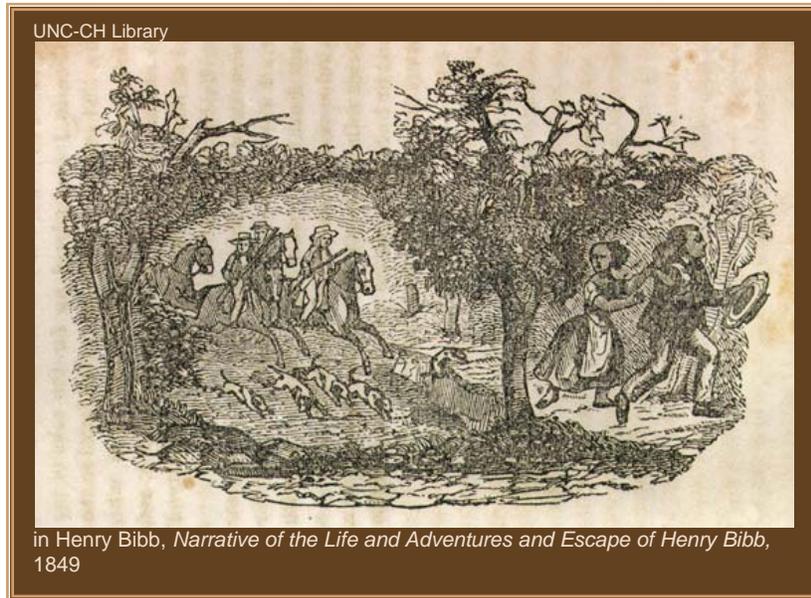
When we had made arrangements for leaving, a slave told of [on] us. Not long after, master called to me, "Come here, my girl, come here." I went to him; he tied me by the wrist with a rope. He said, "Oh, my girl, I don't blame you — you are young, and don't know; it's that d—d infernal son of a —; if I had him here, I'd blow a ball through him this minute." But he was deceived [mistaken] about it: I had put John up to hurrying off.

Then master stood at the great house door, at a loss what to do. There he had Willis, who was to have run away with us, and the man who betrayed us. At last he took us all off about half a mile to a swamp, where old A— need not hear us as he was going to meeting, it being Sunday. He whipped Willis to make him tell where we were going. Willis said, "Ohio State." "What do you want to be free for? G— d— you, what do you know about freedom? Who was going with you?" "Only Jack." "G— d— Jack to h—, and you too." . . .

. . . Then he (master) asked, "Where is Jack?" "I don't know." Said he, "Give her h—, R—." That was his common word. Then they struck me several blows with the paddle. I kept on telling them it was of no use to whip me, as I knew nothing to tell them. No irons were ready for me, and I was put under a guard — but I was too cunning for him, and joined my husband.

tremble; I turned back and went to the place I had appointed. She was near by, saw me and ran to me, and so we were together once more.

We then walked nine miles northwardly to a little village where I had put up my clothes. The man who betrayed us had told our route. I got the things and went to the barn close by; then my wife was exhausted and fell on the barn floor. I had a strong constitution and could travel all the time; but she was so fatigued from the flogging, and the race, and the long walk, that she fell on the barn floor. I returned to the house and then walked to a tavern stable to hook three or four blankets to keep us warm on our way north. If this was wrong, it was taught me by the rascality of my master.



in Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures and Escape of Henry Bibb*, 1849

While at the tavern stable, I heard the dog bark at the house I had left; I gathered three blankets and bolted for the barn, expecting the scoundrels would be pursuing my wife. I saw a candle burning bright in the house, and moving from room to room. That frightened me; I seized and shook her — “wife! wife! master is coming!” — but I could not awaken her. I gathered her up, put

her across my shoulder manfully, jumped the fence, and ran with my burden about a quarter of a mile. My heart beat like a drum from the thought that they were pursuing us. But my strength at last gave out and I laid her down under a fence, but she did not awaken. I then crept back to the house to see who was there and to get my things. The light I had seen now came down stairs and moved towards the barn. I was so near that I saw the overseer and six slaves, armed, searching for me.

Oh my soul! it makes my hair stand up to think how near we were to getting caught and carried back, to be abused and maltreated unreasonably, and without cause.

I was within five rods [app. 28 yards] of them when they went into the barn. They searched it thoroughly, as I saw between the rails of a fence. “Oh you rascals!” I thought, “you’re defeated now!” — but ’twas a close run and a narrow chance. When they left the barn, I kept watch of them. They returned the candle to the house, then walked the way they had come, to the place where they had left their mules. They stayed there about a half an hour. I still kept watch of them. I wanted to get my things, but I was wise enough to know that every time a slaveholder is out of sight, he isn’t gone; every time his eye is shut, he is not asleep. They then returned toward the house; as they moved, I moved, keeping the same distance from them.

When they were within about ten rods of the house, they crouched down in readiness to shoot me when I might approach the house. They had rendered me desperate by their devilment, and knew I would fight; they would not dare take me without shooting me first. I watched them, and they watched for me, until the cocks crowed for morning. It would not do for me to remain any longer to get my clothes and provisions. I went back to the place where I had left my wife; she was then easily awakened, and we hied to the woods to conceal ourselves for the day. We had no provisions but a raw ham. We dared not make a fire to broil it, so we ate of it raw; like a dog. At night, between sunset and dark, I went back to the house in the village — at the door I saw a person with our things. They gave them to me, and bade me God-speed, and that, if ever I was taken, not to betray them. I then put forth and, with my wife, reached Canada. God save the Queen!*

* The following four paragraphs [in brackets] appear later in Little’s narrative, during his description of life in Canada with his wife. They are placed here for chronological sequencing of the Littles’ escape from the South.

[In making my escape, my main difficulty was in crossing the Ohio Bottoms before reaching the river. The water was black and deep. I bound our packages on my wife's back, placed her on a log as a man rides on horseback, and I swam, pushing the log, holding it steady to keep her up. Had the log turned right or left, she would have slipped off and the packs would have sunk her. It would have been death, sure — but worse than death was behind us, and to avoid that we risked our lives. When we had crossed one, we would presently come on another and had to go through the same again. By and by, I would think, this must be the last — but when we had crossed this and gone over some little island, there would be another. Oh dear! it seems as if I could see it now — I almost repented I had started, but on I went. There was another and another — good swimming creeks; but when I had crossed the last one, my spirits rose again — my heart cheered up, and I thought I could go through all.

After we had got to a place where we intended to pass the night, I would leave my wife and go and look all around to see if there was any white man. I was like an old hunting dog who, when he has treed a coon, will not believe his eyes but goes scenting about to see if the track has left the tree: if not, he will come back, look at the coon, bark, and then scent again.

I was hunted like a wolf in the mountains, all the way to Canada. In three months I had to go to many places to steal our food. I would have asked for it, but if I did, it was, "Where is your pass?" To avoid this meanness and the risk of capture, I was obliged to look out for myself, and I made good use of my time. One night, on entering a dairy near a farmhouse, the door creaked, and an old man called out, "Sa-a-l!" But I took some cakes, and Sal made no answer.

When I was travelling in the North, I found that men worked days and slept nights without fear, because they were honest. At the South they do not have this comfort. The overseer watches through the day, and the master is on the lookout in the night. . . I saw the different between free labor and slave labor: the northern man labors in the day and sleeps soundly all night. he does not spend his day in laying deep schemes to whip a "nigger's" back, and then start up at night, in unexpected place, like a ghost.]

From Jackson to the Ohio River was called one hundred and forty miles,— crossed the river to Cairo; then we footed through Illinois to Chicago; all the way we lay by days and travelled nights. I forgot the name of that city, and wandered out of the way and got to a river. It was the Mississippi, but I did not know it. We crossed into Black Hawk [Indian] territory. There

Mrs. JOHN LITTLE

My shoes gave out before many days — then I wore my husband's old shoes till they were used up. Then we came on barefooted all the way to Chicago. My feet were blistered and sore and my ankles swollen; but I had to keep on. There was something behind me driving me on. At the first water we came to I was frightened, as I was not used to the water. It was a swift but shallow stream; my husband crossed over, and I was obliged to follow. At the Ohio Bottoms was a great difficulty — the water was in some places very deep — it was black, dirty water. I was scared all but to death, but I had become somewhat used to hardship. If I had seen a white face, I would have run into the river. . . .

. . . I felt afraid at getting into a boat to cross the Ohio River: I had never been in any boat whatever. Now to get on this in the night frightened me. "John," said I, "don't you think we'll drown?" "I don't care if we do," said he. We reached Cairo [Illinois] well enough. . . .

At Cairo, the gallinippers [mosquitoes] were so bad, we made a smoke to keep them off. Soon after I heard a bell ring. Said I, "John, somebody's dead." It was a steamboat bell tolling. Presently there she was, a great boat full of white men. We were right on the river's bank, and our fire sent the smoke straight up into the calm. We lay flat on the ground. John read the name — Maria. No one noticed us; after the boat was gone, we had a hearty laugh at our good luck. Thinking there was no more trouble, we did not put out our fire. Presently came a yawl boat; they saw our fire and hailed, "Boat ashore! boat ashore! runaway niggers! runaway niggers!" We lay close, and the boat kept on. We put out our fire and went further back from the river, but the mosquitoes were so bad, we made another fire. But a man with a gun then came along, looking up into the trees. I scattered the fire to put it out, but it smoked so much the worse. We at last hid in a thicket of briers, where we were almost devoured by mosquitoes, for want of a little smoke.

I was so lost and bewildered that I had at last to go up to a house to inquire the way. I found there a man with true abolition principles, who told us the route. He said a man and his wife had been carried back to slavery from that neighborhood. He did not take us across the river, but we found a way over. Then we walked on — my wife was completely worn out; it was three months from the time we left home before we slept in a house. We were in the woods, ignorant of the roads, and losing our way. At one time we came to a guideboard which said “5 miles to Parks’s Landing.” I had learned to spell out print a little. This was Sunday night. I took the direction I wanted to travel as near as I could, and we went on. On Wednesday afternoon we came back to the same guideboard — “5 miles to Parks’s Landing.” Many such roundabout cruises we made, wearing ourselves out without advancing; this was what kept us so long in the wilderness and in suffering.

I had suffered so much from white men that I had no confidence in them, and determined to push myself through without their help. Yet I had to ask at last, and met with a friend instead of an enemy. At Chicago money was made up to help me on, and I took passage for Detroit and then crossed to Windsor in Canada. That was the first time I set my foot on free soil.

Work was dull among the French at Windsor. We stayed there about six months. We heard of the Queen’s Bush, where any people might go and settle, colored or poor, and might have a reasonable chance to pay for the land. We set out to find the Queen’s Bush — went to Buffalo [New York] — thence to Black Rock [near Buffalo] — thence to St. Catharines [Canada], and there I got straight instructions.

We had not a second suit of clothes apiece; we had one bedquilt and one blanket, and eighteen dollars in money. I bought two axes in Hamilton [Ontario, Canada], one for myself and one for my wife; half a dozen plates, knives and forks, an iron pot, and a Dutch oven: that’s all for tools and furniture. For provisions I bought fifty weight of flour and twenty pounds of pork. Then we marched right into the wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of woods which the chain had never run round since Adam. At night we made a fire and cut down a tree, and put up some slats like a wigwam. This was in February when the snow was two feet deep. It was about fourteen years ago. We

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. . . We started to find a road and then met with a white woman. . . “Good evening, good evening,” said she. My husband asked if she would sell him some bread; this was to make conversation, so he could inquire the road. “Oh yes, just come to my house, I’ll give you some bread.”

We went to the house, and presently her husband came in. He asked, “Have you got free papers?” John answered, “No.” “Where are you travelling to?” “To the upper lakes.” “We are not allowed to let a colored man go through here without free papers; if we do, we are liable to a fine of forty dollars.” He allowed us to remain all night — but in the morning we were to go before a squire [judge] at Dorrety, and if we were free, we would go on. This was the woman’s arrangement; the man did not seem inclined to stop us. She said, “If we stop you, we shall get fifty dollars apiece for you: that’s a—good—deal—of—money— you know.”

The man asked John if he had a pistol. John produced one. The man said ‘twas no harm, he would take care of it for him — and locked it up. They lived in a little dirty log hut; they took the bed off the bedstead, and lay down on it close to the door so that it could not be opened without disturbing him. The man took a nice silver-mounted pistol from a cupboard, loaded it, and placed it where he could reach it in the night. We lay on the bedstead — they on the floor. She was the evil one: she had made the plans. Their name was Smith.

At about three o’clock in the morning, husband aroused me — “I’m going away from here; I don’t value [trust] them, now other folks are asleep.” We both got up. John spoke roughly, “Mr. Smith! Mr. Smith!” He aroused: “we are unwell and must pass out [leave] — we’ll be back very soon.” Mr. Smith got up very readily and pulled the bed away a little, so we could slip out. As John passed by the pistol, he put his hand on it and took it in exchange for his old one. It is a beautiful rifle pistol, percussion lock — John has been offered fifteen dollars for it. If the man will come here with John’s old flint lock, my husband will exchange back and give him *boot*. I am very sorry for my friend, Mrs. Smith, that she did not get the hundred dollars to go a shopping with in Dorrety — am much obliged to her for our night’s lodging.



"A Canadian Forest," and "Clearing Land," in Henry Bleby, Josiah [Henson]: *The Maimed Slave. A True Tale*, 1873

made our bed of cedar boughs from a swamp. Thus we travelled three or four days, seeing plenty of deer: wolves, as plenty as sheep are now, were howling about us, and bears were numerous.

At last I came to a place where I judged, from the timber, the land was good — and so it proved. My nearest neighbor was two miles off. I felt thankful that I had got into a place where I could not see the face of a white man. For something like five or six years, I felt suspicious when I saw a white man, thinking he was prying round to take some advantage. This was because I had been so bedevilled and harassed by them. At length that feeling wore off through kindness that I received from some here, and from abolitionists who came over from the States to instruct us, and I felt that it was not the white man I should dislike, but the mean spirit which is in some men, whether white or black. I am sensible of that now.

The settlers were to take as much land as they pleased, when it should be surveyed, at various prices, according to quality. Mine was the highest price, as I had taken of the best land. It was three dollars seventy-cents an acre. I took a hundred acres at first, and then bought in fifty.

Myself and wife built us here a little log hut amid the snow. We made it ourselves, shouldering the logs to bring up to the place. We went to the cedar swamp and split out boards for the roof. We had plenty of firewood, which served instead of blankets. Wolves, any quantity, were howling about us constantly, night and day — big savage wolves, which alarmed the people. Some men carrying meat were chased by them. Isaac Johnson was obliged to take up a tree. We got used to them on our way here and did not fear them at all. In the spring, plenty of bears came

about us after sheep and hogs. One day my wife and I were walking out, and we saw four bears in the cherry trees eating the fruit. My wife went for my gun, called some neighbors, and we killed all four. Now the wolves are all gone, and the deer and the bears are scarce. There are idle men enough about here, colored and white, to drive them away, when they had better be chopping and clearing land.

We went to chopping, day and night; there was no delay; we logged the trunks with our own hands, without cattle or horses or help — all with our own hands, and burned them. I raised that year one hundred and ten bushels of spring wheat and three hundred bushels of potatoes on land which we had cleared ourselves, and cultivated without plow or drag. All was done with the hoe and handrake. This I can prove by my nearest neighbors. I got the seed on credit of some Dutchmen in the towns, by promising

to work for them in harvest. They put their own price on the seed and on my labor.

In the next winter we went to clearing again. My wife worked right along with me: I did not realize it then, for we were raised slaves, the women accustomed to work, and undoubtedly the same spirit comes with us here: I did not realize it then but now I see that she was a brave woman.

I thank God that freedom has never overweighted us; some it has, but I have worked to support it and not to discourage it. I thought I ought to take hold and work and go ahead, to show to others that there is a chance for the colored man in Canada: to show the spirit of a man, and a desire to improve his condition. As it is so often said by slaveholders, that if the “niggers” were free and put in a place where they would be together they would starve to death; I wanted to show to the contrary. I have one hundred and fifty acres of land: one hundred and ten of it cleared and under good cultivation: two span of horses, a yoke of oxen, ten milk cows and young cattle, twenty head of hogs, forty head of sheep; I have two wagons, two plows, and two drags. I would like to show this to that everlasting scoundrel, E——, my former master, and tell him, “All this I would have done for you cheerfully, and thought myself at home, and felt happy in doing it, if you would have let me; but I am glad that you scarred and abused me, as it has given to myself and my family the fruits of my own labor.”

I would like to show it to those stout able men, who, while they might be independent here, remain in the towns as waiters, blacking boots, cleaning houses, and driving coaches for men, who scarcely allow them enough for a living. To them I say, go into the backwoods of Queen Victoria’s dominions [i.e., Canada], and you can secure an independent support. I am the man who has proved it; never man came into an unsettled country with lesser means to begin with.

Some say, you cannot live in the woods without a year’s provisions — but this is not so: I have come here and proved to the contrary. I have hired myself out two days to get things to work on at home one. If there is a man in the free States who says the colored people cannot take care of themselves, I want him to come here and see John Little. There is no white blood in me; not a drop. My mother’s father was imported from Africa, and both my grandparents on the father’s side were also imported. I can prove to him that everything which was due on the land is paid; that I raised seven hundred bushels of wheat last year, two hundred bushels of potatoes, one hundred bushels of peas, two hundred and fifty bushels of oats, ten tons of hay; fattened fifteen hundred weight of pork, one ox, besides other produce of less consequence. I have now growing fifty acres of wheat, eighteen acres of oats, ten of peas, one acre of potatoes, and twenty acres of meadow grass: I have horses, oxen, cows, hogs, sheep, and poultry in abundance. The man who was “a bad nigger” in the South is here a respected, independent farmer. I thank God that I am respected in this neighborhood by the best men the country can afford — can lend or borrow two thousand dollars any time I am asked, or choose to ask for it. I don’t say this for the sake of boasting — I say it to show that colored men can take care of themselves — and to answer any who deny that Canada is a good country.

Mrs. JOHN LITTLE

I got to be quite hardy — quite used to water and bush-whacking; so that by the time I got to Canada, I could handle an axe, or hoe, or anything. I felt proud to be able to do it — to help get cleared up, so that we could have a home and plenty to live on.

I now enjoy my life very well — I have nothing to complain of. We have horses and a pleasure-wagon, and I can ride out when and where I please, without a pass.

The best of the merchants and clerks pay me as much attention as though I were a white woman; I am as politely accosted [spoken to] as any woman would wish to be.

I have lost two children by death; one little girl is all that is spared to me. She is but four years old. I intend to have her well educated, if the Lord lets us.