

WALT: Write an account about travelling along the Underground Railroad

By E. C.

July 1850

When I was nine-years-old, I witnessed an incident that would change my life...

My father was a wagon driver on a cotton plantation. One day, however, that all changed...When I turned nine, my father was happy because he didn't have to work in the fields. As soon as I was old enough, he would give me rides in the wagons. On the day of my mother's birthday, I felt poorly so I watched the wagons instead of riding in them. That day, my father was riding in the wagon with a jet-black mare harnessed to the back when we heard a shout. It was the overseer. The wretched mare bolted with my father inside the wagon! He tried to calm the stupid animal but it worked too well. He stopped abruptly and my father was thrown out of the wagon and everything seemed to go in slow motion. His head hit a wall and life was knocked out of him immediately.

Soon after, my father's death, my mother asked me a question, "Would you like to get away from the plantation?" I said I would but we had to go together. My mother told me to pack my nice green dress, a white dress, some bread and a flask of water. We packed them in our quilt while I wore my black mourning dress and strong shoes. My mother did the same, and we escaped under the cover of darkness. The silver moon was not out so we hoped we would not be seen. Even though it was July, the night was chilly as I pulled on my warm woollen shawl.

We both knew that moss grew on the north side of trees and the moths that lived in those parts glowed in the dark, so we would be able to see, wouldn't we? My quilt had patterns on it like a drunkard's a path, crossroads, a log cabin and shoe flies that would serve as our guide and map. Everything went fine. We made good progress across the fields and forests and met our Quaker friends.

I had nightmares though...not normal nightmares...patroller nightmares. They came for me in my sleep every night. I found some bear paw prints leading into a safe cave with fresh water running next to it. I was convinced that it was a trap. My mother went in first to convince me that it was safe. It wasn't a trap! My cheeks went crimson with embarrassment and I hid my face in the darkness. I was right to be weary...we were not alone.

I thought I had heard a noise in the bushes. My mother had laughed and told me to stop being so silly, it was probably just a wild mouse. I wasn't so sure. We stopped at a shady clearing to rest and fill our flasks with fresh water from a nearby stream. My mother had said that we could pick some wild strawberries from the hedgerows. Just then we heard the terrifying sound of guns firing! The patrollers. We scattered like shoeflies, remembering the quilt code. My heart was booming in my chest. I bolted through the trees like the horse that had killed my father. At last, the sound of gunfire had died down and I knew that I had to go back. When I found the place where I had run from, I didn't know what to think. My mother wasn't there but...I knew that I had to carry on somehow.

In the next forest, I found some Quakers who were glad to take me the final couple of miles into Canada. They took me to an orphanage and I hope, today, that I will be adopted by a free family one day. Meanwhile, I am learning how to sew in the hope that one day I will be able to a seamstress and make my own quilt.