THE SLAVES OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad was a network of safe houses and secret passages used by enslaved African Americans in the 19th century in an attempt to escape to free states and Canada. It is estimated that upwards of 100,000 slaves escaped through the use of these houses and secret passages. This project focuses specifically on the group of people who arrived at the office of Sidney Gay in New York City between January 22, 1856 and April 30, 1856. The majority of enslaved people that reached him during that time period were sent to Syracuse New York. However, there were some instances of them being sent to places such as New Bedford and Boston Massachusetts where they may have had friends or family. In gathering this data, there were some cases where there was very minimal information and others with an abundance of information that indicated what the persons life was like prior. The majority of the enslaved people passing through were treated very poorly however there were some who weren’t and were just tired of being a slave.
MARY JEFFERS

Mary Jeffers arrived in New York City on January 28, 1856. She came from Bohemia Manor Maryland and was owned by Joshua Craig. The date of her escape is not known, and on her way to New York City she stopped in Philadelphia Pennsylvania and an unknown town in New Jersey. Various people helped her along on her journey, but names were not given. However, she was permitted to leave by her master and mistress six years prior to her arrival. However, at some point along her journey her previous owner, Joshua Craig, tried to re-capture her but she was able to escape and hide out in a neighbors home. She had a husband, who was also a fugitive slave, who was in California. Sidney Gay paid $15.39 for her passage and sent her to Syracuse.
HENRY CHAMBERS, JOHN CHAMBERS, AND WM. RYEBOLD

Henry Chambers, John Chambers, and WM. Ryebold all arrived in New York City on January 31, 1856. Henry Chambers came from Sassafrack Neck and it is not known who he was owned by. John Chambers came from an undisclosed location in Maryland and it was also unknown of who his owner was. WM. Ryebold came from Cecil Co., Maryland and his owner is unknown. All men left their slave owners on Christmas day and were sent to Syracuse by Sidney Gay who paid $17.40 for all men to go.
ALBERT HENNISON

Albert Hennison arrived in New York City on March 17, 1856. He came from Richmond, Virginia and was owned by Patsy Allen and was hired to Lewis Hyman. Prior to his arrival he worked as a packer in a crockery store. He had tried to escape for 18 years and was married to a free woman. He received permission from master to visit his sister for 3-4 days who was ill and sent for him which made him free of suspicion and helped him escape. Once his master realized what he was up to he tried to pursue him immediately. His wife and child were already in New York City and waited for his arrival.
TAZWELL ROBINSON

Tazwell Robinson arrived in New York City on March 20, 1856. He came from Richmond, Virginia, and belonged to Thomas Jones, who was a grocer. He walked to City Point on March 13, 1856, where he concealed himself on board a steamer headed for Jamestown. Along his journey, he had nothing more than a small piece of bread to eat for almost three days. Sidney Gay sent him to Syracuse and paid $4.37 for his passage.
NATH’L WEST

Nath’l West arrived in New York City on March 27, 1856. He came from Washington, D.C. and belonged to N.D. Bowie. Upon escaping from his master he became a servant at Barnum’s Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. His friends told him of how to escape and he bought a ticket at a depot to come to New York City. He was sent to Albany for $11.
REBECCA JONES

Rebecca Jones arrived in New York City on April 2, 1856. She came from Norfolk, Virginia and belonged to Mrs. Davison. She was the sister of Isaiah Robinson who passed through on March 25, 1856. Her mistress died while abroad while she was making preparations to free her slaves. She had siblings who were recently sold and she thought she would be sold next which was her motivation to come here. She passed through Wilmington before arriving in New York City. She was sent to Boston and the price of her passage was $7.50.
CAROLINE TAYLOR

Caroline Taylor arrived in New York City on April 2, 1856. She came from Norfolk, Virginia and was owned by Peter March. Her husband was a free man who is now at sea. Many of her master's relatives died of yellow fever so he wanted to sell his slaves. She had a sister in New Bedford so that is where she was sent. The price of her passage was $10.50.
HENRY MATTHEWS

Henry Matthews arrived in New York City on April 4, 1856. He came from Prince Georges Co. Maryland, near Bladensburg, and his master was Ethan A. Jones. On his way to New York City he would travel at night and hide during the day. He paid $10 for a guide to take him the right way. He didn’t have enough to eat when he was working as a slave, and a reward of $300 has been offered for him by his owner for his return. He was sent to Syracuse and the price of his passage was $4.50.
**OTHO TAYLOR**

Otto Taylor arrived in New York City on April 7, 1856. He belonged to Henry Fyrey and was from Clear Springs Maryland. He was originally traveling with his wife and kids but their carriage broke down. His wife and one child left on a horse, and the others went with his brother. He passed through Philadelphia on his way through and while he was there his owners were also there looking for them. He was sent to Syracuse and the price of his passage was $8.50.
CHS. HALL

Chs. Hall arrived in New York City on April 9, 1856. He belonged to Atwood Blunt of Baltimore Co., Maryland. Prior to escaping he was whipped and handcuffed for something he didn’t do. His master locked him in an upstairs room to be sold the next day. He was able to escape and he walked to Baltimore with handcuffs still on. He went to a friend’s house who was able to conceal him for three days prior to his arrival. He was sent to Syracuse and the price of his passage was $8.50.
JOHN AND MARY WILLIAMS

John and Mary Williams arrived in New York City on April 30, 1856. They came from Haven Manor Maryland and their master's name was John Peach. They attempted to run away previously but were caught and brought back. Upon return, they were severely whipped. They left again on April 10, 1856 and reached Wilmington by morning where they were received by Thos. Garrett who sent them to Sidney Gay. He sent them to Syracuse and paid $8.50 for their passage.