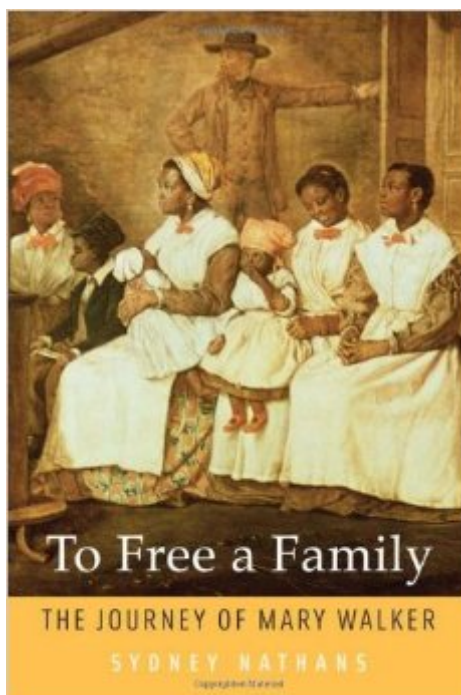


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# To Free A Family: The Journey Of Mary Walker



## Synopsis

What was it like for a mother to flee slavery, leaving her children behind? *To Free a Family* tells the remarkable story of Mary Walker, who in August 1848 fled her owner for refuge in the North and spent the next seventeen years trying to recover her family. Her freedom, like that of thousands who escaped from bondage, came at a great price—remorse at parting without a word, fear for her family’s fate. This story is anchored in two extraordinary collections of letters and diaries, that of her former North Carolina slaveholders and that of the northern family—Susan and Peter Lesley—who protected and employed her. Sydney Nathans’ sensitive and penetrating narrative reveals Mary Walker’s remarkable persistence as well as the sustained collaboration of black and white abolitionists who assisted her. Mary Walker and the Lesleys ventured half a dozen attempts at liberation, from ransom to ruse to rescue, until the end of the Civil War reunited Mary Walker with her son and daughter. Unlike her more famous counterparts—Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs, and Sojourner Truth—who wrote their own narratives and whose public defiance made them heroines, Mary Walker’s efforts were protracted, wrenching, and private. Her odyssey was more representative of women refugees from bondage who labored secretly and behind the scenes to reclaim their families from the South. In recreating Mary Walker’s journey, *To Free a Family* gives voice to their hidden epic of emancipation and to an untold story of the Civil War era.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 360 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press; First Edition edition (February 13, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674062124

ISBN-13: 978-0674062122

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 5.6 x 1.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #634,174 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #110 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Women](#) #443 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Abolition](#) #708 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War](#)

## Customer Reviews

*To Free a Family* is the best of the historical facts books and storytelling. Sydney Nathans tells the

story of Mary Walker's journey from slave in North Carolina to free woman in Pennsylvania and Boston/Cambridge. The book made me laugh and made me cry. Though from the south, I learned things about slavery and about events leading to the Civil War that I'd never heard before. It's hard for us to imagine the life that Mary led as a slave and it's hard to imagine the anguish of her escape to the north, having had to leave her children and her mother behind. Using quotes from letters and journals, Mr. Nathans leads the reader through the life of Mary Walker and her family, her North Carolina "owners" and her northern friends and supporters. I couldn't put the book down and recommend it completely!

To Free a Family is one of the most compelling stories I have read. Strong research! Reads like a detective story. Syd Nathans is to be congratulated for the strength of his writing.

I am really really impressed with the amount of research Mr Nathans put in to writing this incredible story. He has taken a sad story and woven it into a saga of heroism and persistence. Does Sidney Nathans have anymore books available?

The book was sad but it was informative about the plight of blacks trying to become free by moving North. I like reading about our country's history.

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