

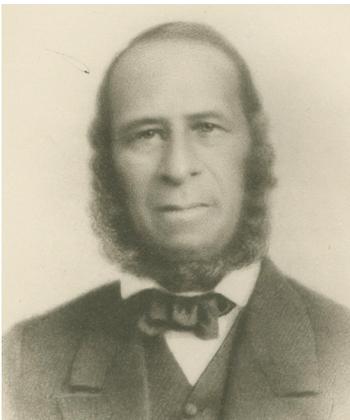
Lesson 16, Worksheet 1

From England to Brooklyn - The Story of Ann Maria Weems

Ann Maria Weems was enslaved in Rockville, Maryland. She was the daughter of a free father and an enslaved mother. Her parents were in constant communication with abolitionists as they tried to emancipate each family member. Abolitionists established a Weems Ransom Fund financed by two British Quaker abolitionists Henry and Anna Richardson who were based in Newcastle, England. The Richardsons were good friends with Lewis Tappan, a Brooklynite, and they gave him and black abolitionist Charles B. Ray, who lived in Manhattan, control of the financial account. The fund allowed her sister Stella to escape.



Ann Maria Weems, Courtesy of the Brooklyn Historical Society



Charles B. Ray, Courtesy of the New York Public Library

In 1855, when the Richardsons realized that Ann Maria was still enslaved after two failed escape attempts, they wrote a letter to Charles Ray. Ray visited Lewis Tappan's Brooklyn Heights home where he admitted to using the money to pay for the upkeep of his home and intended to return the funds. Ray soon returned the money with interest and Ann Maria traveled from Washington D.C. , to Philadelphia and onwards to Brooklyn, disguised as a young boy named Joe Wright.

The 14-year-old spent two days at Lewis Tappan's home. His wife Sarah used \$63 from the Weems Ransom Fund to buy Ann Maria new clothes as she still wore the boys clothing she had escaped in.

On November 30, Ann Maria left for Canada. Ray had originally intended to chaperone her. Because he was unable to leave the city immediately, Amos Freeman, Tappan's colleague and pastor of Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, replaced him. Freeman and the young girl traveled by train to the Canadian border and then another 216 miles to Dresden, Ontario, where Ann Maria's aunt lived.