

Harriet Tubman, the original Cinderella
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Harriet Tubman was born in 1820 or 1821 and named Araminta Ross; and, nicknamed Minty. As a child of only five years old, Harriet was “hired out” to a nearby plantation as a weaver and was also sent out to check on muskrat traps in the icy rivers. Along with being weakened from regular beatings, Harriet became so sick from the cold waters and malnourishment that she was soon sent back home. Once recovered, Harriet was hired out again to another plantation as a house servant.

At the Big House, stuck inside and under the constant eye of the owners, Harriet became nervous often breaking things or making messes for which she was severely beaten. The only thing she liked here was the baby she took care of. However, when the baby became irritable Harriet was punished and whipped because the mistress would not tolerate the “noise” the baby made.

Harriet was extremely lonely for her parents and her ten brothers and sisters. She would have much preferred to be in the one room shack she shared with them to the big house she was living in now. Even though the house was grand, she did not have a bedroom or even a mattress to sleep on. Harriet slept downstairs on the cold kitchen floor by the fireplace without a blanket or anything to give her warmth. To try and stay warm, Harriet slept as close to the fireplace as possible without catching on fire herself. She would even put her feet in the cinders to try and warm them. She sorely missed the closeness and warmth of her family as they all snuggled into one warm lump at night!

Harriet was eventually sent back “home” in disgrace because she was caught stealing (eating) a sugar cube. Once she recovered from the mistreatment of her second placement, Harriet was sent to work in the fields of her home-plantation. She had hated being cooped up inside anyway, and besides the fresh air, one of the things Harriet enjoyed most about being a field hand was the camaraderie of working together with “her people”. Harriet loved the gospel songs they sang as they worked, which eventually became one of the ways she communicated about the escapes she would plan. The words of these songs, like “going to the promised land,” meant finding freedom for Harriet and her people.