

Harriet Tubman Series: Part One, An Overview

By Vicki S. Davey, M.Ed.

Harriet Tubman was among America's first heroes. Over ten years making 19 trips, Harriet saw more than 300 slaves safely north. She communicated with the "conductors" of the Underground Railroad via quilts with secret maps and codes sewn right into the designs. Messages were also passed through the words of songs as slaves worked in the fields.

As a young woman on errands in town, Harriet fearlessly protected a young black man accused of stealing. The store owner hurled an iron weight at the young man and Harriet stepped in the way of the iron missile to protect him. She was hit in the forehead and knocked out cold. Besides carrying an identifying scar on her forehead which she disguised by wearing a turban type head covering, Harriet was plagued with blackouts. These blackouts came upon her without warning and could last for minutes, hours, or days, making her rescues all the more dangerous.

Harriet and her comrades would travel under the protection of night often covering their scent by traveling distances in the rivers, and sleep during the day. To sleep they would dig holes in the ground and cover themselves with earth, leaves, and anything else that would throw the hounds off their scent while they tried to rest. As careful as Harriet and her "passengers" were, one threat always threatened their safe escape – that of her unpredictable blackouts.

Tubman was named General Moses by the army because she guided rescue barges safely through river mines during the Civil War; and because, like Moses of the Bible, she led her people out of slavery to freedom. Harriet Tubman was among the first of many to become heroes in American history, but she has definitely not been the last.

Bibliography:

<http://www.duboislc.net/read/Tubman%27sCivilWarCampaign.html>

Bound For The Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait Of An American Hero by Kate Clifford Larson (pgs 212-214)