

William and Ellen Craft

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



3-7-2012 Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom By: William Craft and Ellen Craft Beginning in the principal slave state of Georgia, "Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom" details the adventure and eventual escape from slavery of William Kraft and his wife Ellen craft. In December of 1848, both received written passes from their owners allowing them a few days away together. They would make the most of it and never return to bondage. Ellen craft was the daughter of her first master and as such was almost white.

So much so that after being frequently mistaken as a child of the house she was given to a daughter, her half-sister, as a wedding present when she was 11 years old. Though both William and Ellen's Masters were moderately humane; neither could stand the thought of marriage or children while being slaves. Ellen in particular, after being separated from her own mother at such a tender age, could not stomach the thought of her own child being taken away from her in a similar manner. But as they saw no escape from their positions, they eventually were married.

William Kraft focuses on the adventure of their escape and how the mindset of American slaveholders seemed to continually oppress his race while giving written appreciation to those who helped in securing their freedom along the way. William, himself, was a cabinet maker who watched as his entire family was sold one by one for money or to pay his master's debt. Through this great anguish or more so because of it, he devised a plan to disguise his nearly white wife as an invalid white gentleman and he as a servant slave to him.

Leading up to their few days pass, William purchased Ellen's disguise a piece at a time from different parts of the city. At the appointed time, she put on

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trousers, a gentleman's jacket, and a top hat. Some bandages about her face, spectacles, and sling on her writing hand completed the outfit and their journey began. First they boarded a train to Savannah, Georgia, and then took an omnibus to the steamer bound for Charleston, South Carolina. They traveled through Richmond to Baltimore, with not one person seeing through Ellen's disguise though they were questioned several times and both were scared and sleep deprived.

Their biggest test came in Baltimore while securing tickets to Philadelphia as this was the last port before they would arrive in a free state. William was questioned by an officer who saw him on the train and both he and Ellen had to satisfy the man that Ellen, playing the part of a Mr. Johnson, had the right to take his slave to Philadelphia with him for the purpose of seeking medical advice for Mr. Johnson's supposed rheumatism. Through sheer will and determination they were able to continue this facade and allowed to board the train, where they arrived in the free state of Pennsylvania on Christmas day.

With the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Bill their safety was no longer guaranteed and they left America after two years in Boston. They sailed to England, where they would live in exile for the next 19 years and have numerous children. They would be abolitionists, teachers, authors, and speakers for the rest of their lives. The author gives thanks to the abolitionists and the anti-slavery movement leaders by including their names and the specific event and manner in which their aid was given.

He directly expresses how he and his wife could not have completed this journey without it. He is very descriptive yet conveys their story not from the

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perspective of a violated victim of slavery- but from an enlightened position of knowledge having overcome the trappings of bondage. It is of particular note the irony and shame of a country founded on the principles of freedom, having fought and died for that cause of escape from England, forcing these honorable human beings to that same country in order to preserve their own freedom.