

Resource Sheet #1

Leonard Black (b. circa 1814 - d.)

MSA SC 5496-8776

Fled from Slavery, Anne Arundel County, Maryland, circa 1837

Biography:

Leonard Black was born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland around the year 1814. At the age of six, Black's family ties were further severed when his master decided to hire him out to a Mr. Bradford, who lived nearby. At Mr. Bradford's estate, Black was treated harshly by Mrs. Bradford and longed for his family. Later, Black was transferred to Mr. Bradford's father's household.

When the elder Bradford died, Black became the property of his daughter, Elizabeth. It was under his new master, Elizabeth, that Black realized the inherent hypocrisy of piety and slavery. Elizabeth's husband, a proclaimed Methodist, treated Black with the same ferocity as his prior two masters. On one occasion, when Black and another slave girl were caught stealing a melon to satisfy their immense hunger, Elizabeth's husband beat the both of them until a puddle of blood formed at their feet.

After thirteen years living without his family, Black was transferred back to his original master and was reunited with his brothers. The reunion, however, was short lived. Within six months of his return, three of his brothers ran away, leaving Black and his younger brother behind, as they were considered too young to endure the journey. In the ten years following his brothers' flight, Black planned his escape, taught himself how to read, and became a believing Christian. One year after his conversion, around 1837, Black decided to runaway.

Like his brothers before him, Black left his younger brother behind. The day before his escape, Black met with a Quaker man who supplied him with seventy-five cents and told him a route to Boston. But Black's escape was made difficult when he arrived at the meeting spot to wait for Henry, a slave who planned to runaway with Black, and saw his master and a search party coming to look for him. Believing Henry had betrayed him, Black fled the scene and hid in a tree until the search hounds lost his scent. He then continued on the road to freedom. He eventually made it across the Maryland-Pennsylvania border, through New Jersey and New York, passed through Boston, his original destination, and settled in Canada.

<http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/008700/008776/html/008776bio.html>