

1852

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, into a family of notable ministers, educators, and abolitionists, Harriet Beecher Stowe grew up in a household where learning and notions of social justice were strongly emphasized. Stowe graduated from the Hartford Female Seminary, where she received a classical education, a rarity for women at that time. In 1832 her family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, when Stowe was 21. There she met formerly enslaved men and women who had come from the South and shared stories of the horrors of slavery. Moved by these accounts, in 1851 she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a fictional depiction of the grueling life, slaves endured on southern plantations. Selling 10,000 copies in its first week and then over 300,000 copies in the first year, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made Harriet Beecher Stowe a household name in the North while she was vilified throughout the South. She and her book are credited with unifying disparate groups of abolitionists across the country and galvanizing them into collective action. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also stimulated a rising tide of antislavery sentiment in the North which intensified the rift between the nation's two halves. When she met Abraham Lincoln at the White House in 1862, Lincoln was reported to have to have said, "So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war." Following the end of slavery, Stowe devoted her energies toward securing equal legal rights for married women. An exceptional American who perhaps changed more minds about slavery than anyone else did, Harriet Beecher Stowe died in Hartford, Connecticut at 85.



Photos from the
Library of Congress

(Text from the U.S. Dept of the Interior , "No claim to original U.S. Government works.")