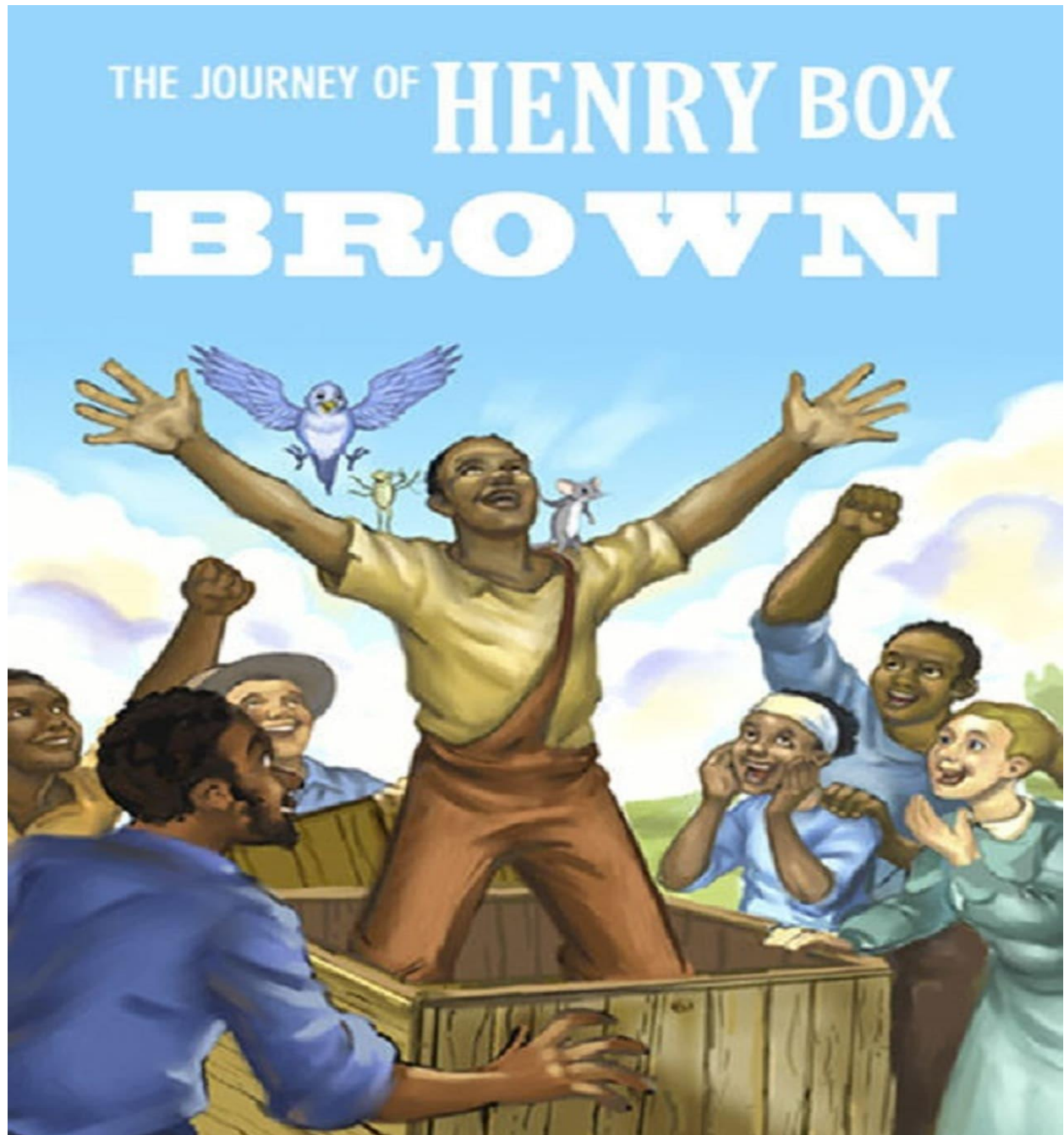
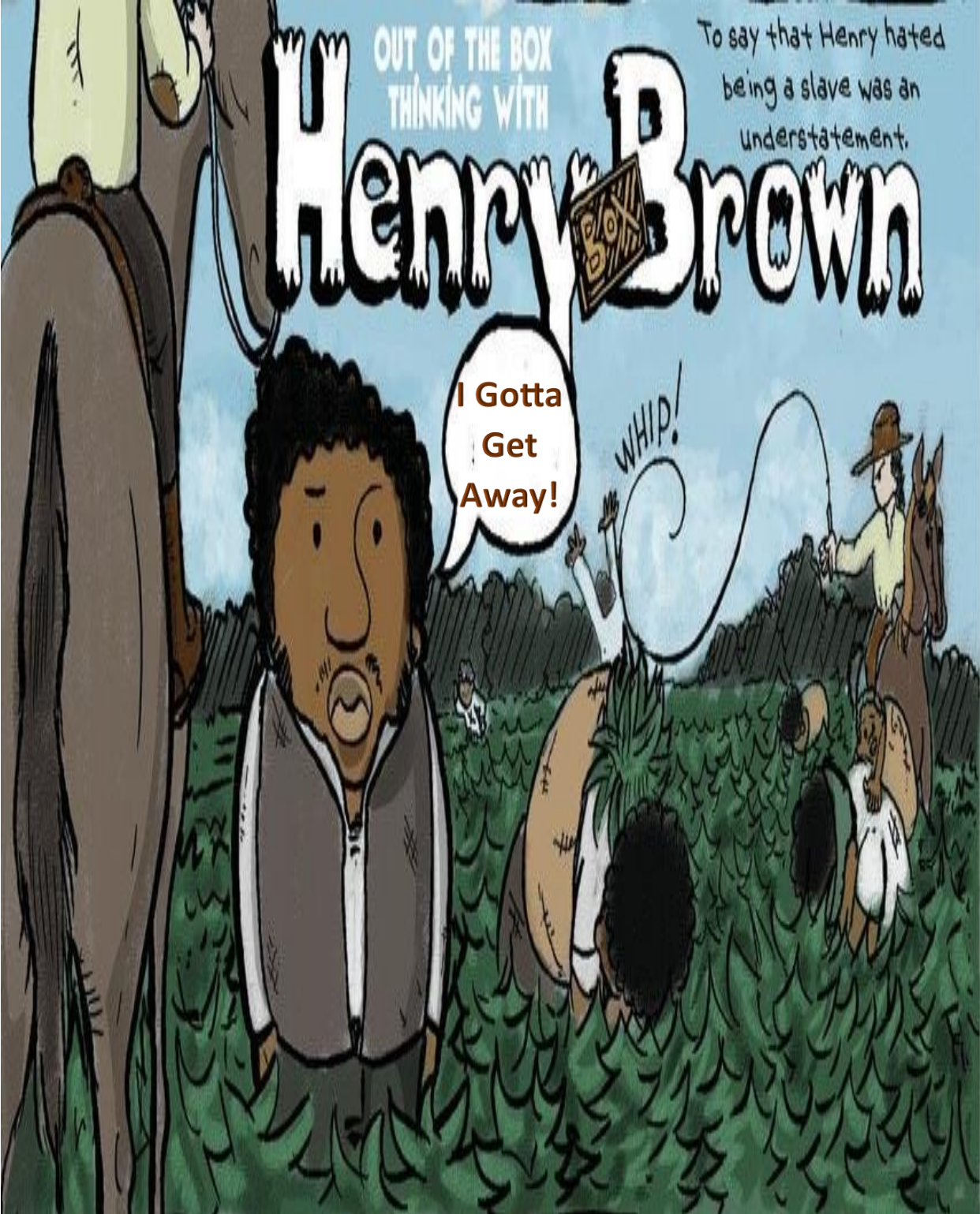


HENRY BOX BROWN & HIS SONG OF PRAISE

By David Lee Burris





OUT OF THE BOX
THINKING WITH

Henry Brown

To say that Henry hated
being a slave was an
understatement.

I Gotta
Get
Away!

WHIP!

Henry "Box" Brown

The box Henry was sealed into traveled by a variety of wagons, railroads, steamships, and ferries before being delivered to the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society. In 1848, as a way to earn a living, Brown had artists build a moving panorama about slavery which he used in a show called "Mirror of Slavery" where he would demonstrate how he contorted himself into the box. When the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850, he fled to England. In 1875, Brown returned to the United States and again performed as a magician using the original box.



Henry Brown 1815 - 1897

Henry Brown was born a slave in Virginia in 1815. Henry worked in a tobacco factory and was separated from his wife, who was a slave, on a neighboring plantation.

In 1848, his wife and children were sold to a plantation in

North Carolina. Brown resolved to escape slavery, and with the help of a fellow church member, had himself shipped in a box from Richmond, Virginia to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The box was 3' long, 2' wide, 2'8" tall, and had a small hole for air. The box was strapped and nailed shut and labeled "dry goods, this side up."



Henry Brown
Mirror of Slavery Panorama

When Born He Had Been Placed In a Box



HE SERIOUSLY PRAYED!

HENRY “BOX” BROWN: A SLAVE SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

Slave Henry Brown mails himself to freedom. The baggage handlers ignored the “This Side Up With Care” label and rudely shoved the wooden box onto the steamship deck with those words exactly on the bottom. They would certainly have been surprised to learn that inside the crate was a man—Henry Brown, a Richmond slave who was at that time mailing himself to freedom.

Brown was fully prepared to “conquer or die” on his mission, and at that point the latter looked more likely. Positioned upside down, he felt his eyes and the veins in his face begin “swelling as if they would burst.” He endured for an hour and a half until two men flipped the box on its side to sit on it. The swelling subsided; his head cleared. Henry Brown, it seemed, just might conquer his bondage, after all.

Born in Louisa County, Va., in 1815, Brown’s natural intelligence was quickly noticed by his master, who allowed him to go on errands as he grew older. On those trips off the plantation, Brown devoured any knowledge of the world at large he could gain.

When Brown was 15, his “uncommonly kind” master died, and he was sent to work in Richmond’s tobacco industry. While there, he was witness to retaliations against blacks brought on by Nat Turner’s failed 1831 slave revolt, and saw bondsmen whipped, hanged and beaten in the streets. He also endured the vagaries of a series of overseers & experienced firsthand that there was “no law by which the master may be punished for his cruelty.”

He married a woman named Nancy and then had to experience one of the most heartbreaking aspects of slave existence when she and their three children were sold away to North Carolina in 1848. Henry Brown watched his wife, children and other slaves pass by on their way out of town. As the miserable gaggle walked on, he resolved to escape their fate, and it was not long before he came upon the idea of “shutting myself up in a box, and getting myself conveyed as dry goods to a free state.”



HE SERIOUSLY PRAYED!

The Saga Continues. . .

Brown enlisted the aid of James C.A. Smith, a free black, and Samuel Smith, a white storekeeper who helped for a price. Brown paid him \$86 that he had managed to squirrel away in exchange for Smith arranging shipment to Philadelphia abolitionist James Miller McKim.

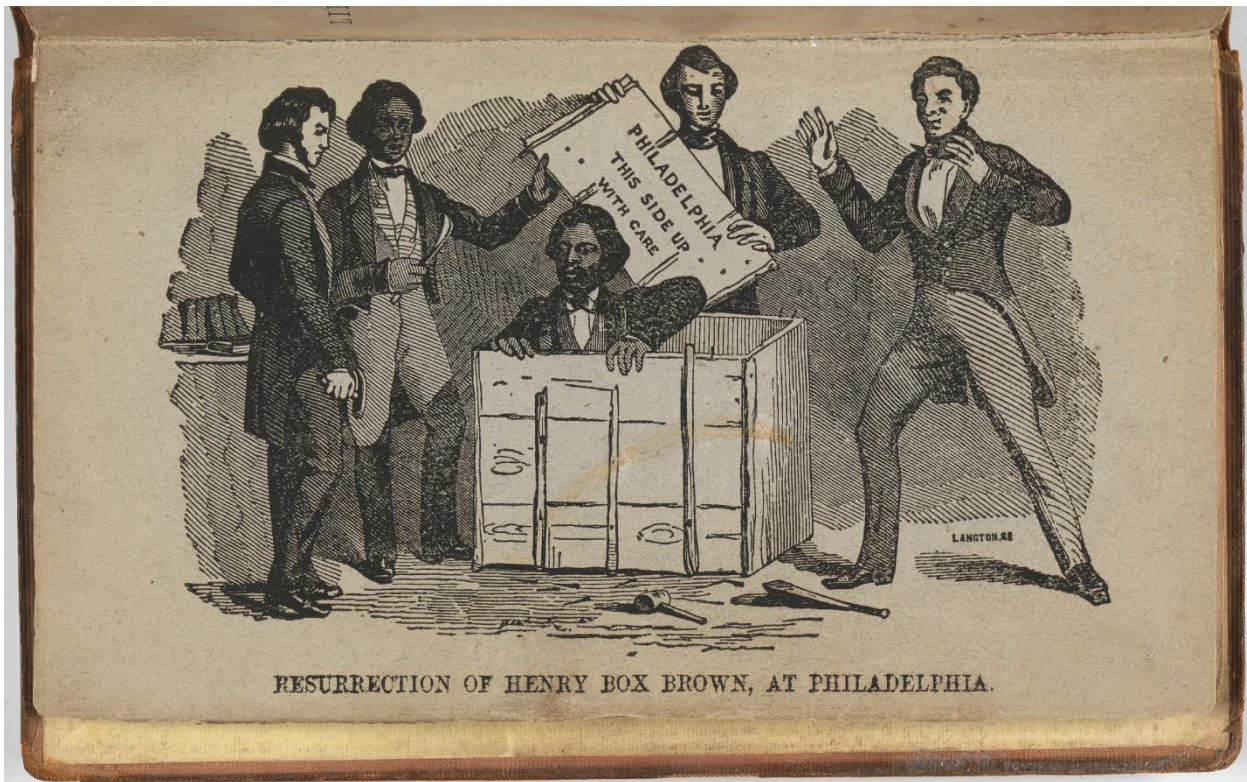
On March 29, 1849, Brown squeezed his 5-foot-8-inch, 200-pound frame into a wooden crate 3 feet long, 2 feet wide and 2.6 feet deep. With “three gimlet holes” opposite his face for air and fortified only with a bladder of water, he began his “battle of liberty,” as he called it, at Richmond’s express office.

He bumped and thumped for 27 hours as the box went from wagon, railroad baggage car, the deck of that miserable steamboat, wagon, another railroad car, ferry, railroad car yet again, and the final delivery wagon that took him to McKim’s home in Philadelphia.

McKim and a group of abolitionist friends were awaiting their special delivery, and gathered around the box. Brown kept quiet. Finally, he heard someone ask, “Is all right within?” He replied, “All right.” The box was broken open. Brown tried to stand and promptly passed out, but he had won his battle for liberty.

Henry “Box” Brown and his escape became a cause celebre in the North, but Southerners saw his escape as more Yankee meddling with their property & pushed even harder for passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which would force the federal government to help return escaped slaves. When that act passed in 1850, Brown had to flee to England.

Brown enjoyed his life in England. He published his autobiography and dramatized his escape onstage. He remarried and in 1875 returned to the United States. The man who mailed himself to freedom died in 1879. — HistoryNet



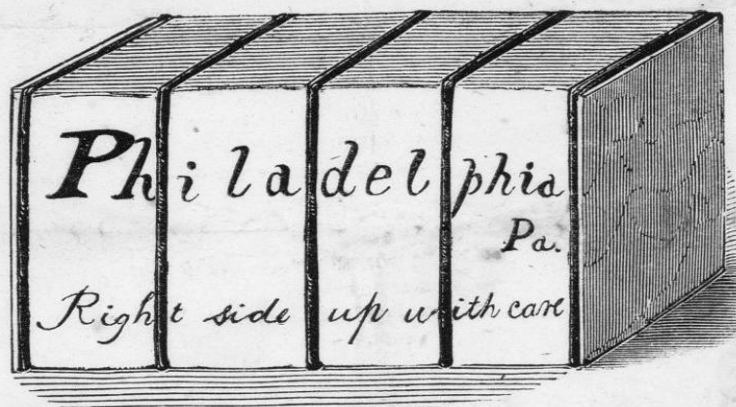
RESURRECTION OF HENRY BOX BROWN, AT PHILADELPHIA.



Henry "Box" Brown
Master Escape Artist
1814 - 1883

In one of the most ingenious instances of an escape from slavery, Henry "Box" Brown, a slave from Richmond, Virginia, had himself shipped to Philadelphia in a box made up for him by a black carpenter. Once free, he used the box as a platform to speak out against slavery.

SONG OF PRAISE FOR SAFE DELIVERY:



Engraving of the Box in which HENRY BOX BROWN escaped from slavery in Richmond, Va.

S O N G ,

Sung by Mr. Brown on being removed from the box.

I waited patiently for the Lord ;—
And he, in kindness to me, heard my calling—
And he hath put a new song into my mouth—
Even thanksgiving—even thanksgiving—
Unto our God !

Blessed—blessed is the man
That has set his hope, his hope in the Lord !
O Lord ! my God ! great, great is the wondrous work
Which thou hast done !

If I should declare them—and speak of them—
They would be more than I am able to express.
I have not kept back thy love, and kindness, and truth,
From the great congregation !

Withdraw not thou thy mercies from me,
Let thy love, and kindness, and thy truth, alway preserve me—
Let all those that seek thee be joyful and glad !
Be joyful and glad !

And let such as love thy salvation—
Say always—say always—
The Lord be praised !
The Lord be praised !

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