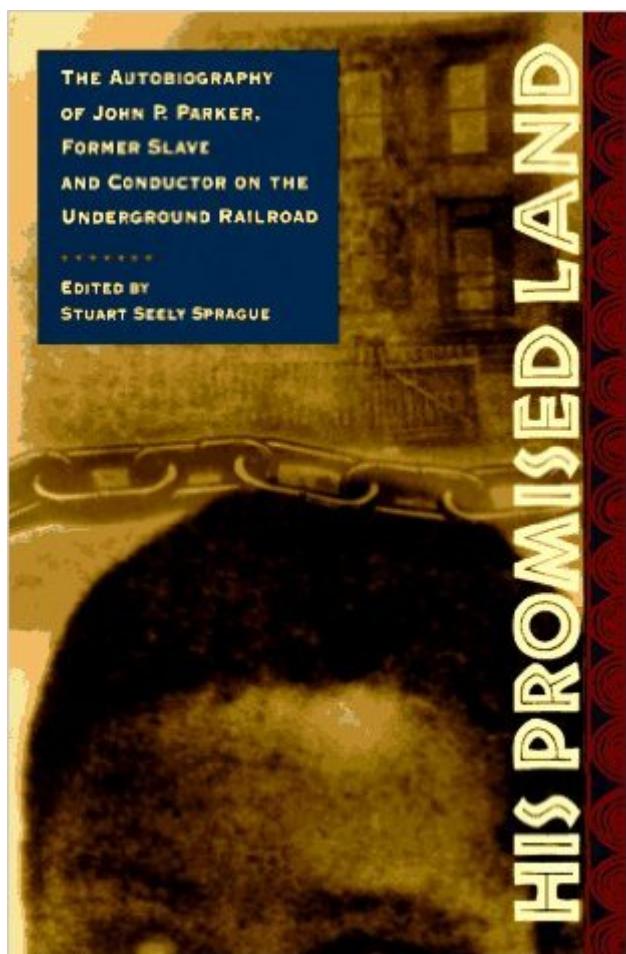


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His Promised Land: The Autobiography Of John P. Parker, Former Slave And Conductor On The Underground Railroad



Synopsis

This is an autobiographical account of how John Parker risked his life to escape from slavery, and then became a fervent abolitionist, working on a border railroad where hundreds of runaway slaves were helped to freedom. At the age of eight Parker was forced from his family and sold. He tried to escape but was found by his master, then sold again. With much difficulty he earned his way out of slavery, and moved to Ripley, Ohio, a "station" on the Underground Railroad, a conduit to freedom which spirited runaway slaves to a new life, usually across the Canadian border. This tale of Parker's adventures describes his personal battle against slavery, recorded in his own words.

Book Information

Hardcover: 165 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1st edition (November 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393039412

ISBN-13: 978-0393039412

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 5.6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,187,999 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #547 in Books > History > World > Slavery & Emancipation #770 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Abolition #2567 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black

Customer Reviews

John Parker's autobiography is an engrossing and often surprising account of the activities of the Underground Railroad. Parker was born and lived as a slave until buying his freedom and moving to Ripley, Ohio. There he joined forces with Rev. John Rankin in helping slaves cross the Ohio River and escape to Canada. His account is lucid, swift-moving, rambunctious, and highly literate. He describes the Ohio River Valley as "the Borderland," comparing it to the lawless, violent Scots/English border. The border, constantly raided by Abolitionists helping steal men, women, and children out of slavery and patrolled by slave-owning vigilantes intent on catching them, simmers in as treacherous a state of unrest and violence as any "Wild West" town at its worst. Parker never walks the streets of Ripley without a pistol, knife, and black jack in his belt. He never admits to working for the Underground Railroad, especially after passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850,

but pretty much everyone in the region knows that he does, putting his life in constant danger. Parker's account abounds in hair-breadth escapes, heart-rending failures, and startling heroics. He also reveals aspects of the Underground Railroad that one never suspects but which seem inevitable after he describes them, such as the competition that developed between John Rankin's Ripley, Ohio branch of the Railroad and Levi Coffin's Cincinnati group. Parker insists that Coffin was merely the better publicist, not the better rescuer of the two. It's also clear that for Parker rescuing slaves was not merely a fierce moral imperative but also an activity touched with excitement, zest--even, strange as this sounds, fun.

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