For Kentuckv:—

Port Tobacco Times, Oct, 25:—

SLAVES WANTED.

The subscriber is permanently located at Maniceville, Charles County (immediately on the road from Port Tobacco to Allen's Fresh), where he will be pleased to buy any slaves that are for sale. The extreme value will be given at all times, and liberal commissions paid for information leading to the conviction of persons who shall sell any slaves sold in this neighborhood. U. M. B. B., Gen. Agent.

Cambridge (Ml) Democrat, October 27, 1852:

NEGROES WANTED.

I wish to inform the slave-holders of Dorchester and the adjacent counties that I am at present in the market. Persons having negroes are free to dispose of them to the best advantage, and I will give the highest price in cash for both sexes, and at their residence in the aforesaid county and state. Address Anderson R. Anderson, at Rayville Post Office, White Oak Grove, Berkeley County, Va.

Winchester Republican, June 29, 1852:

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The subscriber having located himself in Winchester, Va., wishes to purchase a large number of Slaves, either of both sexes, and at any place, which he will give the highest price in cash. Persons wishing to dispose of Slaves will find it to their advantage to give him a call before selling.


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In 1928, as Joanna Harris Haines looked back upon her childhood, she recalled a "bright memory that does not fade" from the early 1850s. "I looked forward to each issue of the paper with an intense interest that surpassed any I have experienced since. I was so eager to get the paper from the carrier that I would go down the road to meet him as he brought the mail. If I was lucky in getting the longed-for chapter I would go off in the woods near the old home to read [it] before anyone could interrupt. If I was not forehanded, I was alert to get it when it was laid down and I would tie myself to the loft to read it undisturbed."

The young girl from Lee County was among thousands of Americans (some estimates say 50,000) who were reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* serialized in the antislavery newspaper National Era. Biographer Milton Rugoff notes that Stowe wrote "at white heat to meet a weekly deadline" for 41 installments in 1851 and 1852.

John P. Jewett published the novel as a book in March 1852. Within the next few months, 300,000 copies were sold. Jewett marketed it relentlessly. He hyped the novel in a white heat, encouraging commercialization of Stowe's characters through sheet music, statuettes, card games, and decorative plates and scarves. "The American reader of 1852 would have had to live with Stowe's characters through sheet music, statuettes, card games, and decorative plates and scarves. The American reader of 1852 would have had to live as a hermit not to be aware of Stowe's antislavery work," observes scholar Clare Parfait.


California gold miners passed around scarce copies, and even in the South the book was quietly circulated among curious readers. Stowe did not want to put Southern planters on the defensive, so rather than portraying the slaveholding South as evil, she created evil individual characters, such as Simon Legree. Still, the book enraged in Athens, Georgia. In Mobile, Alabama, a bookseller was run out of town. Rugoff notes that Stowe received "hate-filled and obscene letters from the South, including one from which, as [her husband] Calvin opened it, fell a blackish ear, obviously of a slave."

As soon as the book came out, dozens of theatrical companies dramatized the novel for audiences in Boston, New York, London—and Davenport, Iowa. In September 1856, an acting company performed the play in the Iowa river town. Years later a local chronicler commented that the melodrama was a great hit because it depicted "the cruelties and barbarous hideousness of slavery in a manner that struck the popular heartstring at a psychical time when the public mind was much agitated by the question of slavery. . . . Pathos and the sharp crack of the auctioneer's whip, and the shrill screams of the poor victim were the main requirements for a successful production."

Melodrama and sensationalism prevailed on stage. One dramatist added a panorama with a steamboat on the moonlit Mississippi. Minstrel songs and dark face were inserted. Scholar John Frick writes that even one of America's better popular playwrights tempered objectionable and crude aspects of Stowe's searing work, creating "a compromise between anti-slavery politics and established entertainment conventions."

"By the 1890s," according to Rugoff, "four hundred to five hundred troupes were performing the play." In 1920, the play was still touring in Davenport.

It was equally staple fare in small towns like Springdale, Iowa, the Quaker community that had sheltered John Brown and his men. "When I was in seventh grade, a wandering troupe of players came to town and gave a parade about recess time," Jeanette Mather Lord reminisced. "All I can remember was the beautiful, blonde lady in a red velvet riding costume and plume, who rode a white horse with gold trappings which waltzed when the band played. As a result, the school children were wild to go in the evening to see the play, given in a tent in the small pasture across the road from the Quaker meeting-house. Since the play was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, many sedate parents felt they could countenance it, as the Springdale Quaker boys had gone with John Brown on the way to Harper's Ferry. They either let their children go or took them themselves. . . ."

"The players, I suppose, were the cheapest sort, and the performance was probably awful. But we were blissfully satisfied with everything, and especially with Eliza and the bloodhounds."

Modern critics and readers generally dismiss the novel as sentimental; its characters, overdrawn. For decades, paternalistic whites fondly called elderly black men in their community "Uncle Tom," assuming a familiarity that did not always denote respect and equality. By the 1950s, African Americans viewed "Uncle Tom" as a symbol of "abject servility."

But in the 1850s, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* struck like lightning on the American scene. As Rugoff concludes, Harriet Beecher Stowe was "the first American realist of any consequence and the first to use fiction for a profound criticism of American society, especially its failure to live up to the promises of democracy."