

**BACKGROUND:** John Andrew Jackson was enslaved in South Carolina. As a young man, sometime in the late 1840s, he ran away from the plantation where he and his family were enslaved in rural South Carolina to Charleston. Once in Charleston, he worked on the docks with enslaved men hired out. Once he had enough money saved, he secreted himself on a ship heading to Boston. Once in Boston, he worked as a tanner and then in a lumber mill. Jackson asserted that in his quest for freedom was his desire to be “master of myself” because he was “trying to belong to myself.” After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Jackson left Massachusetts and relocated to St. John’s, Canada. He was helped during this journey from Salem, Massachusetts to Canada by Harriet Beecher Stowe who “took me in and fed me, and gave me some clothes and five dollars.” From Canada, Jackson traveled to England and Scotland where he worked as an abolitionist. He gave lectures to large audiences.

The below excerpt from John Andrew Jackson’s narrative published in 1862, recounts the efforts some enslaved men went to in order to protect their relationships.

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On one occasion there was a sale of slaves near, and a man came to the auction to purchase a slave girl.



He fixed on one who pleased him, and took her into a neighbouring barn and stripped her *stark naked*, for the purpose of examining her, as he would a horse, previous to buying her. The father and mother of the girl were looking through the window and keyhole and various crevices, with many other slaves, who saw all that passed. He ultimately purchased her for his own vile purposes, and when he had several children by her, sold both her and her children. Marriage in the slave States among the slaves is absolutely “Nil.” There was on one plantation, a slave about thirty years of age and six feet high, named Adam. He had a wife on neighbouring plantation belonging to Mr. Hancock. My master bought a young slave girl about fourteen years old, named Jenny Wilson, and he then ordered Adam to leave his present wife and take Jenny. Adam, after having some hundreds of

lashes for obstinately persisting in loving his wife, at last consented, but not so Jenny, who was in love with me and I with her. But she was at last compelled to obey her master by the bloody cowhide. My master served nearly all his male slaves in the similar manner. One of his slaves, however, named Abraham, was unusually obstinate, and would not give up his wife. At last my master, in despair, sent him to his son-in-law’s plantation, Gamble M’Farden, who was an inveterate drunkard, and who murdered my sister Bella, as related elsewhere. He ordered Abraham not to go up to see his wife any more; but Abraham loved his wife too much to be parted from her in that manner, so he went fifteen long miles once

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every fortnight, on the Saturday night, for the pleasure of seeing his wife for a short time. He was found out, and whipped to death by that drunkard Mr. M’Farden. My brother Ephraim did not escape; he was compelled to leave his wife and marry the house girl.