



# **Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress**

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Cecelia was a fifteen-year-old slave when she accompanied her mistress, Frances "Fanny" Thruston Ballard, on a holiday trip to Niagara Falls. During their stay, Cecelia crossed the Niagara River and joined the free black population of Canada. Although documented relationships between freed or escaped slaves and their former owners are rare, the discovery of a cache of letters from the former slave owner to her escaped slave confirms this extraordinary link between two urban families over several decades.

*Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress* is a fascinating look at race relations in mid-nineteenth-century Louisville, Kentucky, focusing on the experiences of these two families during the seismic social upheaval wrought by the emancipation of four million African Americans. Far more than the story of two families, *Cecelia and Fanny* delves into the history of Civil War-era Louisville. Author Brad Asher details the cultural roles assigned to the two women and provides a unique view of slavery in an urban context, as opposed to the rural plantations more often examined by historians.

## Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress Details

Date : Published September 21st 2011 by University Press of Kentucky (first published January 1st 2011)

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Author : Brad Asher

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## **From Reader Review Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress for online ebook**

### **Lisa says**

Was disappointed in that the book is not so much about the friendship of the two women as it revolves more about this time period, people they married, the type of industry and a lot of dates and addresses of where everyone lived. There were only 5 letters found between the two ladies, so the idea of a "remarkable friendship" was just speculation. And it was always the slave writing asking for money from her past owner. The author did have a lot of facts about everything else though.

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### **Adrielle says**

A misleading title for a dry historical rundown of the time period. There is very little information actually regarding the women for whom the book is named, and nearly every word printed about them is qualified with a "perhaps," "it is possible," "we can only guess," "the facts are impossible to know for sure, but," or "maybe." The five still existing letters from Fanny to Cecelia mentioned by the author are not even printed in the book.

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### **Fran says**

Boring. It is about Fanny and her family and about slavery in general. A lot of assuming occurs about Cecelia. I really don't think he had enough information for a book. I had to skip parts just to finish it.

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### **Gayla says**

This is an account of life in Louisville, KY in the mid to late 1800's.

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### **Mariah Burton Nelson says**

NOT a friendship, so the subtitle is misleading, but a true story based on correspondence between these two female figures long after the 19-year-old escapes. The author, a historian, includes a lot of context to explain what each of the two women were probably experiencing, thinking, feeling, needing – and depicts the network of free black people living near the Canada border who helped enslaved people who were traveling with their masters. Apparently that was not unusual - for southern slave owners to bring enslaved servants with them when they traveled to free states – which led to some successful escapes across to Canada, and a variety of state laws regarding the rights of those enslaved people. New info to me.

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## **Susan says**

See my review at [Reading World](#).

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## **University of Chicago Magazine says**

Brad Asher, AM'91, PhD'96

Author

From our pages (Mar–Apr/12): "Fifteen-year-old slave Cecilia from Louisville, Kentucky, escaped to Canada in 1846. Separation from her enslaved mother and brother led her to begin a correspondence with Fanny, her former mistress, that lasted several decades. Brad Asher's book draws on letters from the former slave owner to the escaped slave, exploring race relations in mid-19th century Kentucky. Asher, an independent scholar, details the cultural roles assigned to the two women and offers a glimpse into urban slavery and the life in 19th-century America."

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