



Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811- 1894)

Read by:	John Greenman	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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“So, this is the little lady who started this great war.” The statement is ascribed to Abraham Lincoln on meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe, the woman who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the most popular novel of the 19th Century. There are moments in history when an artist gives voice to the deep-seated issues and powerful forces underlying the times. When Stowe's novel was published in 1852, the issue of slavery had been sleeping like a serpent coiled around the best intentions of the new republic. The North and the South stood at loggerheads and, despite efforts in Congress to reach compromise, slavery remained a trigger that impelled extreme reactions on both sides. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made the abstract concept very real for millions of readers. As readers delved into the lives of Uncle Tom, Eliza and Eva,

who were sold and moved from slave owner to slave owner, their well-being wholly dependent on the character of their master (personified by the cruel Simon Legree), the grave sin of slavery ceased to be an abstract concept. The characters, the crime, the suffering and the call to action became more than a story for millions. The novel sparked a cause fueled by emotions and sympathy then based in the readers' vicarious experience. In the minds of millions, slaves ceased to be property and became people, fully human, created and loved by God. They became a people to be freed, and slavery became an institution to be abhorred and banned. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might not have started the Civil War, but it certainly gave many a reason and the courage to fight. (Summary by Michael Hogan)

Harriet Beecher Stowe (June 14, 1811 – July 1, 1896) was an American writer and abolitionist best known as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She was born the seventh of eleven children to religious leader Lyman Beecher and his wife Roxane, also deeply religious. She received a classical education typically accorded only to males at the seminary school run by her sister Catherine. At age 21 she joined her widower father in Cincinnati, where he ran the Lane Theological Seminary. There she met and married Calvin Ellis Stowe, a widower and professor at the seminary and a vocal critic of slavery. She joined the Semi-Colon club, a literary salon, and with her husband supported the Underground Railroad. In 1850 she and her husband, now teaching at Bowdoin College, were living in Brunswick, Maine, when she had a vision to write the story of a dying slave. She submitted the first chapter entitled “The Man Who Was A Thing” to the National Era newspaper, which serialized the entire book between June 1851 and April 1852. It was published in book form and went on to sell an unprecedented 300,000 copies, galvanizing the issue of slavery in the public discourse. Her prominence led to her meeting President Lincoln at the White House in Washington in 1862 after the start of the Civil War. She settled in Hartford, where Mark Twain was a neighbor. She was a champion of rights for women, likening the status of a married woman to that of a slave, and helped found the Hartford Art School, which later became the University of Hartford. She suffered from dementia in her later years and exhibited bizarre behavior we know associate with Alzheimer's Disease. She is buried in the historic cemetery at Phillips Andover Academy.