



Dred and Harriett Scott: A Family's Struggle For Freedom

Gwenyth Swain

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The landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, in which the slave Dred Scott was denied freedom for himself and his family, raised the ire of abolitionists and set the scene for the impending conflict between the northern and southern states. While most people have heard of the Dred Scott Decision, few know anything about the case's namesake. In this meticulously researched and carefully crafted biography of Dred Scott, his wife, Harriet, and their daughters, Eliza and Lizzie, award-winning children's book author Gwenyth Swain brings to life a family's struggle to become free. Beginning with Dred's childhood on a Virginia plantation and later travel with his masters to Alabama, Missouri, Illinois, and the territory that would become Minnesota, this "family biography" vividly depicts slave life in the early and mid-nineteenth century. At Fort Snelling, near St. Paul, Dred met and married Harriet, and together they traveled with their master to Florida and then Missouri, finally settling in St. Louis, where the Scotts were hired out for wages. There they began marshalling evidence to be used in their freedom suit, first submitted in 1846. Their case moved through local and state courts, finally reaching the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857. But the Court's decision did not grant them the freedom they craved. Instead, it brought northern and southern states one step closer to the Civil War. How did one family's dream of freedom become a cause of the Civil War? And how did that family finally leave behind the bonds of slavery? In *Dred and Harriet Scott: A Family's Struggle for Freedom*, Swain looks at the Dred Scott Decision in a new and remarkably personal way. By following the story of the Scotts and their children, Swain crafts a unique biography of the people behind the famous court case. In the process, she makes the family's journey through the court system and the ultimate decision of the Supreme Court understandable for readers of all ages. She also explores the power of family ties and the challenges Dred and Harriet faced as they sought to see their children, the daughters of slaves, live free.

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