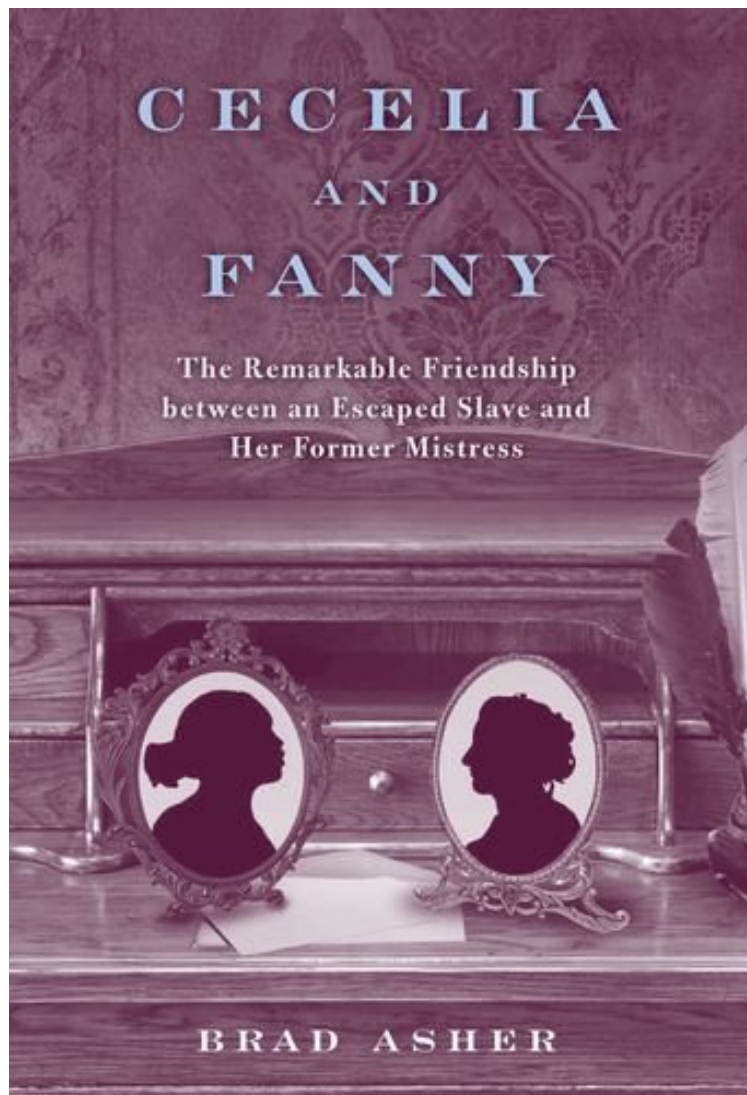


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## Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress

*Brad Asher*

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**Brad Asher : Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cecelia and Fanny: The Remarkable Friendship Between an Escaped Slave and Her Former Mistress:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. They don't get any better....By WallerishLiving in Louisville, KY and having known at least one well-respected local "historian," I'm always interested in the convoluted, sometimes

strangely recalcitrant history of our area, one whose identity has been shaped by a multiplicity of people and events and one that is misunderstood to this very day... especially by the local inhabitants themselves. When I first heard about this book, I was expecting a treatise, a kind of literary dissection, on the intimate communication between Cecelia and Fanny. It took only a few pages into the book to discover that not only was I quite wrong on that point, but that the "recalcitrant history" I just alluded to would be used as a kind of contextual backdrop for the enduring personal relationship of the two protagonists. I'm amazed at how Mr. Asher is able to weave such a small amount of information on Cecelia and Fanny into a detailed, big-picture drama that transcends the lives of the two ladies and at the same time provides the reader with a far greater understanding of the day-to-day and year-to-year impacts on their lives. I'm not sure if this book is more like "History Detectives" or "Gone with the Wind," but be assured it contains elements of both. I'm also not sure if this book has been nominated for any historical or literary awards, but in my humble view, if it hasn't, it should be. Histories don't get any better than this. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful history of slavery Civil War By Millie MI live in Louisville, so the details of this book are of particular interest, but the story and the historic events are certainly applicable to many areas of the country. The lives of two families, the white owners, a prominent Louisville family, and one of their female slaves and her daughter are followed from the 1840s until the end of the century. The author relates the process of slave owners "learning" how to carry out that role, and provides a heart-rending portrait of how slaves were handled, what just the fact of being property meant to them as individuals, and how it affected the slave families both before and after the war. The politics and events of the Civil War in Louisville and Kentucky are described in detail, as well as the life of escaped slaves in Northern US cities and in Canada. Because it is a history of real people the story is particularly emotional and touching, and the history of this time truly comes alive. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. a great read, though the friendship wasn't unusual By J. Painter This book does an excellent job of describing what life was like for real people who were slaves and slave owners in America before, and after, the Civil War. The stories of Fanny and Cecelia and their families are skillfully interwoven with all the background material needed to understand their stories. And I was pleased that Asher was careful to draw the lines between fact, speculation, and the unknowable. The subtitle is slightly annoying - the "friendship" sounded normal enough, not "remarkable". It's not a close friendship, they don't feel compelled to see each other. If you've ever known someone who worked as a housemaid for the same family for several years, this relationship will seem familiar.

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 is an excellent story, but it is also an outstanding case study on uncovering every possible source of information in order to discover the life stories of Fanny and Cecelia through the decades of the nineteenth century." "Kentucky Ancestors" Among the countless tragic tales of slavery Brad Asher documents one of freedom and hope. When Cecelia ran away from her mistress Fanny for freedom in Canada it didn't end their relationship. Bound together by the emotional and physical bonds formed in their youth they maintained a relationship for the next fifty years. Cecelia and Fanny tells the fascinating story of their lives and times." James J. Holmberg, The Filson Historical Society "The true story of an escaped slave and her former mistress who emerged from the Civil War to maintain a relationship despite their past. Using a cache of letters discovered in a Louisville archive, Asher documents their relationship and sheds new light on race relations in the years following the war." Appalachian News-Express "Reading between the lines and around the margins of this 'lacunae-laden story,' Asher delivers a credible account of how two fairly ordinary women lived their roles as slave and mistress." Publishers Weekly "While many books have been written about slavery, Asher shines a light on it as a 'web of personal connections that extended beyond a single generation' and shows different aspects of the master-slave relationship." Library Journal "For an understanding of the issues behind the war and of daily life at the time, we recommend Cecelia and Fanny, a new book by historian Brad Asher. Lest we forget, the Civil War truly was fought over slavery and Asher takes a fresh look at the subject." Hancock News "The true story begins when Cecelia, a 15-year-old slave girl, escapes to Canada in 1846. As years pass, she wonders about the family she left behind in Louisville. She writes to her former mistress, Fanny Ballard, and a correspondence ensues, some of which was kept by the Ballard Family. Asher fills out the story with meticulous research about what Cecelia's and Fanny's lives may have been like as well as the business and

political world around them." ?Morgan Messenger""The story of Cecelia and Fanny is fascinating. Asher gets credit for taking historical facts and using them to write a riveting book that gives us look at a surprising friendship that stands as a testament to both human compassion and the ability to overcome remarkable adversity."?Saturday Evening Post""This well-written, extensively researched book makes fascinating reading."?Historical Novels ""Brad Asher's account of the relationship of Ceclia with Fanny and her family is well-written and thoroughly researched. . . .Readers will learn much more about Kentucky society, the nuances of slavery in a border state, and race relations in the post-Civil War Era than they might expect from this small, but excellent book."?Bowling Green Daily News""This book makes history come alive. . . . it is a supreme example of genealogical and primary source research, and the piecing together of the material to form a narrative."?Kentucky Libraries""Beguiling and well-written story . . . Highly recommended for specific documentation of a difficult and little understood topic."?Louisville Courier-Journal""Draws on letters from the former slave owner to the escaped slave, exploring race relations in mid-19th-century America."?University of Chicago Magazine""Offers a fascinating window into the seismic social change from slavery to freedom in the United States."?Bakersfield Californian""Asher's well-written and poignant book opens a new chapter in slave narratives and takes readers through Kentucky's multifaceted history with slavery. Cecelia and Fanny presents a succinct examination of the aftermath of the ghoulish institution and what the abolishment of slavery meant for those suddenly thrust into freedom."?Kentucky Monthly""Asher makes the complicated and tragic history of American slavery personal and poignant."?Ohio Valley History""Cecelia and Fanny offers a revealing perspective on slavery, race relations, and society in Louisville, Kentucky, from the antebellum era to the post-Civil War years, with some compelling diversions." ? Ginette Aley, *The Journal of Southern History*""[. . .] [T]his work does a wonderful job of not only presenting portraits of these two women but also documenting many historical facts about the contexts in which they lived, such as information about thelives of free blacks in Canada, courtship practices of the time, family lives of slaves, and how the Civil War affected many states and cities. This book is recommended for any library with African American or Southern history collections, and it will be an informative and wonderful read for anyone interested in Southern history."?Georgia Library QuarterlyAbout the AuthorBrad Asher is the author of *Beyond the Reservation: Indians, Settlers, and the Law in Washington Territory, 1853–1889*. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky.