



# Liberty Brought Us Here

## The True Story of American Slaves Who Migrated to Liberia

Susan E. Lindsey

Between 1820 and 1913, approximately 16,000 black people left the United States to start new lives in Liberia, Africa, in what would become the largest out-migration in US history. When Tolbert Major, a Kentucky slave and single father, was offered his own chance for freedom, he accepted. He, several family members, and almost seventy other people boarded the *Luna* on July 5, 1836. After they arrived in Liberia, Tolbert penned a letter to his former owner, Ben Major: “Dear Sir, We have all landed on the shores of Africa and got into our houses. . . . None of us have been taken with the fever yet.”

Drawing on extensive research and fifteen years’ worth of surviving letters, author Susan E. Lindsey illuminates the trials and triumphs of building a new life in Liberia, where settlers were free, but struggled to acclimate in an unfamiliar land, coexist with indigenous groups, and overcome disease and other dangers. *Liberty Brought Us Here: The True Story of American Slaves Who Migrated to Liberia* explores the motives and attitudes of colonization supporters and those who lived in the colony, offering perspectives beyond the standard narrative that colonization was solely about racism or forced exile.

**Susan E. Lindsey** is coauthor and editor of *Speed Family Heritage Recipes*, a historical cookbook of recipes from the Speed family, who built Farmington Plantation in Louisville. Lindsey has also published several essays and short stories.

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3 charts  
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“Lindsey breathes life into a poignant, provocative, and largely forgotten tale. Beautifully written and meticulously researched, *Liberty Brought Us Here* is both a significant contribution to the historical record and a pleasure to read.”—Alan Huffman, author of *Mississippi in Africa: The Saga of the Slaves of Prospect Hill Plantation and Their Legacy in Liberia Today*

“Lindsey has ambitiously and carefully told the other side of Liberia’s story: the connection or disconnection of Americo-Liberians to America, their hope of finding a truly free and peaceful land, the contradictions of Liberia’s history as the unwanted ‘uncolonized colony,’ and Americo-Liberians’ struggle to be liberated while perpetuating the same slave culture that had kept them in bondage in America for centuries. This is an urgently necessary book that should be on the shelf in every library.”  
—Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, author of *Praise Song for My Children: New and Selected Poems*

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