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HARRIET JACOBS FAMILY PAPERS RELEASED IN DEFINITIVE TWO-VOLUME EDITION

(Chapel Hill, NC) This November the University of North Carolina Press will publish THE HARRIET JACOBS FAMILY PAPERS, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin, the literary scholar who has devoted much of her career to illuminating the remarkable life of the escaped slave and abolitionist Harriet Jacobs (1813–97).

The volumes have been called a "masterwork" by *Library Journal*.

Born a slave in Edenton, North Carolina, Jacobs escaped her lascivious master in her early twenties and hid in the cramped attic crawlspace of her grandmother's house for seven years. In 1842 she escaped and made her way north as a fugitive slave. In 1861, she published her autobiographical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Although millions of African American women were held in bondage over the 250 years that slavery was legal in the United States, Harriet Jacobs is the only one known to have left papers testifying to her life. Her counterparts, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, were illiterate. It took the pioneering work of Yellin to recover these papers and to rescue Jacobs from over 100 years of obscurity.

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2-2-2 Harriet Jacobs Family Papers

For over a century, Jacobs's *Incidents* was dismissed by scholars as a ghost written abolitionist tract. Yellin, who believed the account to be real, finally proved that Harriet Jacobs wrote *Incidents* and that it was in fact not a novel, but an autobiography written to support the abolitionist cause. Every scholar of slavery in the United States is indebted to Yellin, who has established Jacobs as an American icon equal in stature to Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman.

Jean Fagan Yellin is Distinguished Professor Emerita of English at Pace University. She is author or editor of ten books, including the award-winning *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*.

THE HARRIET JACOBS FAMILY PAPERS distills three decades of painstaking research, during which Yellin discovered more than 900 primary source documents, approximately 300 of which are collected in two volumes. According to Yellin, "What is perhaps surprising is that we found the items we have."

Accompanied by a searchable CD-ROM, the 300 documents in the PAPERS include transcribed speeches and letters, little-known writings of Jacobs's abolitionist brother and suffragist daughter, and accounts of all three by contemporaries who knew them.

For scholars the PAPERS are, according to Yellin, "the incentive for future work and a set of tools to do that work." For the many readers of *Incidents*, these letters and papers written by, for, and about Jacobs and her family provide a rich historical context, as well as a comprehensive picture of Jacobs's lifelong struggle against slavery, racism, and sexism that extends beyond the period covered in her autobiography.

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3-3-3 Harriet Jacobs Family Papers

"It is only because of the painstaking and meticulous scholarship of Jean Fagan Yellin that we have this extraordinary documentary record," said Kate Douglas Torrey, director of the University of North Carolina Press. "THE HARRIET JACOBS FAMILY PAPERS will provide generations of scholars and students with many crucial keys to unlocking the past, and specifically to understanding important chapters in the history of abolitionism and feminism; literary, political and social/cultural events; and the complex world of nineteenth-century America. Publication of THE HARRIET JACOBS FAMILY PAPERS is a major event for scholars in a wide range of fields."

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The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers

Two-volume boxed set

Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin

1056 pp., 37 illus., 5 maps, 26 tables, 1 family tree, append., notes, index, CD-ROM

ISBN: 978-0-8078-3131-1, \$100.00 cloth until 12/31/08; \$125.00 thereafter

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