



Freedom's Gardener: James F. Brown, Horticulture, and the Hudson Valley in Antebellum America

Myra B. Young Armstead

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In 1793 James F. Brown was born a slave, and in 1868 he died a free man. At age 34 he ran away from his native Maryland to pass the remainder of his life as a gardener to a wealthy family in the Hudson Valley. Two years after his escape and manumission, he began a diary which he kept until his death. In *Freedom's Gardener*, Myra B. Young Armstead uses the apparently small and domestic details of Brown's diaries to construct a bigger story about the transition from slavery to freedom.

In this first detailed historical study of Brown's diaries, Armstead utilizes Brown's life to illuminate the concept of freedom as it developed in the United States in the early national and antebellum years. That Brown, an African American and former slave, serves as such a case study underscores the potential of American citizenship during his lifetime.

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