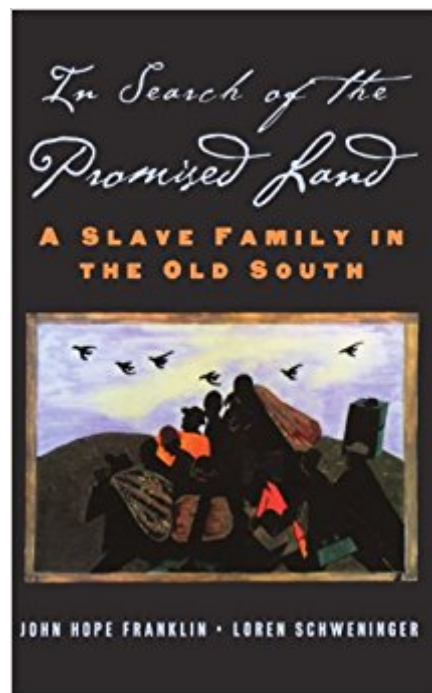




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# In Search Of The Promised Land: A Slave Family In The Old South (New Narratives In American History)



## Synopsis

The matriarch of a remarkable African American family, Sally Thomas went from being a slave on a tobacco plantation to a "virtually free" slave who ran her own business and purchased one of her sons out of bondage. *In Search of the Promised Land* offers a vivid portrait of the extended Thomas-Rapier family and of slave life before the Civil War. Based on personal letters and an autobiography by one of Thomas' sons, this remarkable piece of detective work follows the family as they walk the boundary between slave and free, traveling across the country in search of a "promised land" where African Americans would be treated with respect. Their record of these journeys provides a vibrant picture of antebellum America, ranging from New Orleans to St. Louis to the Overland Trail. The authors weave a compelling narrative that illuminates the larger themes of slavery and freedom while examining the family's experiences with the California Gold Rush, Civil War battles, and steamboat adventures. The documents show how the Thomas-Rapier kin bore witness to the full gamut of slavery--from brutal punishment, runaways, and the breakup of slave families to miscegenation, insurrection panics, and slave patrols. The book also exposes the hidden lives of "virtually free" slaves, who maintained close relationships with whites, maneuvered within the system, and gained a large measure of autonomy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Tracing the Thomas-Rapier family through three antebellum

generations— from about 1808 to 1865— distinguished historians Franklin and Schweninger present an absorbing, impeccably researched account of "blacks who [have] only received passing notice— the free and quasi-free persons of mixed racial ancestry." Through this uncommon but not unique family, Franklin and Schweninger compress vast strata of slavery studies into an awesomely compact monograph, treating the reader to enough material (and drama) for a door-stopper; if the book were not so gemlike in size (it's 4" x 6" x 1.5"), style and substance, one could call it a page-turner. From Tennessee, Thomas-Rapier's travel widely (sometimes as slaves), and there is a panoramic quality to their immersion in American historical events: one attends a Jenny Lind concert; one seeks gold in California; one escapes to Buffalo and later settles in Canada; one is involved with the filibusters in Nicaragua. They become entrepreneurs and adventurers, gamblers and teachers, churchmen and a congressman. They talk politics; they worry about their children. The brutalization endemic in slave culture is ever present. The authors bring it all to life with startling clarity, using documents, letters and diaries with such judiciousness that the scholarly apparatus enlivens rather than deadens. A genealogy that keeps the family connections clear, maps that trace their peregrinations and the fully informative captions that accompany the illustrations supplement this remarkable text. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"In Search of the Promised Land is a unique and exciting addition to the literature on slavery and nineteenth-century history. It shows the complexity of slave life and challenges existing historical interpretations without completely overturning the studies of the last thirty years. . . . I love the story itself--what a story!"--James Fuller, University of Indianapolis

"The book's focus on the Thomas-Rapier family provides for one of the more vivid presentations of antebellum race relations I have seen. So much of scholarship on slave life tends to lose sight of individuals who had to confront life in a slave society. This book brings individuals back into the picture."--Dickson D. Bruce, University of Irvine California

Never had read anything more interesting. Full of detail, not just general information.

Really nice history story. Book was in great condition and arrived on time.

\_Promised Land\_ does indeed cover an interesting family. The true tales of the Thomas clan,

descendents of a "semi-free" entrepreneuring slave in mid-nineteenth-century Nashville, have the potential to enlarge the boundaries of our imagination of American history. The telling is another matter: far less imaginative. Much of what one learns in *Promised Land* one could get more amusingly and emotionally wrenchingly from Edward Jones's *The Known World*. If one prefers history in non-fiction, though, *Promised Land* is a good bet.

This is a moving, enlightening history of one African-American family in the pre-War South. The strength, anguish, resourcefulness, and bravery of the enslaved are highlights of their story. And movement: there is movement across the South, North, and West as people seek freedom and destiny. We are fortunate that both whites and blacks kept records, journals, and letters -- and that the authors used them so well to tell this story. I like this book so much that I've given it as a gift.

I read the book because I was interested in learning more about the life of Judge John Catron. The Judge is my 3rd cousin 6 times removed. I thought the book was a good read, I found out that I have relatives of color out there somewhere, may have to look them up sometime. I bought another copy to donate to the archives in the Sumner County, TN.

i had to get this book for a college class and i'm really glad i had the opportunity to read it. i'm not much of a history buff but really enjoyed this. a lot of stories and unique perspectives on african americans and how they were treated pre-civil war.

### An Excellent History

This is exactly what the seller described and it came in just a few days

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