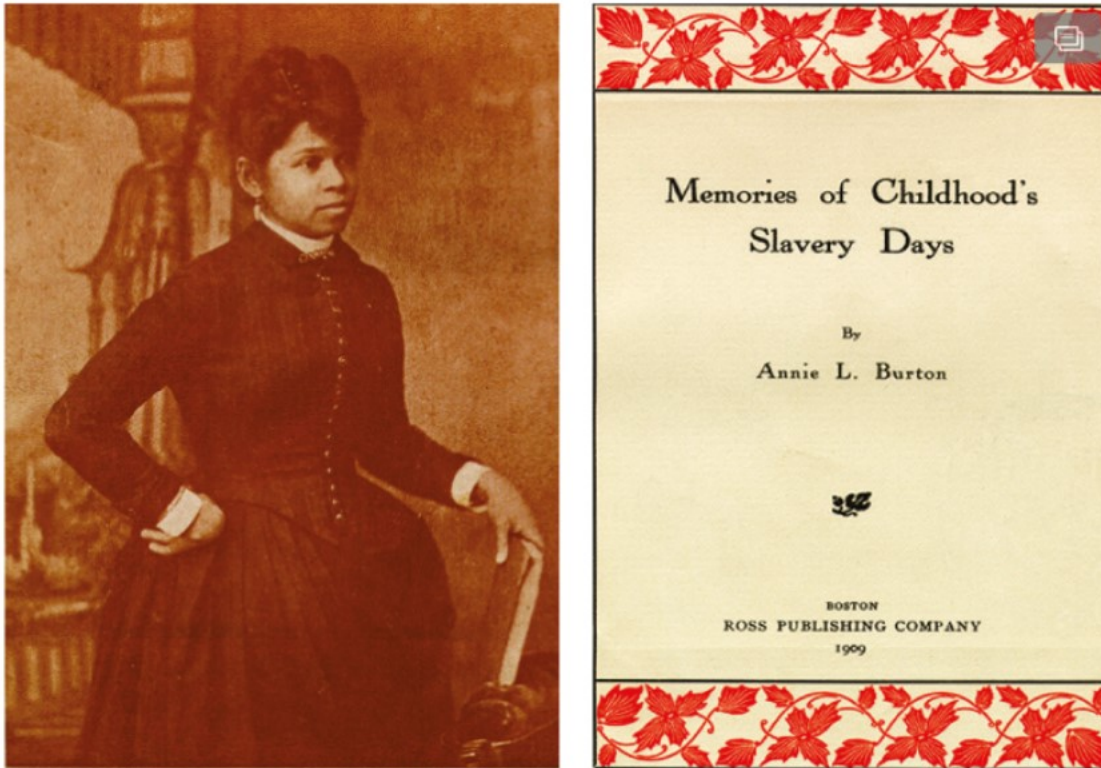


For God has commanded me to write this book, that someone may read and receive comfort and courage to do what God commands them to do. God bless every soul who shall read this true life story of one born in slavery.

Thus one purpose of the memoir was to give readers “comfort and courage to do what God commands them to do.” Another purpose might have been to help women readers understand what it was like to be a woman and a slave.

Since a purpose of slave narratives is to build empathy in readers, Burton probably intended to reach white people who had not suffered the indignities of slavery. Her audience might have also included literate former slaves, most likely in the North because her book was published in Boston. Her current audience might include students like you, scholars, and historians who want to read a firsthand account of slave life.



Credit: Images courtesy of Documenting the American South, Wilson Special Collections Library, The Memories of Childhood's Slavery Days University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.

### ► AUTHOR PHOTO & COVER

**Annie L. Burton**, author of *Memories of Childhood's Slavery Days* (1909).

Burton likely took into account various constraints and situational factors, including the attitudes of white readers toward African Americans. While she had the education and writing skills to sustain an ambitious writing and research project, she chose to tell her own story simply. As Burton considered her rhetorical situation — she wanted to communicate a message of resistance and faith — and pondered an effective social response, she must have noticed that a very popular genre of the day was memoir. Because memoirs were widely read, Burton could expect a good-sized audience for her piece, and she stood to make some profit from it. The memoir allowed Burton to tell her personal story the way she wanted to tell it, to make her point about resistance, and to set it in a historical context.