

# Jarena Lee

Born February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1783 in Cape May, New Jersey, to unenslaved African Americans, Jarena Lee was taken from her parents at the age of seven to live as a maid for the Sharp family. Lee attended various church meetings, in search of not only her own spirituality but also a denomination with which she could identify. One afternoon, at the Methodist Church, Lee discovered the “people with which her heart unites.” The man giving the sermon that afternoon was Reverend Richard Allen, who was once the Bishop of the African Episcopal Methodists in America. In 1819, Lee became the first African American woman to be authorized to preach. She spread her message by traveling thousands of miles on foot. She was said to have traveled over 2000 miles, preaching 178 sermons in one year. In 1833, she began turning her religious journals into an autobiography, and distributed it amongst her parishioners. In 1840, Lee joined the American Anti-slavery Society, using her voice to speak out against slavery. Although the date of her death is unknown, what is certain is that her life was rich with both religious and literary achievements.