

House 'Boy', 81, Drops Work to Honor Liberator

Love for Lincoln, Inspired in Boyhood of Slavery, Deepens With Passing of Years

In the rude plantation shack in which he was born into slavery 81 years ago, John McClure heard the name of Abraham Lincoln whispered with a deep reverence again and again as the old darkies huddled together after the day's work was done.

Talk of approaching war clouds, mumblings of "the day when Abe Lincoln would free the slaves" inspired in the little Negro a love for the man who was fighting their battles, a love he nourished and with which he grew to manhood.

Time Deepens Love

The 63 years which have passed since the "Great Emancipator" issued his historic proclamation have dulled many a man's memory and love. But to John McClure the passing years have brought a greater love for Lincoln, a profoundness of emotion he can express only by observing Lincoln's birthday, Feb. 12, as a holy day rather than a holiday.

Each year—and John is now 81 years old—he drops his work on Feb. 12, dons his full dress suit, and shlnay top hat, and spends the day in meditation and prayer for the man who cut away the shackles of slavery into which he was born.

He Saw Lincoln

Known to many Madison families, John is one of the last of the old time "house-boys" who came north after the Civil war. He was born in 1850 on a large plantation near Celount Sterling, Ky., the property of the Gibson family.

The affection in which he was held by his "young miss" is indicated by the fact that she was his teacher, and the deep feeling of gratitude he holds for her now after 50 years of freedom.

"Yes, ma'am, I saw Lincoln, our dear disciple," John will say if you ask about the war president. "It



JOHN MCCLURE

was in Hardin, Ky., and he was in camp there. It was surely a fine privilege."

Industrious Beyond Years

Industrious far beyond the strength of his 81 years, John has no specialty in his work. "I do almost any kind of house work," he replied to a question. "I was cook in the old Capital house for a while and at the Kelley restaurant and other places, too. Whatever my families wanted, I generally could do. Heavy rugs are getting a little beyond me now, but I can manage a good many tasks still."

"I take care of my own home at

635 East Dayton street and tend
to my lovely garden. The place was
'Benny Butts.' He was a friend of
mine, and once with Jim I heard
Governor Kohler speak and after-
ward met him.

Making It Pleasant

"Yes, ma'am, I've been back to
the old plantation. I went there
eight years ago. All of the grown-
up folks I knew had gone. But
some of the young ones were still
living. And all the little children
I met seemed glad to see me. I
had some of my money changed
to dimes and nickels so I could
make it pleasant for them. I surely
enjoyed seeing them happy."

But whatever little moments of
happiness or sorrow come to John
as the years slip away, he finds
a soothing comfort on Feb. 12
when memories of plantation days
jostle in his mind with prayers
of thanksgiving for Lincoln's work.

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Born in Slavery, 91 Year Old Racine Colored Woman Peers Into Past To Paint Picture of Misery in Pre-War Days and Joys of Freedom

By A. J. Schmidbauer

Hanging on the wall at 1326 Prospect street is a picture of Abe Lincoln.

Before it, in a rocking chair, sits an old colored woman. Occasionally she croons a melody of the old south. Her thoughts go back three quarters of a century.

She hears again the crack of the slave driver's whip. The scream of the darkies as they were beaten. The wailing of a family when one was sold "down the river".

Tells of Invasion

She hears again someone talk of the great white master who determined to set them free. The battle between the north and the south over the right to human bondage.

She sees again the cloud of dust from which there waves the stars and stripes as the Yanks come into the state of Tennessee bringing freedom, emancipation and the end to suffering.

She hears once more the "commands of her white owner as he orders them to get out—"you're free now. Get out and don't come back."

How the colored families faced a new world, a new state of existence, penniless, hungry and amazed—but happy.

For Sarah Anthony, now 91, was born and reared a slave.

On Aug. 1, 1838, she was born on a 500 acre plantation, 16 miles east of Gallatin, Tenn.

As a small child she saw her mother and older brothers and sisters hurry to the fields at 6 a. m., not to come back until 6 p. m. Her father she didn't know, for he was taken from the family when his owners moved to Arkansas.

Goes Into Fields at 10

Before she was able to work in the master's house, she and the other slave children were mothered by an old colored woman—Aunt Dinah. Then, as she grew older, she was

taken to the big house, where she served the family, lit her mistress' pipe and performed household duties. She clearly recalls the several slaps she received when she wasn't prompt enough with the light to the white lady's pipe.

Usually was she 10 when they started taking her into the fields also.

"But," she hastens to add, "our white folks treated us well. They worked us hard, but the food and clothing was good."

Jeremiah Sarver was her owner. While freedom was little, and his slaves were forbidden to learn to read or write, his treatment otherwise was good, as she has explained.

Once, recalls Mrs. Anthony, he sold two women and a man after an altercation. The slave trader took them away. Remorse seized him and he hurried after the trader. He bought back the man, but the two women preferred to go to the "low countries". That was the last heard of them.

On neighboring plantations, the colored folks weren't treated so well. She remembers Colonel Meadows, who earned his title in the War of 1812.

A Mean Devil

"He was a mean devil. He treated his folks brutish. Lots of times we could hear him beating his slaves. He had a thick hickory stick and a heavy horsehide whip. I can remember when he called some of his colored women before him, took ahold of their hair and cut it off.

"He used to beat the men folk down. Sometimes he raked a cat across their backs and then sprinkled salt in the wounds."

Their cries for mercy would resound over the countryside, Mrs. Anthony recalls.

Mrs. Anthony hasn't been feeling so well of late. She noticed it when she tries to smoke her pipe. "Makes



me get dizzy," she explained. "I had to give up up."

So distinct is her memory that she recalls the names of the white neighbors. There were the Lanes, the Howes, the Petticords, and the Meadows.

Needed a Pass

Slaves were not permitted to leave their owners' land without a pass. Sometimes the men and women sneaked away to attend a ball. God help them if they didn't have a pass, says Mrs. Anthony.

The white owners hired patrols to watch for just this sort of thing. Often, while a ball was in progress, the patrols entered and demanded to see the passes. Those who didn't have any were beaten unmercifully. The others scrambled to safety through doors and windows.

"They caught me once. I thought they'd skin me alive before they was through. Lord, how they beat me."

The only leniency shown was on Sunday when some of the slaves were permitted to attend the white folks' church. "I used to walk barefoot for miles, carrying my shoes, so they wouldn't be dusty when I came into church."

Then came the war of the rebellion. Eagerly the slaves listened for progress of the war. Always they heard nothing but the success the southern armies were having, for the slave owners didn't want to encourage the colored people.

Then came the day when the union invaded Tennessee. "I can see the blue soldiers walking down the road right now. I remember how they made us all fry ham. How they took all the cows, the chickens and the hogs to eat when they moved on."

"They fought a battle a little way from our plantation. We could hear the cannon roar. Our master came

out and said the rebs were licking hell out of the northerners. And all the time the union soldiers were just eating them up."

Her eyes twinkled when she recalled that she answered her master by saying she hoped the southerners would wipe the invaders from the earth. "But in my heart I thought different. I knew that old guy was lying to me."

The master's son came home when his father died. The rest of the southerners jeered when he didn't hurry back to fight. He went and was dead a few weeks later.

Kicked Out

Finally came the end of the war. When peace was signed their master called them all in front of the house. Rage was in his heart. "Get out," he commanded. "And don't come back." Not a penny or a crust of bread did he give them, she said.

One of her daughters, still living, was born also in slavery. She is living with her mother and is now 71.

After she was freed she accompanied her husband to his former master's plantation in Kentucky. They lived there many years.

"We knew we were poor. But we were free. Better nothing than a crust of bread and a cup of water than being driven like dumb brutes."

Eight of her children are still living.

John Liegler, attorney, has promised Mrs. Anthony to write to Tennessee to determine whether any of her former master's children or descendants are still living. She hopes she'll be able to greet them again.

She was careful to explain that her name then was Sarver. For the slaves always took the names of their master.

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101 on New Year's

* * * * *
Mrs. Hattie Pierce, Mother of Sam, Was Born
a Slave; Over Century Old Tomorrow



Mrs. Hattie Pierce, who will be 101 on New Year's day, and her son, Sam, messenger in the governor's office.

BORN into slavery in North Carolina, freed during the Civil war, her Negro husband later elected to the legislature of Louisiana, and then as a judge in New Orleans, her son, Sam, for the last five years messenger in the governor's office in Wisconsin—these are a few things that bring back memories to Mrs. Hattie Pierce, 1438 Williamson st., as she prepares to celebrate her 101st birthday on New Year's day.

Mrs. Pierce was born near Rochester, N. C., Jan. 1, 1829. Her daughter has an old bible, a family heirloom, in

which the date is duly recorded. Her parents were slaves and Hattie was born a slave.

Her owner took her parents and the children to Freeport, La., while Hattie was yet a child. Here she remained and at the age of 28 she was married to a slave owned by her master. Their first son was born before the Civil war.

Slaves Are Freed

Then came the war and the slaves were freed. Mr. and Mrs. John Pierce remained with their former master for two years after receiving their freedom.

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Then they lived in various places in the South. Sam, the fifth child, was born in Virginia.

After Sam was born, the family moved back to Freeport, Ia. and from there, Sam's father was elected a member of the Louisiana legislature. He served two years.

Having established their residence in New Orleans, Mr. Pierce was elected judge, in which office he served until his death in 1892.

Sam Pierce now sought employment as a Pullman porter and brought his mother with him to Chicago. For many years, he made the long run from Chicago to Los Angeles and back regularly, but the long journey affected Sam's health and he sought an easier run.

Securing a transfer to the Madison-Milwaukee run, he brought his family to Madison about 22 years ago. Here they have lived happily in a neat house at 1438 Williamson st., kept spotlessly clean and attractive by Mrs. Sam Pierce.

Is Named Messenger

Five years ago, Sam was appointed governor's messenger by Gov. Blaine and has served in the same capacity under Gov. Zimmerman and Gov. Kohler.

"Were you ever sold at auction?" the reporter asked Mrs. Hattie Pierce as she sat in the parlor of her son's home.

"I was never sold at all," was her reply. "No, sir. The man I belonged to didn't sell people. He was a fine man, indeed."

Her son didn't quite bear out her former master's good reputation when he

told of a promissory note for \$50 in wages for the two years John and Hattie Pierce worked after they were freed—the note was never paid. Mrs. Pierce still has the note.

Mrs. Hattie Pierce likes the North, fully as well as the South, she declared. The cold doesn't bother her and she is usually in very good health.

"Of course old age does bring pains that we don't have in our youth," she admitted.

She is very spry for her 101 years and when she was asked to step outside for a picture with her son, she did so with a step and bearing that belied her age.

Sam has just returned from a two months' vacation trip over his old Chicago to California run. He visited the governor of Colorado at Denver and met his messenger. He was surprised to see the growth of Salt Lake City, El Paso, Houston and the California cities.

Four days were spent in New Orleans, where he visited the graves of his father and brothers and made arrangements for their perpetual care. "That was really the purpose of my trip," he said.

Unless a cold, which he contracted on his vacation, gets worse, Sam expects to be back at his work in Gov. Kohler's office Thursday morning after the first vacation he has had in five years.

Mr. Pierce left Madison about two months ago, and has been visiting with friends in Los Angeles and other western cities. He returned to Madison recently.