

CHAPTER 13

EVENTS AND ISSUES LEADING TO THE CIVIL WAR

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(Transcribed by Dorothy Harlan)

Slaves Are Sold South on an Auction Block in Boonville's City Market--Missourians, Intent on State's Rights, Unite Against Outside Interference on Statehood--Barton and Benton With 18 Whigs and Democrats, Plan in 1828 to Rid Missouri of Slavery, but Fate Intervenes--War With Mexico, Forty-niners, German Immigration, Dred Scott--Lincoln Offers to Pay for Peace by Purchase of Slaves, an Old Missouri Plan--Bright and Dark Sides of Slavery--Recollections of Thomas Shackelford, Walt Windsor and Colonel C. C. Bell.

DR. TRIGG! Dr. Trigg! Buy me! They're selling me South!

"But I don't buy slaves."

"Oh, Please, Dr. Trigg, don't let 'em sell me South!"

Sobbing the girl cowered on the auction block in Boonville's city market. Doctor's heart was touched. He joined in the bidding. A dark face brightened through tears.

Up, up, went the ante. And, "Sold!--To Dr. Trigg!"

Exuberant she went to her new owner's home. He built a servant house in his backyard and she lived there long after emancipation. Doctor was the father of W. W. Trigg, deceased.

SLAVE AUCTIONS were numerous in Boonville, outpost of empire in the '20s and '30s and commercial center of western Missouri in the '40s and '50s, before Kansas City was great. The Santa Fe Trail "from Civilization to Sundown" started from Boonville then.

Many slaves were sold Christmas week. Southern buyers came for cotton labor. Local transactions were mostly "hiring" for a year.

The city market at Spring and Main streets, where farmers first had to offer produce, was a slave mart. When a mortgage was foreclosed, with a slave as collateral, bidding was at the courthouse.

WHEN DAVID BARTON of Boonville wrote Missouri's first Constitution in 1820, slavery was not an internal issue. Abolitionist and slavery delegates united against outside efforts to make statehood contingent on free soil.

After state's rights triumphed with admission, August 10, 1821, the problem returned. Slave owners themselves held divergent views. Kentuckians, Tennesseans and Virginians found Cooper County and Missouri unsuited to cotton. Diversified farming lent itself poorly to slave labor.

In 1828, while Missouri's population was mostly along the rivers, 20 leading Whigs and Democrats, including both United States senators, met secretly and agreed to rid the state of slavery.

JOHN WILSON, then a Fayette lawyer, years later wrote Thomas Shackelford, describing the event. His letter, in the Missouri Historical Society, states:

"COLONEL BENTON and Judge Barton were present but not on speaking terms. We unanimously determined to urge action upon all candidates at the approaching election. Resolutions were printed in secret and distributed amongst us in the form of memorials to be placed before the people all over the state on a fixed date. Both parties were to urge voters to sign. Our combination had power to carry our project.

"Unfortunately, before the appointed day, newspapers published that Arthur Tappan of New York entertained at his private table some Negro men who also rode in his carriage with his daughters. Perhaps untrue, it was believed in Missouri, and we dared not bring our memorials to light.

"But for that story we should have carried future emancipation. Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee would have followed. How little turns the destiny of nations!"

YEARS became decades...The Mexican War in '46...German exiles starting tidal immigration in '48...The California gold rush in '49...Demands for "free labor" to develop Missouri.

DRED SCOTT, St. Louis slave taken to free soil, sued for freedom. Anti-slavery Easterners financed his long court battle with enough to buy 100 slaves.

In March, 1857, the Supreme Court, in 125 pages, held the Missouri Compromise of no force. Dred Scott, a slave, could not sue in the courts. The nation was on edge.

Dred Scott possessed a striking physique. The most military appearing man in St. Louis was Thornton Grimsley, inventor of the saddle used by United States dragoons. He was in demand as grand marshal of processions for two generations. A reporter described Dred Scott as "another Thornton Grimsley done in Ebony".

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FRANK P. BLAIR, in 1859, freed his four slaves in St. Louis. U. S. Grant, in St. Louis County, freed his one.

What to do with the freed worried the thoughtful. Blair, leader of the emancipation movement, dreamed of deportation and colonization.

From repeal of the Missouri Compromise, setting aside restriction of slavery north of 36 degrees, 30 minutes, Abraham Lincoln set his political course by Blair's theories. Blair conferred with him in Springfield, Illinois.

After war had freed thousands, President Lincoln sought to negotiate for peace with emancipation, proposing to pay \$300 for every man, woman and child slave. Echoes of Barton and Benton! If accomplished early, it would have won the border states and probably averted war.

SLAVE POPULATION in Missouri was 120,000 in 1860. Most were well treated. Masters valued them.

Missouri's seasons were shorter than in the land of cotton. Mean slaves were weeded out for the auction block. Threat to sell South had a salutary effect, according to stories told Walter Benton Windsor.

His grandfather, Horace Simeon Windsor, told the approximate age of slaves by pinching skin on back of the hand. If loose, dry and rigid, it indicated age. If soft and relaxing, it meant youth.

Owners encouraged attentions of husky bucks toward slave girls nearing maturity. But a thin, consumptive appearing darky, frequenting a cabin on a nearby farm, might die violently from unknown hands.

TRAVELING COMPANIONS of Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, visited St. Louis seeking material to condemn slavery. But one wrote:

"Today I visited Colonel O'Fallon's large stone house in a park of stately trees, surrounded by cottages. The occupants are slaves. They appeared well fed and well clothed.

"Black Lucy, who opened the door, was the former nurse of Mrs. Pope, the proprietor's daughter accompanying me. Delighted to see her young mistress, she called her children and grandchildren--a numerous band of woolly-haired imps. Mrs. Pope petted them, and genuine affection existed on both sides.

"Tomorrow we leave St. Louis. It impresses me with young and expansive life."

MADAME CHOUTEAU, "mother of St. Louis", was noted for consideration of slaves.

St. Louis had free Negroes long before American occupation. Faithful service sometimes won liberty. Many masters provided it in wills.

THOMAS SHACKLEFORD of Fayette, addressing the Missouri Historical Society in 1901, said:

"JOHN HARRISON, a large hemp grower in Howard County, was kind to his many slaves. In the early '50s a wayfaring couple with lean horse and rickety chaise asked to stay all night.

"Next morning after the poor had gone, Mrs. Harrison asked a slave: 'How would you like to be that man? Aren't you better off?'

"Ah, Missus', he replied, 'he has nobody to hinder him'. Well treated, the slave longed to be situated where no one hindered him.

"A SLAVE named Brown had a wife belonging to a neighbor who failed. The wife and children were to be sold to a trader. Her master had permitted her to hire her own time.

"Brown came to me, saying he was about to be separated from his family. His wife had money enough to pay for herself and children, but the law did not allow slaves then emancipated to remain in the state. I told him to send her to me.

"With \$1,000 in silver she brought in a handkerchief I purchased her and had the bill of sale made to me. I indorsed the fact on the bill of sale and kept it among my secret papers. Publicly, she was my property. But, as before, she kept her earnings.

"When it became apparent federal troops would occupy Missouri, many sent their slaves South. Mr. Harrison prepared tents.

"Brown asked me to intercede against being sent away. I told him to tell his master that he and his associates would be faithful until legally freed. I came upon them during their interview. Both were in tears.

The tents were folded and stored. Mr. Harrison provided homes for all, and only one was unfaithful. Devotion between master and slave was the rule, but Northern men read only the dark side.

"MY FATHER died when I was 14. Mother then managed many slaves. A slave who insulted a white man should receive 40 lashes, save one.

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"A constable came to arrest one of our slaves. My mother sent me to the trial. Angry whites were there. Evidence showed an altercation developed while the white traded with the Negro. The man cursed the slave, who cursed in turn.

"The magistrate condemned the slave to be lashed. Taking me aside, he said: 'Your slave is not guilty, but to satisfy this crowd I had to pass sentence.'

"A constable asked if he should be whipped publicly. 'No', said the judge. 'Take him to the smokehouse.'

"THE SLAVE was stripped and taken inside. Men counted the lashes. Emerging, the officer admonished the Negro: 'Don't tell what occurred.' To me he confided: 'I lashed only the post.'

"I asked mother why the innocent was whipped. She replied: 'Son, before slavery is righted this land will be deluged in blood.' She reminded that sons in good families, and husbands, were having children by slave women; that this was evil among free parties, but terrible with bond women.

"My mother died before the cloud burst, but her precepts were indelibly impressed on my young mind. With secession, I feared fulfillment of her prophecy."

ANOTHER EVIL, of slavery, according to Walt Windsor, was hiring slaves by the year. He knew of cases where renters overworked and half-starved them. Poorly clad and inadequately sheltered, they died.

The established farmer, with affectionate regard for welfare of obedient slaves, considered the professional slave trader low in the social scale and deplored abuses incident to transfers by failure, foreclosure, or inheritance, whereby brutal or incompetent men sometimes became owners.

TWO THOUSAND YOUTHS in St. Louis New Year's day, 1861, prevented the last sale attempted there. They bid, "Three dollars! three dollars!" lustily for 15 minutes. Then "Four dollars" for a like period.

At \$8 the auctioneer gave up and took his charges back to jail.

COLONEL C. C. BELL in his day saw a Negro man saved from a sale South by a \$1,500 bid of Isaac Lionberger. Joyously the slave, a musician, grabbed his fiddle and played tune after tune.

Missouri was predominantly Southern and for state's rights. But most wanted to save the Union. Many favored abolition, by degrees and in moderation.

Germans, remembering tyranny in the Fatherland, swelled the cry for "free labor" in a state where only limited numbers of slaves were employed profitably. Germans were rabidly devoted to the Republic. Free speech was especially prolific in St. Louis.

Missouri, on the border, was to see blood on the sun.

HOME SUFFERS FROM BOTH SIDES IN CIVIL WAR

During the Civil War many good citizens suffered at the hands of both North and South.

Mrs. William A. Hurt, residing southeast of Boonville, was small, but recalls as though yesterday a knock at the door one night. Her father, John Benoni Johnston, answered. A long, whispered conversation, and the men left.

Early next morning Mr. Johnston put his family to preparing quantities of food. The smaller children carried in wood and replenished pails of water. Practically all food in the larder was taken to a mysterious destination.

JOHN BENONI JOHNSTON had been forced to feed bushwhackers. His sympathies were with the South but not with the outlaws who often claimed allegiance to it. Had he refused, he would have been killed.

Word leaked out that he had fed the band. State militia, of the Union Army, arrived at the Johnston home. Two soldiers stood at each window and at each door. Others ransacked the house from cellar to garret.

Searching through a bureau, a militiaman espied something dark, and exclaimed: "There's a pistol!"

He dived into the drawer and drew out a hair roll.

The Hurt boys had hidden their hunting guns in the woods. One had cached a powder horn behind a meal barrel in the kitchen. A militiaman ran his hand behind the barrel but not far enough.

Still not satisfied, the soldiers arrested John Benoni Johnston as a military prisoner.

MRS. HURT attended Shirley Temple's picture, "*The Little Rebel*". She didn't like it. It was too true to unpleasant memories.

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