SOME UNDISTINGUISHED NEGROES

Fred Fowler

Fred Fowler was born about 1832 in Frederick County, Maryland. His first master, Michael Reel, had a farm and a flour mill about four miles from Frederick City. Reel owned sixteen slaves, among whom were Fred's mother and her eight children. Fred's father belonged to a man named Doyle, who had an adjoining farm. Doyle sold the father to a man named Fisher, who subsequently put up the first gas factory in Frederick.

On the death of Michael Reel, in 1847, his estate had to be divided. Some of the slaves were disposed of according to appraisement, others at auction. Fred, then about fifteen years old, was taken at the appraised value of $400 by a son of the deceased Reel. If auctioned off, he thought he might have brought somewhat more.

At this sale his mother and one child were bought for $500 by a man named Todd, who subsequently sold her to Dr. Shipley. Four children were purchased by men supposed to be traders, who presumably took them to Georgia, which, according to the sentiment of ''Nellie Gray,'' was the slave's notion of some far-away place where the speculators found a market. No one of these four was ever seen or heard from after they were put on the train for Baltimore. The other children, two sisters, were taken away by a man named Roach, but that was all that was then known. The almost invariable rule in the inter-state slave-trade was that separation ended all communication with those left behind. In 1887—forty years after the sale—these sisters wrote a letter to a colored church in Frederick asking for information about the slaves that belonged to the Reel family. Someone in the church knew that Fred Fowler was living in Washington, D. C. The letter was forwarded to him and from it he learned that these sisters had been taken to Columbia, Tennessee and were still living. A meeting soon followed.

When Fred was twenty years old, young Reel, who was about to move to Springfield, Illinois, sold him privately for $1,000 to Dr. Willis who lived in New Market, Frederick County, Mary-

land. That was a high price for the time and place. Fowler was with Dr. Willis for three or four years as a farmhand. The Doctor was the physician for the notorious inter-state slave traders B. M. and W. L. Campbell. They had a large jail in Baltimore for their purchases in Maryland. In New Orleans they had another, where most of their sales were made. The Doctor went to Baltimore once or twice a week to examine and prescribe for the Campbell slaves. In the farming season, when there was need of extra labor, he would bring some of them out to work for him.

Mrs. Salmon, a Quaker, told Fowler that Dr. Willis contemplated selling him the following winter, probably because some less valuable slave could do the work. All slaves dreaded being sold, for, if young and strong, it usually meant being "sold South." So in the spring of 1858 Fowler made up his mind to run away. He and another slave started one Saturday night and safely walked to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania by the early morning.

Promptly on Monday Dr. Willis issued a handbill offering $200 reward for the recovery of his runaway. Fowler knew no details of this until perhaps thirty or forty years later, when a son of Dr. Willis gave him one of the handbills. It was shown about 1905 to the present writer who had it carefully typewritten as to the lines and capitalization, but the size of the letters could not be reproduced. The original was duly returned to Fowler, but unfortunately he subsequently lost or mislaid it. It was tiny for a handbill—only about six inches long and four inches wide and was worded and lined thus:—

"$200 REWARD!

Ranaway from the subscriber, living
at New Market, Frederick Co., Md.,
ON SATURDAY NIGHT, THE 8TH.
OF MAY inst., a Negro Man,
named FRED FOWLER, aged about
26 years, five feet ten or eleven
inches high, stout made, dark
copper color, round full eye, upper
teeth full and even, has a down look
when spoken to, lisps slightly in his
speech, and has small hands; no
other marks recollected. Had on
when he left, dark pants and coat and

light-made shoes.
The above reward will be given for the arrest of said Negro, if taken out of the State of Maryland, and his delivery to the subscriber; or one hundred dollars, if taken in the State, and secured in jail.
Dr. W. L. Willis.
New Market, Md., May 10, 1858.''

The same wording long appeared as an advertisement in the Baltimore *Sun*. Both were all in vain.

A free Negro, associated with the underground railroad in Pennsylvania and working as a mason for a company of men who built large barns in Maryland, had told Fowler to report in Gettysburg to a man by the name of Mathers. The runaways did so and were concealed until the next night. They then walked to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There they remained that day. During the night they went on to Harrisburg. Some Abolitionists took charge of them and put them on a farm about eight miles from town. In August, they proceeded to Bradford, Canada West. There Fowler found an aunt who had run away with a party of twelve, many years before. He worked on a farm until May, 1862, when he went to the American Hotel in Lockport, New York to become a waiter. In August, 1863 he left for Hartford, Connecticut, to enlist in the 29th Regiment of Connecticut Colored Volunteers. The regiment was turned over to the Government in March, 1864, and was then taken by boat from Hartford to Annapolis Maryland, and there transhipped to Beaufort, South Carolina.

At Beaufort they had a few little skirmishes. Once they were about surrounded by the Confederates for five days, and were without food a part of the time. The Confederates were between Beaufort and Hilton Head, but did not know to what disadvantage they had the colored regiment.

In the summer of 1864 the regiment was moved to Bermuda Hundred, Virginia. On the day of landing they took part in an engagement at Malvern Hill. They were in several skirmishes and were finally attacked at Strawberry Plains. From there they were taken to the Weldon railway, for the purpose of cutting off the southern connection with Richmond. They fought there three days and tore up the track. To make the rails useless they were

heated red-hot and twisted around trees. Later, the regiment was taken back to the neighborhood of Fort Harrison, on which they made an attack. After a few weeks they took the Fort and remained there all winter and until a few days before the fall of Richmond.

Early in April, 1865, on a Sunday afternoon the troops in Fort Harrison saw a large mass of Confederates marching in plain view in front of them. "We thought there must be a million of them marching there!" It was supposed that the Confederates intended soon to attack Fort Harrison. The occupants of the Fort sent out videttes so as to give the earliest possible notice of it. Those in the Fort made every preparation for resistence. But there was no attack. That night three unarmed Confederates came to the videttes and reported that there were no troops in front; that the Confederate lines had long been very thin and that the Federals could march right into Richmond.

This was found to be true, for on the following day the Union troops started for the Confederate capitol. Fowler's regiment reached there on the morning of the fall and went to State House Hill, but camped close to Libby prison, down near the river. A few days later—a day or two before Lincoln was shot—they left Richmond for City Point, where they first heard of his death. From there they were taken to Point Lookout, Maryland, to aid in the search for Booth. After Booth was captured, the regiment returned to City Point, and a week later was ordered to Brownsville, Texas, for the special purpose of getting the supplies,—a great collection of cotton, wagons and all sorts of munitions—that General Kirby Smith had tried to take to Mexico. The regiment remained there until the 15th day of October, when Fowler and the others were mustered out of the United States service.

In the spring of 1876 he was appointed a messenger in the Library of Congress, which was then and until about 1900 in the Capitol just west of the great dome. He was a strong willing worker. Doctor Spofford relied on him to find and bring forth from dark and dusty storerooms the files of old newspapers when needed for historical purposes. By the time that the magnificent Library of Congress building was completed and things were in shipshape, Fowler had reached an age when he was entitled to and given less heavy work.

For nearly twenty years he was daily at the door of the Reading Room to admit readers and to refer sightseers to the gallery for

the best view of the grand and beautiful rotunda. He was always so cheerful and polite that it gave one pleasure to see and exchange greetings with him. His remarkable and most honorable career caused him to be regarded with much wonder by persons of the young generation, especially if from the North. By the whole staff of the Library and by the many research workers that daily came there, he was regarded with a fondness such as was felt toward no one else.

He died October 9, 1919, at the advanced age of about 87 and was buried in the great National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. There his grave and name can be seen among those of men who fought to preserve the Union, and in doing so destroyed slavery—the "sacred institution" of the old South and "the corner-stone" of the short lived Confederacy. Fred Fowler served his race and his country well and he was well rewarded.

F. B.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DEATH OF RACHEL PARKER.

On the 21st of February 1918 the *Oxford Press* carried the following:

The death on Monday in Oxford of Rachel Parker Wesley, an aged colored woman, recalls an incident of the slavery times previous to the War of the Rebellion, in which Rachel was a principal figure. The question of slavery was paramount then, and later became one of the burning issues of the war. Maryland was a slave State, and an ablebodied negro man was worth in the slave market as much as $1400, while a girl often brought $1000. Frequently negroes were taken from the free State of Pennsylvania across into Maryland, where they might be sold.

Rachel Parker lived at the time with the family of Joseph Miller, on the farm in West Nottingham now owned by S. S. Boyd.

It was on the last day of December, 1850, that she was kidnapped from this home by three men, Thomas McCrery, John Merritt and George Alexander, the latter figuring as the driver of the wagon. It was about 11 o'clock in the morning.

The team took a road, now vacated, that led to old Pine Grove school house. They found the road blocked by the wagon of James Pollock, and his son Samuel, who were loading wood. On demand that the wagon be removed so that they could pass at once, James Pollock refused, and when McCrery drew a sword he brandished his axe.

The kidnappers then turned and made their way to Nottingham, and by way of Stubbs' Mill, Chrome and Calvert, proceeded to Perryville, from which point they entrained for Baltimore.

When the capture of Rachel Parker became known there was considerable excitement in the community. Rachel was born of free parents and that she had been carried away into possible slavery was too much for the sturdy abolitionists of that day.

A party of eight was organized to go in pursuit. They were Joseph Miller, William Morris, Samuel Pollock, Lewis Melrath, Jesse B. Kirk, Abner B. Richardson, Benjamin Furniss, H. G. Coates.

These men went to Perryville and that night took a train for Baltimore. They went to a house of detention or slave pen in that city where runaway slaves were kept. While they were there McCrery appeared with Rachel Parker in a wagon.

The Pennsylvanians protested that the girl was not a slave, but was free, and the authorities ordered that she be held and given a trial.

The Pennsylvanians met an acquaintance named Francis Cochran, who resided in Baltimore. When he learned their errand he told them they were in mortal danger, and advised them to get at once on a train and not leave it until they arrived at Perryville.

Joseph Miller left the car, or the train, and was not seen again by his friends, although search was made for him. His body was found some hours afterwards, hanging in a woods near Stemmer's Run. Just how he met his death is a mystery that never was made clear. It was claimed at the time that investigation proved that Miller was dead before his body was hanged to the tree, and that he had been poisoned.

Rachel Parker was gone more than 14 months, most of that time locked up in Baltimore. Her trial was postponed from time to time.

It was claimed in Baltimore that Rachel Parker was a member of a family named Crocus, and that they were runaway slaves. In an effort to prove this, people were sent to this neighborhood to try to identify other members of the Parker family as in reality belonging to the Crocus family. The attorney who ably defended Rachel Parker was Lloyd Norris. She was acquitted, and she is said to have been the only person so freed in a slave State.

For more than 40 years Rachel lived with the Coates family,

near Glenroy. To Granville Coates, Sr., *The Press* is indebted for the details of the affair, which are from records which he has faithfully preserved.

On the 28th of February, 1918 the *Oxford Press* carried the following:

The account of the death in Oxford of Rachel Parker Wesley, an aged colored woman, in last week's *Oxford Press,* has been closely read. Some older citizens, in town and country, recall the circumstances and the high excitement that prevailed at the time Rachel Parker, then a girl, was kidnapped.

Of all the men who desired that justice be done Rachel Parker, who was kidnapped by Thomas McCrery and others on the last day of 1851, from the home of Joseph C. Miller, West Nottingham, township, not one took deeper and more determined interest in the matter than the late Dr. John Miller Dickey of Oxford. He became a leader in the affair and repeatedly went to Baltimore, where Rachel was in jail, and got a number of the most influential citizens of Baltimore interested to have justice brought about. The late Levi K. Brown of Lancaster county was also active in the matter and rendered much valuable assistance.

The matter had now become so generally known that effectual help was received from the late Senator Henry S. Evans, West Chester, who brought the circumstances to the attention of our Legislature, by which means the case became a State affair.

Dr. Dickey and others attended the trial in January, 1853. The proceedings lasted eight days, during which, as one of the claimant's attorneys expressed it, "an entire neighborhood" appeared and "an avalanche of testimony" was borne to the girl's free birth. Evidence was produced from Baltimore that she was not the girl who had been lost. Forty-nine witnesses were heard and many more were ready when a compromise was proposed and agreed to. Notwithstanding this overwhelming evidence, there was still some fear that a Baltimore jury would decide against the girl, and it was thought wise to give way. The chief end was gained: Rachel Parker was declared free born; the same jury gave a verdict also for her sister Elizabeth who had been found in New Orleans and brought North, and the two were restored to their mother.

The costs of the trial were divided, these amounting to $1000, besides $3000 expended by the State of Pennsylvania and heavy outlays by friendly citizens of Baltimore and Chester County.

Judge Bell of West Chester, one of the Pennsylvania counsel, wrote thus after all was over to the West Chester *Republican and Democrat:*

''Too much praise cannot be accorded to the host of witnesses from Chester County and the neighboring districts, who promptly on the call of justice and humanity, exchanged the comforts of home for the inconvenience and supposed dangers of sojourn in a strange city, under circumstances well calculated to deter a merely selfish person from obeying the summons. This praise is peculiarly due to the numerous ladies of our county whose sense of right overcame every merely personal consideration.''

The ''supposed dangers'' referred to, of which the murder of Joseph C. Miller was a sign, were realized by Dr. Dickey, who his son, the late J. M. C Dickey, Esq., told, ''would go to trial in Baltimore, not knowing how he would come back. Once he was very near death at their hands.''

The concluding local action of this case of wide agitation was as follows:

West Nottingham, Jan. 17, 1853.

At a meeting of the witnesses and others who attended the Court of Baltimore county, in the case of the girls, Rachel and Elizabeth Parker, the following was passed:

''Whereas, By the blessings of Divine Providence, the two girls Rachel and Elizabeth Parker, have been restored to the State of Pennsylvania, where they were threatened, by a lawless and unjust removal; and whereas, similar cases are likely to occur, and in the excited state of public opinion on the subject of Slavery, both in the Northern and Southern States, difficulties exist in the way of the administration of law and justice where colored persons are petitioning for their freedom, we regard it as a duty we owe to those who may be engaged in similar prosecutions, as well as to those who have mainly aided in obtaining success in this case to put upon record the following resolutions:

''That we regard with great satisfaction the conduct of the Executive of our State, who, at the suggestion of the Senator and Representatives of our county, assumed the control and responsibilities of the trial; and that we tender our sincere thanks to the distinguished counsel, Attorney-General Campbell and Judge Bell, who visited at different times this place to become familiar with and to give encouragement to the witnesses to about to testify in another State, thus accomplishing the object as well by their urbanity as well as by their professional skill.

"That we express our sincere acknowledgement of the courtesy shown us by the Court of Baltimore county, both by the bench and bar and especially to Wm. H. Norris, Esq., for his invaluable services, associated as counsel with those from our own State.

"That we deplore the death of Joseph C. Miller, a witness in the first trial before the magistrate's court, and believing, as we most positively do, that he came to his death violently by other hands than his own, we implore the Executive to offer a suitable reward, in addition to that offered by his friends, for the discovery and apprehension of his murderers.

JOHN M. DICKEY,
Chairman."
HUGH ROWLAND, *Secreary.*

It may be added that the Grand Jury of Chester county brought in a true bill against Thomas McCrery and Merritt, his associate, for kidnapping. But Governor Lowe of Maryland refused the requisition for apprehension and delivery, going behind the record, contrary to the law, as Governor Bigler of Pennsylvania demonstrated clearly in the published correspondence.

SOME OHIO NEGRO PIONEERS

In 1835 some of the earnest free colored people of Virginia were interested in reports of the great opportunities for colored folk in the State of Ohio, so often called the Buckeye State. At that time there were no railroads from the slave State Virginia to Ohio, a free State. But the determined freemen and their families undeterred by this drawback went forth in covered wagon trains.

One of the earlier groups of pioneers consisted of several families from and near Richmond Virginia; namely, Abraham Depp and his wife Mary Goode-Depp, Elias Litchford, James Poindexter, and Archer Goode, with their families, and Samuel Willis Whyte accompanied by his son bearing the same name, all of whom settled in central Ohio, not far from Columbus. Abraham Depp purchased five or six hundred acres, south of Delaware; Litchford about the same number of acres nearer Columbus; the elder Whyte, being a mechanic, purchased only about two hundred arces. Samuel W. Whyte Jr. later left his trade for the profession of medicine and became noted as a specialist of chronic diseases. Dr. Samuel Whyte married Miss Louisa Goode, daughter of Archer Goode. She was of a peculiar sweet disposition, a model companion, and a loving earnest mother. She as often called Saint Louisa by those who knew her best. She died in 1905.

The Doctor always kept in touch with the leading thoughts and achievements of his day. He was a brilliant scholar, a great logician, with a keen wit, having a dash of eccentricity throughout; in fact, he was a born philosopher, and a man of many parts. He was educated for missionary work to Liberia, but he remained at home and became one of the landmarks of Central Ohio in politics and medicine. He was born in 1815 and died in 1902, when, as it happened in the case of his wife whom he survived seven years, he was borne to his final resting place from the home where he had lived since 1835. Dr. Whyte and his wife had a large family of whom the writer, H. Georgiana Whyte, alone bears the family name. The old homestead is retained by the descendents.

All through Ohio settled many such high minded, thoroughgoing Christian Negro families that helped to build up Ohio and left large families, of worthy descendants. Of this pioneer group one of the most prominent characters was James Poindexter, who sold his farm of forty acres and went to Columbus, Ohio to live. He was a playmate and always an ardent friend of Dr. Samuel Willis Whyte, Jr. There James Poindexter became a Baptist minister and during later years became one of the foremost citizens of Columbus, having become a member of the city council and for over forty years served as pastor of the most prominent Baptist church in the city. He was in great demand as an orator before and after the Civil War. He lived to a ripe old age.

H. GEORGIANA WHYTE.

THE ALEXANDERS

Henry Alexander a mulatto who lived at Mayslick, Kentucky, and who purchased his freedom when twenty-one years of age, sent his two oldest daughters to school in Philadlphia as early as 1846. He was a store-keeper and grain merchant. In the fifties he sent three younger ones to Oberlin, Ohio where Louisa Alexander was graduated in 1862. She and her older sister Rachel taught in the South during the Reconstruction period and had many thrilling experiences. In several instances their schools were closed and they were given so many hours to leave town. Maria Ann, who went to school in Philadelphia, taught a while in Covington, Kentucky, strange as it may seem, before the war. She was later married to the late Judge Mifflin W. Gibbs, an unflinching advocate of human rights.

Q. G. H.