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Charleston West Va June 2 - 1862

Mrs Brackett - Dear Madam

Modestly has with held me this long from
complying with your request as to my early
life just where to begin I am somewhat
at loss but I will write you an out-
line and you can take your pick.

I was owned by a Mrs Alexander

she was the daughter of Bussard Cobin

Washington Grand daughter of P. H.

Lee of Revolutionary fame. ^{predecessor} ~~father~~

in second degree to Judge Washington and

third degree to Gen. Washington. Cousin

to Gen Scott, and also Robert E. Lee

and her maiden name was Hannah

Lee Washington. When at the age

of 16 she met with one Wm. Alexander, a

Gentleman from the Eastern part of the state

they both fell in love with each other and

married. She was discredited for

a home by her parents she & her husband
 lived in old Va for a while. But
 the Parents becoming reconciled, they
 moved & off. Where they lived until
 they parted. He was a man (always)
 of violent passion, very proud, a hard
 drinker, & extravagant, but noted for
 politeness, generosity, and kindness
 to his slaves. At the death of Mrs.
 Alexander's father my Grandmother
 & all her children were given ~~over~~ to
 Mrs. Alexander. My Grandfather was
 owned by Mrs. Alexander's uncle, Thornton
 Washington, but on account of nearness
 of relation had been allowed to buy
 himself, but by the law, if the woman
 was a slave that made the children
 slaves also - so you can see how it was
 that we were owned by Mrs. Alexander
 and not by Mr. Alexander. Now I hope
 I have given you quite a prelude
 to my own Biography.

Well, on the 4th July 1855 I made
 my appearance in this world
 (for the first time). It is an old
~~that~~ saying that a fool can tell who
 his mother is but it takes a smart
 man to tell who ~~his~~ is his father -
 and the dignity of the Worthington
 blood seemed to be stirred at my ap-
 pearance & charged Mr. Alexander
 with being accessory before
 the act. upon which issue was
 taken and the cause was tried before
 the court at Chelmsford judge
 Green then practicing here & ap-
 pearing as counsel, and it is said that
 owing ^{to} the family dissimilarity of Mrs.
 Alexander and myself that the court
 decided that he was my father
 and decreed a bill of divorce
 to Mrs. Alexander. This was somewhat
 out of the usual custom - but there
 was something here in the character

truly, praiseworthy
of Mrs Alexander. She refused to
sell my Mother as she was advised
and urged to do. She never had
sold one of her slaves and never
did so willingly (she had two forced
out of her hands). At this time
the family were reduced, by
the extravagance of Mr Alexander.
he had gone through with his own
fortune left him by his father, and
had spent a great part of Mrs
Alexander's - hence their condition
at the commencement ^{was} of the year
also the first of my remembrance found
the family in quite straitened
circumstances. The second year
of this was they broke up housekeeping
in Charleston and moved to the
country. I was put with an old blind
colored woman in town and here
I first ^{learned} what slavery was. I
think without exaggeration I averaged
three whippings a day while I lived there
Sunday excepted -

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The first thing in the morning she would make me repeat after her a long "Iron side Baptist" prayer. After this, she would set me on the stairs & comb my head, and say the Lords Prayer, then likely as not the next thing would be a good beating followed by a small piece of bread for breakfast. She afterwards went blind, stone blind. She was a free negro - but the avenger of wrongs sent a just curse upon her heart - This was in '62; one day Mr. Richard Spencer, the present assessor came to see how I liked. The old woman told him I was getting on nicely but I gave him one sign for home, and he grabbed me, without further words and carried me home. He's about four years older than I. - The next year I lived with the family - in '64 I was put out with aunt Rettie Brown, not a

colored woman, but a woman of color
 who looks more like Gen Washington
 than ^{any} Washington I have ever seen.
 She had been allowed to buy her
 self - here I lived till late in the
 fall. This Aunt Lettice Brown was a
 woman of the highest culture, could read
 and write, owned a place of her own
 and was first cousin to my Mistress
 on the Washington side. My Grandfather
 was second cousin to my Mistress, and
 Grandmother was first cousin
 to her Mistress (or mine), well one
 day this lady sent me out to the old
 homestead for butter &c, and child
 like, I stayed all day. When I returned
 she informed me that I should go
 about a mile & bring a bag of chips
^{before breakfast} and ~~see with~~ a little Corporal punishment
 well I started on my journey for
 the bag of chips but did not
 return for 14 years.

I took the pike leading across to
Harpers Ferry and walked on till
I came to the ~~the~~ Yankee guards. There
I was obliged to wait until they were
relieved. While waiting there an old
man came riding down the pike.

I suspected that was coming for me
and for fear that he would get me I
took to my heels, one of the men chased
me but I gave him quite a run &
he stopped and pulled his revolver, then
I thought it time to stop. They would
not give me up to the old man but
carried me into their camp
near Harpers Ferry. I was with a
captain by the name of Wood. it was
the first Maryland Independent Cavalry
they were dismounted & from Harpers
Ferry they moved to Summit Point
from there they were ordered back
and refused to take me with them
because I was so small. They put
me on the train & sent me

to Marlborough - then I got with
the 15th Maine Regiment, and the
Capt. Whitmore of Bowdoinham
Maine. From there we marched
to Stephen's Station. From there
to some place above Manchester
from there to Washington from
Washington South Carolina this was
in the Spring of 65. I was only ten
years old at this time. Here I saw
men dying every day - but those
that know nothing fear nothing
and that was my case I had the
Whooping Cough all the time I was
in the South. Mr. Whitmore had been
promoted Major and acting as
Colonel - but during the month of July
he resigned the Army and started for
home & took me with him. He came
to New York and from New York he
went to Washington and then was
potentially with fever and I laid there
four weeks while he waited in N.Y. at
the Astor House for his return

Like a good dog & watched his baggage
and no one could persuade me that he
had gone home and left me behind.
When he returned he started for Maine &
arrived in August 1863.

Mr. Whitmore left me with ^{my} father Samuel
Whitmore and he raised me. The winter
1866 I went to school for the first time &
there found one Affrican some what Blacker
than myself - & took his opportunity to com-
pliment him for his great beauty, and
he immediately gave me a bloody
nose. This was a good opening, and from
that day till I went going to the Com-
mon-School (as they are called in ME) there
have been few days that I did not have
a little affray with somebody, the teacher
never failed to have one with me.
The habits & hold formed while in the
Army did not make me a
congenial companion.

He raised me

becoming dissatisfied with home I went
 up in North Western Part of Maine
 near the Rangely Lakes to work
 in the Logging Camp. There I cut
 myself very badly, came near
 bleeding to death. Had to send some
 twenty or twenty five miles for a
 doctor. Sewed up the wound then I returned
 home somewhat wiser than before.
 I went to work in the brick yard at
 Bowdoinham and at the same time
 began the study of Latin to Mr. Mahy
 the Lawyer of that place and here
 commenced the struggle for life
 working hard from six to six. Then
 getting a lesson in the Grammar
 and trying to read the "Fables" the broadest
 kind of Latin. In the fall I went to
 Litchfield Academy. There at the
 Bowdoinham High School I got
 my preparatory course for Bowdoin
 College - every solitary dollar of.

School at penses I earned & paid myself I shall never forget the first School I was appointed for. It was the School in neighborhood where I was raised, & where I first went to School. The Agent was a Whitmore, and he hired me to teach the School. Some said they would send their children, large boys said they would put me out. Other said I could not pass the examination. At last the fearful time came I went to see the examination & he did examine me, for three hours he kept me, he was an old teacher. He knew just where to pick, but Providence favored me & I remain more than right then & ever have since. He gave me the School. ^{children} no one kept them at home. ^{large boys gave me} I taught the School with success. ^{Some went to school that winter that was in the} Several Schools afterwards, in that vicinity and ^{pay by at penses} I was enabled.

people

no people

In the fall of 1877 I went to the Law
 office of Tallman & Larabee, Battle
 Maine to study law. There I was com-
 pelled to pay $\$4\frac{1}{2}$ week & my Washington
 & Ira. But you will be surprised
 when I tell you that I had only
 \$2 dollars to my name at that time
 but I felt as I had often felt that
 there would be a way provided
 and sure enough I did have
 an opportunity to earn something
 there writing & what I was not ca-
 ble to pay at that time. My landlord
 waited for till I should reach in the
 winter. The winter before this I had
 taught school and walked twice a
 week after school was out ^{at night} $2\frac{1}{2}$ to write
 a lesson in Virgil. This winter I
 read Blackstone. This hard work
 told upon my health and I was
 threatened with the consumption. I
 went back to the office in Spring of '78
 and was ^{leaves} not there 79—

~~He never does not see my the city under~~
~~in any one transaction~~
~~of the work of my life~~
~~He never does not see my the city under~~
~~in any one transaction~~
~~of the work of my life~~

I paid my expenses that year by May
 weighing in on the Kemetic River. In the
 Spring of 79 I was examined & admitted
 to the practice law. My health was
 such that the doctors said it was
 no use to think of stopping there.
 But I was poor, what could I do?
 Besides at that time I had no
 in Bank nearly due then with nothing
 to meet it with. Well there was
 a providence still in my favor
 20 of the good citizens of Bowdoin
 but their heads together, gave me
 five dollars a piece making in all
 \$100. I took & cancel my note
 at the bank. I paid up some other
 bills, and left my old N.E. home
 those that I loved, as brother & sister
 companions that I can never forget.
 for the home ^{my} birth to early
 childhood

I had letters of introduction to Mr
 Faye, M.C., from Mr. also to Rev
 Morrell of Hopkins, in Washington &
 Saw Mr Faye who gave me letters to
 Mr Douglass. but I did not see
 him he had gone out to a horse
 race. From Washington I came to
 Perry where I was treated very
 kindly by Mr. Morrell & family
 from here I came to Charleston
 my native home. I went to the
 Hotel & got my dinner as I had been
 used to doing, and sat there quite
 unconcerned but afterwards I
 learned that they knew I was colored
 but behaved myself so becoming
 they did not have the heart
 to order me out. I hunted up all
 old relations my mistress and went
 to see all they seemed pleased to see
 me I was glad to see them. It has
 whispered around often while

that I was a Calvary but both
 White & Black said it could
 not be so, such a thing is never
 by has never heard of much less
 seen, well & taught school the fol-
 lowing year. ^{new} Jeff Co. the next year ~~was~~ ^{he}
 gave the presidential station
 and before this ^{house} ~~country~~ which I'm
 Brown was tried I made a speech
 for Gorfield, for making that speech
 I was turned out of my school but
 that went to "old" and came
 back to Charlestown the next
 year 1882 and tried to get ^{with} ~~admitted~~
 on the papers the court had given
 me in Maine, but the circuit
 judges refused to accept them
 and I was obliged to go the Court
 of Appeals and be examined by
 them to see if I did really know
 any thing about law. This court
 did examine me & found me

Philadelphia and then I was
 admitted here, then to visit
 Barryville & out home
 done some business there
 and am pleased to say
 have been treated with
 the greatest kindness &
 the court of ^{appeals} West Va. was
 composed of four members
 Judge Dean the President
 Chief Justice. Who receded
 the famous jury discession
 in 79 in this state but he was
 present at the time
 of my examination
 He is the same man that acted
 as counsel in the case when
 the Alabama case was tried
 I have given you the best
 sketch I could. I have written
 great hurry but thank you are
 accustomed to poor writing you
 would know no trouble - I have
 taken no pains at all in choice of
 words - I have taken no pains for I was in
 such hurry and knew if I died not do this

now it would be too late

Charleston W. Va. 2^d 1842
 My Brother etc. My dear Sir

You will understand how much
 a thing should be published. I can I wish
 don't be too free with the use of
 the real names. I have written
 most every thing in full that your
 wife might understand the whole
 story. and be better able to condense
 I think your Anniversary a success
 Your etc. as cited at least through
 the day were 25% better than they
 were last year. With this best
 wishes for the success of your
 work I remain your

Respectfully W. H. H.

P.S. I will say here I am now a strong
 believer in the interposition of Providence.
 There is a Providence that shapes our ends

rough how them as we will -
 I have tried to write the sentiment of an
 evolution but some written so much to day
 cannot reach the limit