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AN EX-SLAVE AS A BOOTLEGGER

JOHN BURNS WAS ONCE SOLD FOR $1,650.

He Used To Go and Hear Jim Lane Make Speeches—Says He is Not Guilty of Selling Liquor—Sixty-six Years Old.

Topeka, March 22.—Hale and hearty, 66 years of age, weighing over 300 pounds ,and wearing a regular "Kuhnel" beard, John Burns, an old ex-slave of Silver Lake was brought to the county jail Saturday night charged with selling liquor. His arrest by Deputies Judkins and Sauls came as a result of an inquisition held by County Attorney Schenck after the trial of "Dutch Billy" Kuhrt for shooting up the town and wounding Charles George. The best evidence against the old colored man is that he has a federal liquor stamp.

"That revenue man, Wilson, begged me to take out that license to sell liquor. I wouldn't a done it but I ain't got no education and I didn't know what I signed. He said, 'You just sign that.' Then he took it over to the revenue collector, Simpson, at Leavenworth and then he asked me for $25. I woudn't pay it. I was just over to Leavenworth las' Monday to see about it but I couldn't find him.

"Now that's all I know they got against me. I ordered me some whisky once, but I never sold none and I didn't have nothin' in my house but a bottle a' 'Angeline' (Angelica) wine that I had there for near 15 years as a sort of keepsake."

John Burns is the character of the little town full of characters. He is a barber. Deputy Sauls described his place there as a long shanty about 20 by 10 feet in front of which the old darky was sitting when arrested. In the front room of the two roomed house, Burns has his barber shop.

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The room in the rear is one typical of the old darky shanty. 'Possum skins hang over the walls, old boxes and trunks and relics are piled among the living utensils and scant furniture, and a passage could hardly be cleared through the room.

Burns has been there since Nov. 6, 1877. Born in Platt county, Mo., a slave of George Stiger in 1844, the boy at 10 was taken to Leavenworth and traded to R. C. Foster, now an attorney at Denison, Tex., for a 160 acre farm. Then he was sold to D. D. Burns for $600. Burns, whose name John bears, bought him, says John, for speculation. That it was a good speculation is evidenced by the next sale. In 1859, Burns went to New Orleans with this slave and there sold him to a Frenchman, Price Lander, for $1,650, a top price in the slave market.

"I helped carry the first boat load of shingles that covered a planter's home at Leavenworth," said the ex-slave. "I remember when I used to go and listen to the speeches of old Jim Lane.

"But after I was freed at New Orleans I came back to Kansas again and settled in Johnson county at Lenexie. There my mother joined me but she died, and I moved to Silver Lake.

"No, I was never married. I

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ain't got no children."

John gave some very peculiar testimony during the trial of William Kurht or "Dutch Billy." He said he was asleep when all the shooting was going on in the little main street. He had gone over to the hotel to get a bucket of water and sat down. He heard a shot, he said, but didn't think it amounted to anything and dozed off into sleep, leaving the town to its fate. Asked about the testimony yesterday, he said:

"Yes, I was asleep I guess. I sat down there by the hotel. I nodded some and dozed off. Yes, I heard 'em shootin' but they used to do that all the time when I went there. I didn't s'pose there was anything goin' on."

The day "Dutch Billy" shot up the town and John Burns slept by the hotel was a hot summer Sunday and the town ball club was entertaining the marshal and others out by the edge of the village in a true sport's pasture. The scene was a most peaceful one at the little hamlet.

John Burns laughed a little when he recalled his testimony and the way it sounded to the court, but switched back to the newer topic—his own arrest. "I don't know nothin' they got against me. That revenue stamp was all I had. Wilson begged me to get that."

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