Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/581061905/

Downloaded on Jun 29, 2024



Missouri Planters Were Never Large Slave Holders, History Has Revealed

The State Which Split So Widely and So Terribly Over Issues Which Ended in Civil War Owned only 115,000 Negroes at Most.—Holdings in Boone County Totaled 5000—First Boat-load Was Brought n by Renault, Who Planned to Work Mining Fields With Cheap Labor.

IT HAS BEEN seventy years since Missouri took a definite stand in outlawing slavery, and that was when the General Assembly at the State Constitutional Convention of 1864 approved that the organization "should proceed to consider, first and above all, such amendments necessary for the emancipation of slaves." It was not until Jan. 11, 1865, a year later, however; that the state definitely abolished slavery.

Slavery was always a ticklish problem in the state and since it was a growing institution and a necessary evil, it presented many questions for legislatures up until its final abolition in 1865.

Slavery existed in Missouri from very early times down to the close of the Civil War. During the French period there were both Indian and Negro slaves, but by 1803 Indian slaves had practically disappeared.

The Original Slave Shipment

Negro slavery in Missouri dates from the time of Renault, who, on his way from France in 1719 to what is now Missouri, stopped at San Domingo and purchased 500 Negro slaves to work in the mines which he was going to open in the Missouri country. From these Negroes were descended most of the slaves living in Ste. Genevieve, St. Charles, and other nearby places at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Those found in Cape Girardeau and New Madrid districts were brought in by American immigrants.

At first the Spanish government evidently sought to encourage Negro slavery in Missouri, since the amount of land which it granted to settlers depended not only on the size of the family, but also on the number of servants and slaves which came with them. The Spanish were poor colonizers and the scheme was not successful.

The French brought over slaves, and even though the French settlers did not have any of that race prejudice which characterized the American slave owners, and which made a closer bond between French masters and slaves, the French failed to make use of their instruments and gradually slaves drifted into American hands. It is true that the American pioneers treated their slaves well, but they always considered the Negroes as an inferior race, and this put a bar between master and slave that did not exist, supposedly, in the case of the French.

Slave Holdings Never Large

The number of slaves in Missouri, however, was never large. In 1803 about three thousand slaves were working in different parts of the state. At the start of the Civil War there were about 115,931 slaves and 3572 free Negroes. All this time there was a numerical increase, but the percentage of increase declined from decade to decade. At this time there were in Boone County 5034 slaves out of 14,399 white people. It is noted that there were more slaves along the Missouri river where the occupations demanded more slaves.

The existence of this type of human bondage continually raised problems such as civil status of slaves and punishment of slaves. These matters were made the subject of legislation from time to time. Then too, the coming of the free Negro into the state was the occasion for more real anxiety to slave owners than were the slaves themselves. Hostility grew because the slave holders feared that they would weaken the stability of the institution of slavery in the state. Laws were directed against them to restrict immigration of free Negroes into Missouri.

But notwithstanding all this legislation, the slave was not a mere thing. Despite all the torture to which he was subject, despite all the restrictions and the stripping of civil rights, the slave was a cause in an era of discontent. The geographical situation of Missouri facilitated the escapes of slaves. Restrictions were passed against owners of boats who decoyed Negroes out of the state. In order to lessen chances of escape laws were passed prohibiting assemblies of Negroes.

A Penalty for Human Service

In 1847 another law was passed that "no person shall instruct any Negro or mulatto in reading or writing in this state (Missouri) under penalty of $500, or not more than 6 months' imprisonment, or both." This was inspired to neutralize the efforts of another menace, the Abolitionists.

The feeling of Missourians toward Abolitionists is seen clearly in a law passed ten years before then. The law subjected to fine or imprisonment any person who should "publicly circulate or utter by writing, speaking, or printing anything to excite slaves to rebellion, sedition or murder." As the abolition movement progressed, Missourians became more and more intolerant of agitation on the subject and sought more and more to supress it altogether.

The decade preceding the Civil War, a number of slaves were given freedom, but that was mostly in St. Louis. Here again the free Negro presented a problem. Statutes were passed to prohibit free Negroes and mulattoes from coming into Missouri under any condition whatsoever. There was nothing done however, during the Civil War.

But of the close of the war Lincoln's emancipation proclamation of Jan. 1, 1863, which freed the slaves in those states which rose in rebellion, was cordially approved, and the question was raised as to "why the people of Missouri should not from the same sense of duty strike down with equal suddenness the traitorous and formidable institution in their midst."

On Jan. 11, 1865, an ordinance was legislated abolishing slavery in Missouri "immediately and without compensation" by a vote of 60 to 4. Thus Missouri by her own independent action abolished slavery within her borders before the 13th Amendment of the National Constitution abolishing it extended everywhere in the United States. The "legislation" did not bind Southern sympathizers and partisans in the state, however, and only time has erased from their memory the wretched chain of events which slavery and civil war turned loose in Missouri.

Slave Traders Did Not Live Up to Villainous Reputations

Slave-traders and whiskey-sellers were often deplored on an equal basis in pre-Civil War Missouri, yet the man who bought and sold slaves on the market as a business was not always the frightful orge he was represented to be. At least two instances are on record of slaves seeking the refuge of a St. Louis slave-trader. The social standing of the Missouri slave-trader, however, was far from being an enviable one; he was deplored generally, but nevertheless tolerated as a necessary evil.

In his treatise on "Slavery in Missouri," Dr. H. A. Trexler gives what is perhaps the most reliable picture of slavery conditions in this state. Writing the Johns Hopkins University Studies (Series 32, No. 2), Dr. Trexler characterizes the Missouri slave-trader:

Picture of a Slave-Trader

"The slave-trader is generally pictured as the brutal, conscienceless, evil genius of the slavery system, detested even by those with whom he dealt. In Missouri he held no very enviable position. 'Slave-traders and whisky sellers were equally hated by many,' wrote one antislavery clergyman of St. Louis, while another maintained that 'large fortunes were made by the trade, and some of those who made them were held as fit associates for the best men on change.'

"Dr. John Doy, the Kansas abolitionist, who had a personal grievance against the Missouri slaveholder, claimed that General Dorris, whom he described as a brutal dealer, was highly respected and 'belonged to the aristocracy of Platte County.' Some of the slaveholders who were interviewed declared that the slave-trader and the saloon-keeper were tolerated as necessary evils, but that they were personally loathed and socially ostracised. Others, however, stated that it was a question of the individual trader, some being liked and some disliked.

Business Contemptible of Itself

"If the slave-trader was a hard man and detested, he at least had the satisfaction of knowing that the wisest and gentlest of men would be hated if plying his trade. The very nature of the business made it contemptible . . .

"The smaller towns seem to have been regularly visited (by the slave-trader), while the larger centers had permanent dealers. There were two such in Lexington in 1861, but they are said to have had difficulty in getting sufficiently large gangs to make the business pay. There was at least one permanent firm of dealers in St. Joseph in 1856. John Doy asserts that while he was imprisoned in St. Joseph many Negroes were shipped from there to St. Louis buyers. Columbia and Marshall were regularly visited, and Platte City had quite a thriving trade. John R. White of Howard County was a wealthy planter of good repute who dealt in slaves. He lived on a farm of 1053 acres and was taxed with forty-six Negroes in 1856.

"The slave-trader, like the stock-dealer, undoubtedly plied his trade wherever he could obtain his commodity. . . St. Louis became a considerable center for shipping gangs down the Mississippi. One Reuben Bartlett openly advertised for Negroes for the 'Memphis and Louisiana markets.'

"The St. Louis Directory of 1859 lists two 'Slave Dealers' among the classified businesses. These were Bernard M. Lynch, 100 Locust Street, and Corbin Thompson, 3 South Sixth Street. The former may be taken as a type of the great Missouri slave-dealer, who had his correspondents in the outlying parts of the state. His historic slave-pen in St. Louis was afterwards used as a military prison. Like other dealers, Lynch advertised his business in the newspapers, and posted in his office the rates and the conditions under which he handled Negroes. . . .

Slaves Find Strange Refuge

"Lynch could not have been the terror-inspiring ogre that the slave-dealer is usually pictured to be. On two different occasions slaves ran for refuge to his door. Statistics of his business are uncertain, for he was evidently clever enough to empty his 'pen' on tax assessment day. In 1852 Lynch was taxed on three slaves, on the same number in 1857, and on four in 1860."

Plantation Muses

Uncle Meg Muppin

OUR DOG

Friends may come an' friends may go
An' lebe us in de bog;
Dars a friend who'll neber lebe—
Our lovin', faithful dog.

We may habe an 'umble home
Wid comforts very few;
Nothin' matters, neber fear,
Our dog will watch us thru.

Sorrows may be our sad lot,
An' we may feel alone;
Still we habe some one dat cares—
De dog we call our own.

He may be a common cur,
Not worth a single dime;
Still a friend he'll eber be
In any zone or clime.

Rev. C. L. Dorris
Brunswick, Mo.

Party Given at Fulkerson Home

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Fulkerson entertained with an ice cream social Wednesday evening at their home west of Murry. Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Ladelle, the Misses Pauline, Hazel, Darleen, and Louise Fulkerson, and Jim Fulkerson, all of Columbia, and Floyd Durk were guests.

Weavers Entertain for Friends

Mr. and Mrs. Berry Hudson, Mr. and Mrs. Clark Neinaber, Mr. and Mrs. Estil Tomlson, the Misses Laura Hudson and Mildred Wilkerson, and R. B. Boyce were guests when Mr. and Mrs. Dorsey Weaver entertained at their home in Murry last Thursday evening.

Out Our Way



Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.