From: **Bill Nichols**
Subject: Polly Skinner v. George Grayson: Slave Hiring
Date: April 3, 2025 at 8:35 PM
To:

Bcc:

NB

Hi All:

Stumbled across another Platte County Circuit Court case involving slave hiring on the Missouri State Archives website and purchased the file.

The lawsuit was filed in 1861 by Polly Skinner for the unpaid 1860 promissory note hiring out slave “Abe” to George H. Grayson and Henry B. Baker.

The Skinner/Grayson slave hiring agreement dictates the usual conditions: clothes, blanket, paying taxes, and medical bills.

“Abe” (a/k/a Abraham) was identified during my recent review of the Platte County 1852-1866 Inventory and Appraisement books.

Upon Phinehas Skinner’s death on Sept. 27, 1856, he enslaved Abe and 22 other slaves. Abe was described as about 26 years old and appraised at $1200.00. As of Oct. 5, 1857, it was noted that Abraham had been hired out for one year ending Dec. 25, 1857, for $200.00.

Polly Skinner was the executor of Phinehas’ estate. William Paxton describes Polly Skinner as, "Mrs. Skinner was a large-bodied and large-hearted, hospitable old lady. She was a splendid manager and a valuable assistant to her husband."
The 1850 Census identifies George W. Grayson as being a farmer in Preston Township. The Graysons were amongst the organizers of the M.E. Church South in Ridgely.

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Platte County Circuit Court
May Term 1861 No. 230
Box 55, File 47

Skinner, Polly vs. Grayson, George W. and Baker, Henry B.

“Debt, promissory note”
- Note: $175.00 for hire of male slave named Abe
- Note: lists clothing defendants would provide

January the (blank) 1860: Promissory Note

We, this day, hire of Polly Skinner a negro man named Abe for the year 1860 for which negro we agree to pay $175.00. We agree to clothe said boy as follows: Two summer suits, two winter suits, two pair shoes, one pair boots, one cap and blanket; also pay tax, Doctor bills and lease all time in case of sickness and deliver said boy to Polly Skinner on or before the 25th of December 1860. This note due Jan. the first 1861 and to bear ten percent from due till paid.”

Signed by George W. Grayson and H.B. Baker

April 10, 1861: Petition filed

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Plaintiff states that Defendants by their certain obligation in writing herewith filed dated January 1860 promised for value received to pay Plaintiff on the 1st day of January 1861 the sum of $175.00 with interest from due at 10% per annum till paid, which …. are yet due Plaintiff and for which she prays judgment. Spratt & Merryman, Attorneys for Plaintiff

Joseph E. Merryman, attorney for Plaintiff, makes oath and says that the above petition and the matter and things therein as stated he believes to be true. Joseph E. Merryman

Subscribed to before me on this 10th day of April A.D. 1861. W.L. Remington, Clerk

April 10, 1861: Bill of Costs:
Judgment to Plaintiff for Costs $35.40

April 17, 1861: Summons issued
Summons issued to George W. Grayson and Henry B. Baker to appear on May 25th, 1861. Signed by W.L. Remington, Clerk

May 13, 1861: Sheriff's Return of Service for Summons

I, W.K. Bryant, Sheriff of Platte County, Missouri, do certify that I made due (unreadable) diligence and the within named Defendant not found in Platte County on this May 13th, 1861. William K. Bryant, Sheriff.

March 7, 1863: Summons issued to George W. Grayson.

To appear on November 23, 1863, to answer the petition of Polly Skinner. Signed by George W. Belt, Clerk

????? ??, (1863): Sheriff's Return of Service for Summons

The said George W. Grayson not found in Platte County. W.T. Woods, Sheriff

1864: Judgment
Judgment recorded in Book K, Page 14

Best,
Bill Nichols



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