

ANTI-SLAVERY, JIM CROW, AND “BLACK LIVES MATTER”

An essay for my grandchildren by Dan McKinnon

Pandemic, 2020

Foreword

The Pandemic has provided quiet time for reflection. Having recently passed mile marker 86, it was time to do some cataloguing. Someday my possessions will pass to my grandchildren; now 4, 7 and 9 years old. Years from now I hope they will find that some of the artifacts of my life can be useful in theirs.

Several years ago, I began gathering anti-slavery material and the racist symbology of the Jim Crow Era, decades of legalized racial discrimination. I sold the Jim Crow collection and recently finished recording what was left. As an item was researched, I came away amazed at the stories that it told. The catalog became a dialog. Even when repulsive, an object can speak; it can reveal; it can educate. Maybe my personal discoveries should be shared. It is my prayer that history, seen through these artifacts, will help my grandchildren understand why they are hearing today, “Black Lives Matter.”

Reflections on a Black Americana and Anti-Slavery Collection

The history of the United States is a history of people coming from all over the world to settle two continents gradually displacing a native population that went back centuries. Whether called indigenous as we do today, or Indians as did the Europeans, they were the original occupants of the land. They came from across the Pacific to where on the globe we call the Western Hemisphere. Then came waves of Europeans to both

North and South America. A different kind of wave were peoples brought from Africa in chains to work as slaves. The institution of slavery goes back centuries and existed in all parts of the world. It became part of the story of the development of the Americas. It is a tragic history that hardly corresponds with the United States as the “land of the free.” It is a story that must be studied and understood. My father abhorred discrimination against Negroes, or African Americans, and Blacks today. I believe he made me free of personal prejudice due to race, color or religion.

My grandfather put my Missouri farm boy father on a train to Chicago to get an education. His childhood sweetheart joined him. She worked; they married; he studied; they created a life. He became a children’s dentist. My mother had periodic house help, both Black and White. Many did in the Great Depression. I was taught people were people. I extend that to people who have disabilities, cognitive and physical.

One day when I was ten years old my father took me to the county courthouse to see where a Black man had been pulled from jail and hanged, just two years before I was born. Today I find it easy to understand why, “Black Lives Matter.”

In the history of segregation there are artifacts that tell the story, objects that range from the disgusting to the uplifting. Today on the National Mall is a museum that tells many stories. I started collecting over 40 years ago. It was an education. Jim Crow era material was fascinating. How could people think like that and demean another human being? Today you will find the “Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia” at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan. It tells the story of what could have become a caste system. For many, it was. I found African Americans collecting the same material and using the artifacts for education. Education is their value today. I was going to write a book on its terrible symbology. I did not, and sold the collection. In the collection were stereotypical pictures of boys eating watermelon, happily picking cotton and dancing, and several copies of a poem dating to the 19th century,

thought cute by some, but clearly offensive by any standard, “Ten Little Niggers.” There was even a first American edition of “Little Black Sambo.” That should give anyone an idea of the absurd, disfunctional, and disgusting way some people could think; or did not think. The items that remain are described here for the education of my grandchildren. I am trusting their better natures to understand.

Probably the most famous and iconic symbol of the anti-slavery movement was a cameo pottery medallion designed and produced in England by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787. Today we are familiar with beautiful Wedgwood pottery. The medallion showed a slave in chains seeking to be free and asking, “Am I not a man and a brother?” The symbol was placed on jewelry and inserted into objects and worn as an object of protest. Our miniature English painting on ivory is from c1830. Shown is the keeling slave held by a gold chain to the symbol of Great Britain. He appeals, “Britania, Set Me Free”.



There were similar tokens that people carried in their pockets and it became the symbol of the British “Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.” Wedgwood sent a large number of his cameos to Benjamin

Franklin, President of the Abolitionist Society in Philadelphia, who gave them to his friends. Franklin said, "I am persuaded it may have an effect equal to that of the best written pamphlet in procuring honor to those oppressed people".

In 1833 the British Parliament passed the "Slavery Abolition Act" to eliminate slavery in its colonies. Two tokens from the American anti-slavery movement are in our display box. The second asks. "Am I not a woman and a sister?"

In the United States, as in England, the Quakers were the most ardent in opposing slavery. You could find symbols of abolition even in the simplest items of family life such as this late 18th or early 19th century flint fire striker showing a kneeling slave seeking freedom. The striker would have been struck against flint, chert or rock, and the resulting sparks used with tinder to start a fire. Probably Pennsylvania and Quaker origin, someone was making a statement.

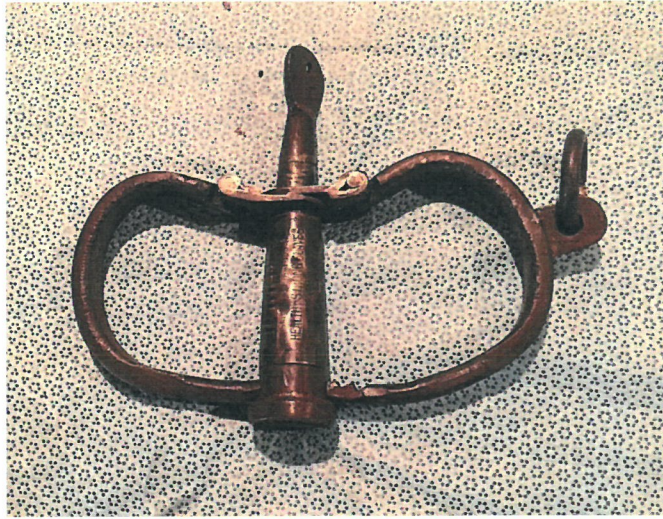


During the 1861 to 1865 Civil War, "The Confederate States of America" created its own postal system. Letters from that system are popular with collectors. One that is unique is in our display box with other artifacts. What makes this envelope unusual is the printing of the first Confederate

flag of seven stars and not the more familiar later flag with crossed stripes, and what was written on it. The envelope was never used and became a souvenir of a Union soldier. He wrote in script under the flag, "Traiter".



Also in the box are two American tokens, "Am I not a man and a brother?" and, "Am I not a woman and a sister?" In addition there are two of the famous British anti-slavery silver medals. The one on the left is dated 1834 showing, "Am I not a man and a brother?", and says, "From Great Britain to America". It is a "farthing condor token", privately minted coinage. The one on the right says, "Give Glory to God", with three slaves praying. At the bottom are American hand restraints used to hold slaves during auction. The brass key lock cuffs were used to restrain slaves while standing on the sales or auction block. On the shaft inside is a small brass plate, "O'Brian's. Dealers in Strong, Healthy Slaves."



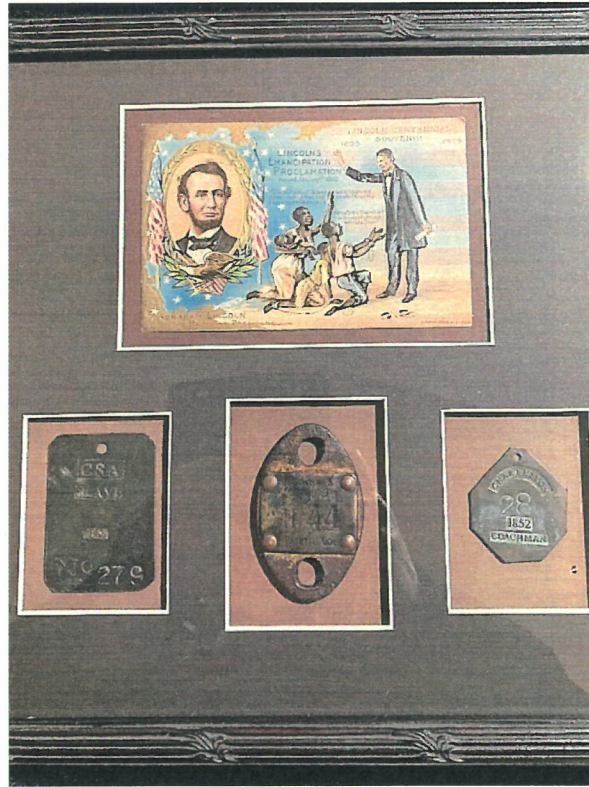
A popular form of entertainment from the 19th and early 20th centuries was the “Minstral Show.” The minstral in history was a traveling Medieval entertainer, usually a singer playing the harp. In 19th century America the Minstral Show became a popular vaudeville act with white actors in black face applying burnt cork, and playing the tamborine, bone clappers, joking and singing with ridiculing depictions of Black people. It was a popular traveling form of comic entertainment. It was not unusual to find children putting on Minstrel shows in grade school with no understanding of their terrible characterizing of a people whose roots in America were from the institution of slavery. In the fifth grade I put on cold cream, and then charcoal, to make my face black. I hated red lip stick. I was a Minstrel “end man”. A typical school play of the 1940s. So niave.

You could find minstrel shows selling or handing out souvenirs, much like shows do today. A small one I discovered is a single shot whiskey flask. Made of porcelin and with a puzzle, perhaps from a fraternal organization, I had it for several years before discovering a tiny inscription, “Pass Bearer, Compliments, Al. G. Fields, Fields Minstrels”. A.G. Fields was one of the most famous, and weathiest, of minstriel show producers. It was given “with compliments” to those attending an A. G. Fields Minstrel Show. The puzzle, unsolved, may indicate that the show

was sponsored by a chapter of the Elks Club. Minstrel shows were entertainment to some, and now ancient racial, and racist history.



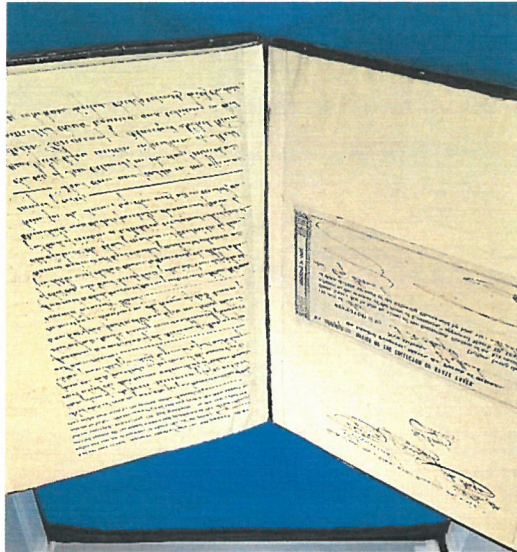
It was a journey in history to collect the artifacts of slavery in America. Material is still coming available at auction and from collectors. One item that always has interest are tags worn by slaves. Charleston, South Carolina used them from 1800 to 1865 as a tax receipt to keep track of the hiring out or rental of slaves and to record their occupation. I placed three tags in a display case that includes a 1908 chromolithograph postcard commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. It celebrates the January 1st 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. "Four million slaves were liberated from bondage that had existed from the beginning of national life. Henceforth, a Government without a Master, and Without a Slave."



The slave tag on the left is inscribed, “CSA Slave 1863 no. 279.”, and is probably a protest token. CSA means “Confederate States of America”, and the Confederacy did not issue slave tags. The one in the middle says, “Mrs Moss and Mr Carr H44 Fayette Mo.” and was perhaps some form of local identification, owner or slave. Missouri was a slave state from 1821 and a border state during the Civil War with citizens serving on both sides. The tag on the right is inscribed, “Charleston 28 1852 Coachman.” It is terrible to think a person was property and sold. You can actually find slavery bills of sale and they are collected for their educational value.

We have a rare and unique bill of sale, special because with it is a monograph by Samuel J. Krooks who obtained the document in New Orleans in 1901. He later wrote about its history. Krooks had been a Colonel in the 2nd New York Calvary Regiment in the Union Army, and from what records I could find, he did not serve well and had to resign. The bill of sale and the monograph are in a leather bound folder. In the

folder are the bill of sale for Richard Glover and the property tax receipt for his purchase.



Richard Glover was 22 years old and was sold by Linnoeus Henry Knight of Richmond, Virginia, for \$900 to George Jacobs of Saint James Parish, located between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Mr Knight had to pay Louisiana three dollars in “State Taxes on Landed Property, Slaves, etc. Parish of Orleans”. After all, Mr Glover was property, and there were taxes.

What makes the monograph unique is that it not only records the life of Richard Glover, it makes him a hero...and content. He went into battle in the Civil War with his “Master” and when George Jacobs was killed, Glover brought the body home and lived until seventy with “happy days spent in Dixie land”. He came to “peace with man and God”, and was buried in the “old plantation graveyard”. He knew nothing else.

It was not unusual in the Jim Crow era of southern legalized segregation, to depict the lives of former slaves as being one of happiness and

acceptance of what must be just good old southern living. The language used is amazing and examples abound in the monograph.

Richard was a “good natured and happy negro”. Married, he had “a band of six interesting pickaninnies who loved watermelons as only these darkies can”. “Cotton picking time is a romp with nature”, and “all day long they pick and sing , laugh and jest.” “Saturday’s nigger’s day they say ... jolly pickers head to town, spend money on pop corn, peanut cakes and candies ... things that are to them good in life.”



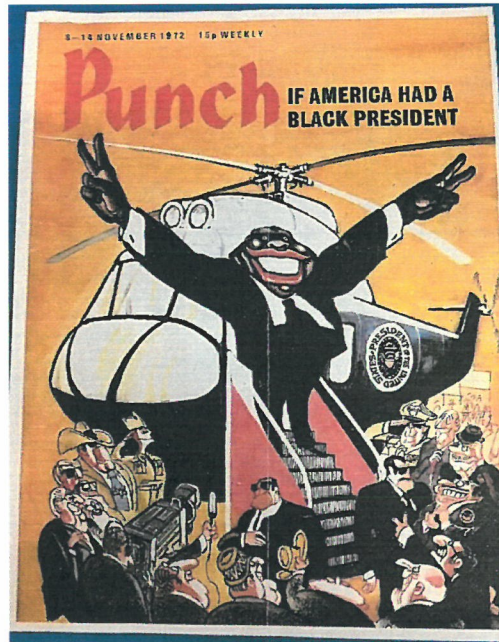
Language was not alone when it came to painting African American southern living as good living. In a flea market was found a scarf called, “The Happy South”, made with vegetable dye and sold by Campbell, Metzger, and Jacobson around 1900. And there is a 1909 Charleston S.C. pinback that helps further the happiness myth.

Today we might call it, brainwashing.



The United States was not the only nation to depict Blacks in a demeaning way. In the 1940s a comic book character, Memín Pingín, was created in Mexico and enjoyed in books and comic strips. A mischievous boy, the character has remained popular in Latin America

In 2005 Mexico issued a series of limited edition stamps celebrating comic book characters. Backlash was swift in the U.S. with protestors appearing at the Mexican consulate in Las Angeles and organizations like the NAACP immediately denouncing the stamps as racial stereotyping. The White House called them offensive. Over 700,000 sheets of 6 peso stamps, or 60 cents for a sheet, sold out immediately. There were lines at the post offices. They instantaneously became collectors items. I quickly bought a sheet that has ten of the series of five. The stamps caused outrage in the U.S.

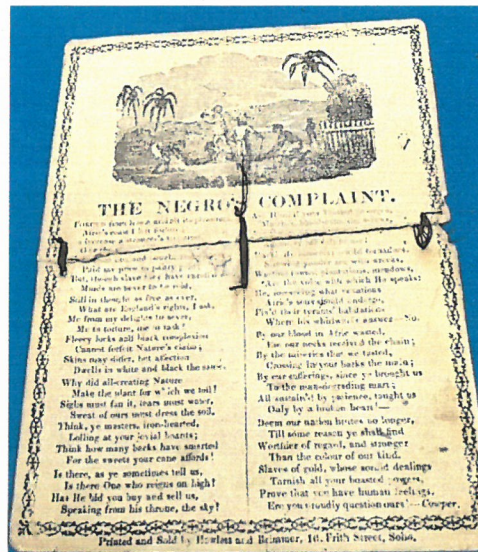


One of the more remarkable items in the collection is a Fall 1972 issue of “Punch”, the British weekly humor magazine. In it is a satirical article, titled, ‘Bre’r President’. On the cover is a Black United States President stepping down from his helicopter, parroting then President Nixon’s famous wild armed gesture, “V for victory”. “If America had a Black President”, is the banner. The article prods U.S hypocrisy, and uses all the early American racial stereotypical language. It mentions, “White House hospitality and respect, for so long denied them.”, and then tilts to a President signing legislation, saying, “All this heah writing stuff, I sho doan know how your gennelmen manages to git the hang of it, heh-heh-heh.”

Your fathers high school classmate, Barry Obama, did just fine.

The article ends when a retired white-haired Black former American President visits the British Foreign Secretary at Yorktown, Virginia, where two hundred years earlier the British General Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington. The elder Black statesman says he is old, but willing to work for a “genuine gentleman”. The British Foreign Secretary agrees ... and buys him.

It was from Great Britain that we discovered the artfully and intellectually crafted anti-slavery material from the late 18th and early 19th century. A beautiful example is a small tract printed and sold by Howlett and Brimmer of Soho in London.



“Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard and stronger
Than the colour of our kind.
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings,
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours!”

On the top is a woodcut of a slave being beaten by his owner in the Caribbean. On the tract is the 1788 poem written by the famous English poet, William Cowper, “The Negro’s Complaint.” The poem was so moving it was used in the lyrics of songs. What is unusual about this one

is that the London printed tract was found in our South. It was carefully folded and parted, bound by thread so it could be concealed in a pocket and not exposed to prying eyes. My theory is that it was the personal possession of a literate slave who kept it protected and close to his body.

He could read.

He could keep hope alive.



Graphic artists in Great Britain who believed slavery was unjust and should be abolished could be as penetrating in their drawings as today's political cartoonists. Three small pen and ink drawings in the collection are pretty dramatic. The drawing in the middle is believed to be Irish. It shows three slaves on a wheel producing what looks like the fine Irish linen enjoyed by British gentry. Under supervision of a man with a rod, it is titled, "Steps to reformation." The drawing on the right pulls from the American idiom "Uncle Tom", a subservient Black. He is crouching, naked, among cattails. "Nebbys an nieces – don't mak lark. This Uncle Tom ye see in' dark. Why aint dress'd? a'co's yer know. Dey purchase me from my "Old Chloe".

The drawing on the left tells an even more dark and graphic story. A Black man meets an English sailor walking in the rain. They talk; the sailor first. “The Law preserve us! Why the critters mad!! Put on your hat and save your head, my lad. Yah! Sailor man, You let poor nigger be _ De head is Massa’s _ hat belongs to me.”

[illegible]

15

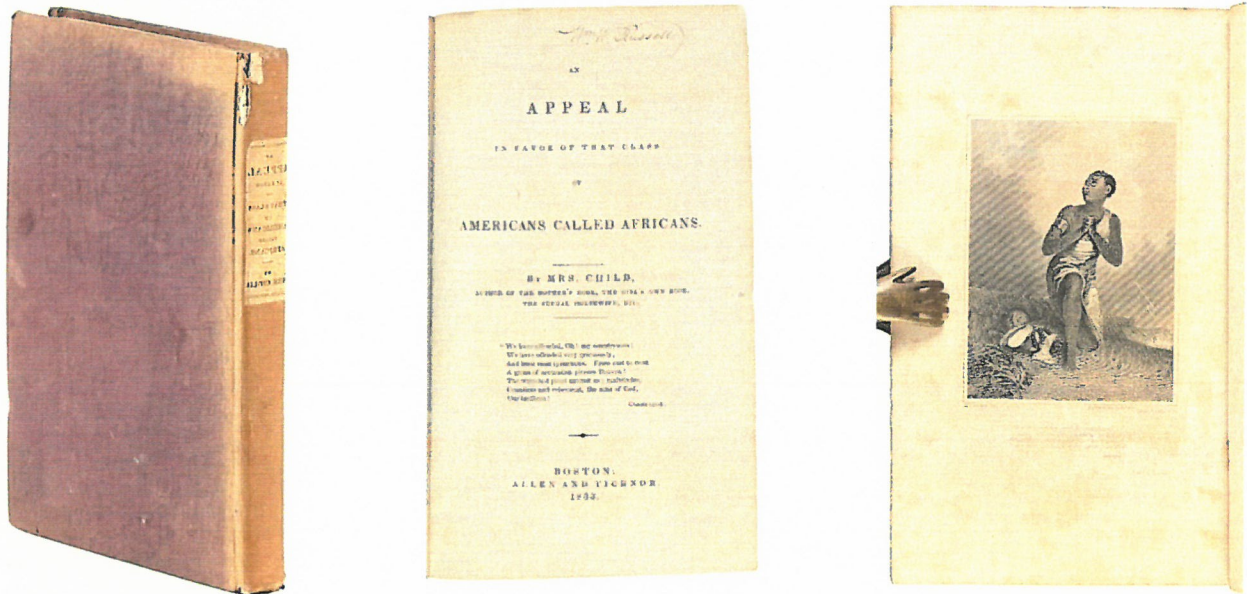
in Philadelphia. Our tract was published in the “Anti-Slavery Bugle” of Salem, Ohio, a community founded by Quakers. What makes it special is that it is a poem by the famous John Greenleaf Whittier, titled “The Branded Hand”.

“Then lift that manly right hand, bold ploughman of the wave! Its branded palm shall prophecy, Salvation to the Slave!”



Although not artifacts, I keep in our library two books that are important. First is the 1919 “History of the American Negro in the Great World War” by W. Allison Sweeney, and a rare copy of “The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, presenting the original facts and documents upon which the story is founded together with collaborative statements verifying the truth of the work.” It was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” and published in Boston in 1853. The author states she writes this “book with no pleasure, and with pain ... commended it to the candid attention and earnest prayers of all true Christians, throughout the world. May they unite their prayers that Christendom may be delivered from so great an evil as slavery”.

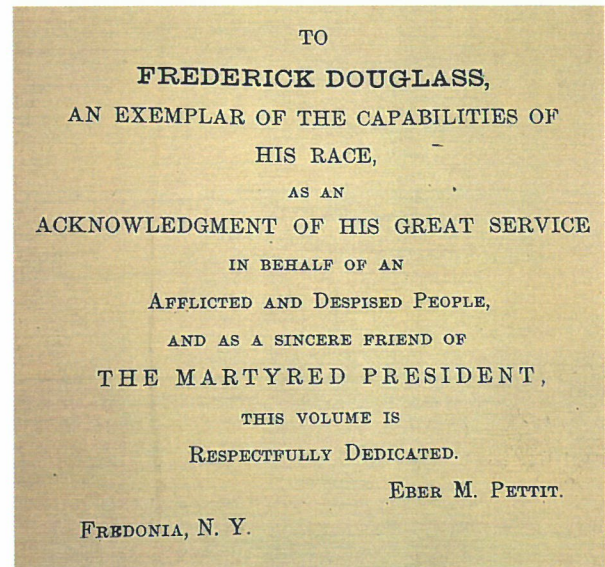
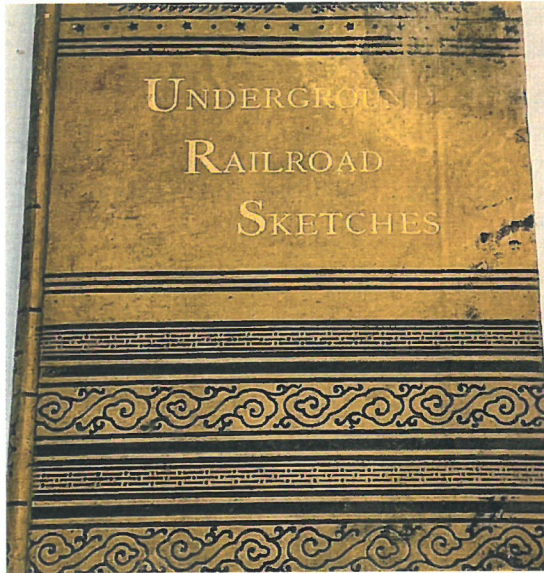
In the collection is a very special book written in 1833. What makes it unique is that early discrimination protest writings were usually in tracts, what we might call pamphlets today. This rare first edition book is an American first.



“An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans”, was written by Lydia Maria Child and published by Allen and Ticknorn in Boston. Mrs. Child was an American author who despised slavery and as writer and advocate had significant influence in denouncing the inequality in the education and employment of Blacks. She knew the book would bring ridicule and censure and her magazine failed the next year.

I loved how she wrote in the preface: "*the market is so glutted with flattery, that a little truth might be acceptable, were it only for its rarity.*"

It was the first abolitionist book written and published in the United States and succeeded in inducing many to join the anti-slavery movement.



During slavery and before the Civil War, what became known as the “Underground Railroad” was an effort by abolitionists using a network of homes, farms, businesses, churches, etc., to set up routes to help slaves flee the South and achieve freedom and an opportunity for a new life in the North. Those who helped became known as “conductors”, and between 1810 and 1850 it is estimated that over 100,000 Blacks fled to the northern states and Canada. It is fascinating history. This rare first edition book by Eber M. Pettit is only 6 by 9 inches and was dedicated to the famous Black writer and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Published by McKimstry and Son in 1879, it recounts the thrilling moments in the escapes of slaves and the many courageous people who helped them as many Whites risked their own lives in the cause of freedom.



Life in the plantation south was simple. An example might be this rolling pin that was hand turned from a single piece of wood, probably southern yellow pine. We found it in a small roadside shop in North Carolina. It was said to have been discovered in a former plantation shack and slave made. To look at it is to think. This Black doll with articulated limbs was found on a farm in Virginia. A hand crafted work of American folk art today, it could have been slave-made.



Any collection that tells the African American experience should have the beautiful as part of a brighter narrative over dark. We found that both in dolls and in art.

Perhaps the rarest of early Black dolls sought by collectors are the “Beecher” dolls, or more properly, “Missionary Ragbabies”.

Julia Beecher was the wife of Reverend Thomas Beecher of Elmira, New York. Missionary ragbabies were hand made in a the sewing circle of the Congressional Church from 1890 to 1910 and proceeds from their sale supported the work of missionaries. The dolls were crafted from cloth stockinette with handpainted faces, supposedly detailed by Julia Beecher herself.

Our two are unique because we have a pair that appear to have been made as a couple, or at least it is nice to think so. We found them four years apart, the girl in 1994 and the boy in 1998. Their clothing matches in type and color. They should never again be separated. We display the two with

a hand oil painted faced girl in a yellow dress c1879 from Lancaster, Pennsylvania,. We obtained it after it won second place in the 1988 Baltimore Best Doll Show.



With them are two late 19th century Rag dolls from Pennsylvania, purchased separately, but clearly crafted by the same hand.

Any child, any race, could hug them.



Collectors of art that tell the story of the post Civil War era cannot ignore the paintings of William Aiken Walker, a southern genre folk artist. His paintings were of many subjects but he is best remembered for depicting the lives of former slaves, just as he saw them. His work did contribute to the trope that Blacks were living happily in the Sunny South. There are small paintings of men and women as well as plantation and farmyard scenes with cabins and wagons. Our small 8 by 10 inch painting is of two children picking cotton. There are no others like it in the two books on his life. It was purchased in 1997 and came from the estate of Dr. Phyllis Pfeiffer, the first woman graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Philadelphia.



A very interesting folk art painting of early African Americans is one that describes life on the docks of New York City. Titled “Dancing for Eels, 1820, Catharine Market.” On the dock shed can be seen, “Port Catharine New York.” Today the location is part of Chinatown on the East River. In 1786 the location was approved, “to create a public market-house at Catharine Slip.” Later it became “Catharine Street Eel Market at Catharine Slip”, where incoming ships docked. News at the time recorded the dock packed with people on Sunday mornings as strolling musicians entertained the crowds. A popular event was a “Dancing for Eels” contest, where the best entertainer won a prize, an eel. The painter may have done this more than once, since I was made aware that it can also be found in a museum collection.



We have always loved paintings of children. Some we collected are on the walls of the home of our son and his family for grandchildren to enjoy. The simplicity and beauty of this painting of a young girl with a pail could not be more appealing.



Paintings can also be alagorical and carry many meanings, leaving it to the your imagination. A painting dating to the time of the Civil War is interesting on several levels. A Black woman is holding a White child. To one side is apparently the child's mother. On the other side are two Black children and a small dog, with white fur that could be seen as depicting a sheep. A boy has a staff and seems to be offering a gift. The girl also has a gift in her hands. The collector from whom it was purchased said it came from a Northern folk art painter, not Southern. What is the message? Some see a Black Holy Mother Mary, and a White Christ Child.



When living in Charleston, South Carolina in the mid 1960s, we observed the “Charleston Renaissance.” Southern artists were being re-discovered. W. A. Walker was one, and an artist “discovered” after her passing was Antonette Rhett. She was known for her floral and botanical watercolors and etchings of scenes in and around Charleston. Her etchings and drawings of plantation life are small and full of meaning. Some years ago at a house sale we saw several. They were signed originals. We bought, “In Dixieland in S.C.”, and “Negro Cabin, South Carolina”. The seller was a relative who I believe did not know that a treasure was in an old cigar box. We also bought a water color painted print of Iris. Antonette Rhett was a founding member of the Charleston Etchers Club and passed away in 1964.



Few know that the first African American hero of the Civil War was a steward and cook on a ship. His name was William Tillman and his story has only been recently widely told. I discovered him when accidentally buying at auction what may be his only known photograph. He was known as the “Union’s First Black Hero”. It is perhaps the only existing photo of William Tillman, an 1861 1½ by 1¼ inch tintype by Abbott and Company of New York, probably commissioned and sold by P.T. Barnum.

It was on board the merchant schooner S. J. Waring sailing from New York to Uruguay when on July 7th 1861, the ship was boarded by men from the new confederacy’s privateer, Jeff Davis. The confederates ordered the ship’s master to haul down the American flag and took Tillman to the privateer. Without a Navy, the Confederacy began commissioning privateers with “letters of marque” to harass Union commerce. The Civil War had begun just weeks before. “Billy” Tillman lived in Delaware and was born free and had never been a slave. A seaman at seventeen years old, he became a cook and steward on packet ships sailing the east coast. He became a prisoner when a five-man prize crew took charge of the Waring and headed to Charleston, South Carolina,

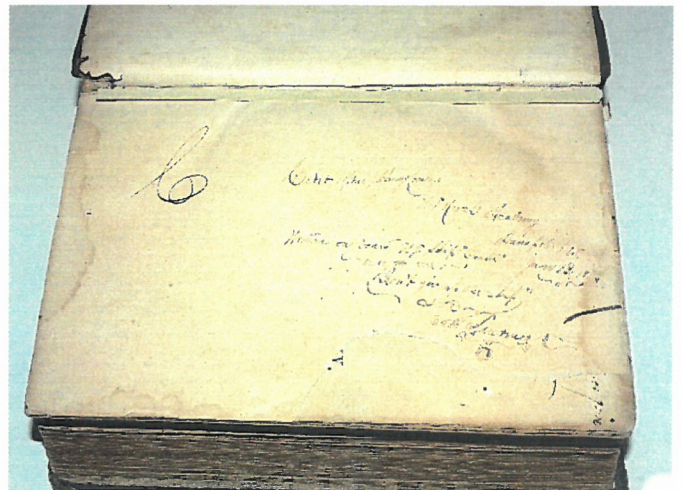
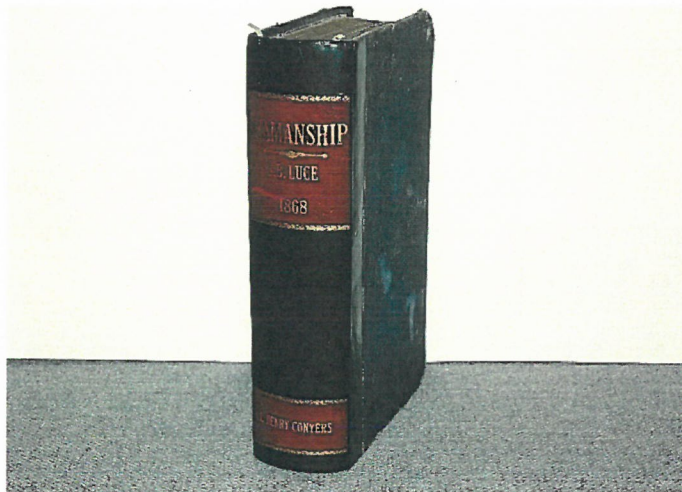
with its cargo to seek prize money. At first Tillman was treated well, but it did not take long for him to discover a plan to be sold into slavery along with the prize cargo. He would have none of it. At midnight on July 16, he took a hatchet and killed three of the five confederates and with help from other crew members threw their bodies into the sea. The story of this remarkable adventure can be found in an article I wrote for the August 2018 issue of Civil War Times, and an earlier 2016 book, “The Rest I Will Kill”. The book title came from a statement that he wanted to get “all that I can back alive, and the rest I will kill.”

The Waring sailed successfully back north arriving at Sandy Hook, N.J. and then New York. First placed in custody as a witness, Tillman soon became an instant celebrity and to many a hero. The famous showman P.T. Barnum invited Tillman to “Barnum’s American Museum” where for several days he would relate his experiences as Barnum displayed “the identical hatchet” used to bring down confederate rebels. It is known that he took part in a successful and long lawsuit with the Waring’s owners for indemnification for recapturing their ship. His share was \$7,000. There is no record if he ever received the money, and indeed no record of his life after 1862

Tillman’s valor and resistance to slavery was undeniable. Horace Greeley wrote in the New York Daily Tribune that the “nation was indebted to this black steward for the first vindication of its (the Union) honor on the sea”. Many were saying that William Tillman was “responsible for producing the Union’s first naval victory of the war.” Booker T. Washington called him “brave as a lion”, and “Lion of the Sea”.

In 2021 I proposed to the U.S. Navy that the USS Doris Miller (CVN-81), a nuclear aircraft carrier under construction, someday carry the honor of being called, “**Lion of the Sea**”.

Following the end of the Civil War came a time in southern history known as “Reconstruction”. Efforts were made to rebuild the Southern States and integrate freed slaves into American society. It is a unique time in our country’s history. Blacks were being elected to public office and the first Black member to the U.S. Congress from South Carolina was Robert Elliott. He sponsored the first Black Midshipman to the United States Naval Academy. We have the only known artifact from that moment in history.



James Henry Conyers entered the school at Annapolis, Maryland, in 1872. Like all new midshipmen, he was issued a book, “Seamanship,” written by Commander S. B. Luce as a definitive nautical reference. Today an academic building, Luce Hall, commemorates his name. Conyers was immediately faced with intense abuse. It made the newspapers. He was provided protection. Some students were dismissed for his treatment but the academic staff was generally supportive. Conyers was able to last over a year before resigning. He wrote his name several times in his book, “Seamanship” and especially penned the famous battle cry, “Don’t Give Up the Ship”. He did not want to **give up**. This book is the only known artifact of his time at Annapolis and today is on loan and displayed at the

Naval Academy Museum. The United States Naval Academy graduated its first African American Naval officer in 1949.

Writing **“Don’t give up”** in his book on Seamanship, in a hammock, with maybe a candle, on board the station ship “Santee”, where first year “middies” bunked, and others sent there for disciplinary behaviors, lends itself to an easy vision of a young man who was the first in trying to crack the color barrier of an institution that today produces top Naval officers of every race and creed.

“God will not ask thy race, nor will He ask thy birth. Alone He will ask of thee, what hast thou done on earth.”

Artifacts of history are like books of history. They must be studied, and studied, and studied.



Tiny precious folk-art painting of two girls praying, that includes century old European stamps, cut-out to serve as clothes.

“Actorum Memores Simul Affectamus Agenda.”

(Let deeds of our past serve as guides to our future.)

Copywrite 2020 Daniel W. McKinnon, Jr.