

# Discover Yellowed Tatters of History in B'ham House

By CLEO SYMONS  
Special Writer

A century old scrapbook compiled by an Indian Quaker has produced some reminders of the days of slavery and the story of two famous people.

The Centennial of the Civil War has revived interest in that dark period of our country's history, and many families have discovered mementoes of those troubled times among their keepsakes.

ONE SUCH souvenir, the scrapbook, was found among the possessions of the late Daniel and Sarah Symons, aged 91 and 87 years, respectively, of W. Brown street, Birmingham.

Its tattered and yellowed pages, so painstakingly put together by the former's mother, preserved innumerable religious "pieces", recipes, obituaries, poems and among other odds and ends, two newspaper

clippings relating to a bygone era. One, a curious reminder of slavery days, is a copy of a shipping bill dropped from a bale of waste-paper which was being unloaded on a Cincinnati wharfbort by a group of roustabouts, some of them probably descendants of erstwhile slaves. The bill, colored with age, speaks poignantly for itself:

"Shipped in good order and

well-conditioned, by James Nelson, on board the good bark called the Leda, wherof Alex. Ruark is master for the present voyage, and now lying in the port of Baltimore, and bound for New Orleans. To say 18 negro slaves, described as follows, but more particularly described on the clearance of the Customs House, Baltimore:

No.	Name	Age	Hgt.	Color
1.	Shaw Ann	26	5'4"	Copper
2.	Ram	9	3'11"	Copper
3.	Mary Elizabeth	4	2'8"	Copper
4.	John Benjamin	4	2'8"	Copper
5.	Lindsay	Infant		Copper
6.	Harrah	Infant		Copper
7.	Martha	11	4'11"	Black
8.	Elizabeth	24	5'10"	Black
9.	William Brazel	2	2'7"	Black
10.	Little Mims	Infant		Black
11.	Babin	5	3'7"	Black
12.	Teresa	5	3'11"	Black
13.	Charles	7	3'11"	Black
14.	Paul	39	5'7"	Black
15.	John Henry	25	5'9"	Copper
16.	Ben	40	5'8"	Copper
17.	Sally	40	5'8"	Copper
18.	Sallie	Alexander B. Ellis, For the Master.		

"Being marked and numbered as in the margin, and are to be

delivered in like good order and well-conditioned, at the aforesaid port of New Orleans (the danger of the seas only excepted) unto J. H. Ashbridge, or to his assignees, he paying freight for the said slaves: adults Twelve Dollars each; under twelve years, Six Dollars each, with no privilege or average of custom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Master or Purser of the said bark hath affirmed to three Bills of Lading, all of this Tenor and Date: the one of which bill being accomplished, the other two are void.

"Dated in Baltimore the 15th Day of November, 1848.  
"Freight—\$138 has been paid, John Henderson and Co., Per Alex. B. Ellis, Baltimore, Nov. 18, 1848.

(THE CLIPPING states that this shipping bill was picked up by Capt. A. P. Ellison, Sup't, Pittsburg and Cincinnati Packet Co.)

The second clipping is an account of the famous Underground Railroad, and "Uncle" Levi Coffin, reputedly its president, and his wife, "Aunt" Katie, the tireless Quaker couple who were instrumental in assisting countless fugitive slaves to freedom across the Canadian border.

The underground had three principal lines from the South, converging at Newport, Ohio, now Fountain City.

ONE CAME from Cincinnati, one from Madison, and one from Jeffersonville, Indiana, the Ohio, the principle barrier between the runaway slaves and freedom, could not be crossed by ferry, without passes endorsed by some responsible person known to the ferryman. But slaves generally found a way to get across, the unknown reporter states.

At first, the fugitives were kept by the free colored people in the neighborhood of Fountain City. They were the descendants of slaves freed by the Friends (Quakers) many years before at the expense of the North Carolina yearly meeting. Not skilful in helping their fleeing brothers, many were captured and returned to their masters.

These God-fearing Quakers, averse to bearing arms, made notable contributions to the cause of freedom and peace, working tirelessly and fearlessly throughout the history of their country.

MANY OF the whites, afraid of the penalty of the law, refused to help them. But in the fall of 1852, there came one Levi Coffin, who thought it always safe to do right.

Believing the Mosaic law which says, "Thou shalt not deliver up thy servant who has escaped unto thee," more binding than the United States Law of 1793, or the Law of 1850, he did everything possible to help them for more than 20 years.

The old brick house in Fountain City in which "Uncle" Levi lived, still stood in the 1860's, (the yellowed clipping reports) and was furnished with many a closet and cranny in the attic, as hiding places for the runaway slaves.

THERE WAS also a "cave", or oblong room opening out of the main cellar by an iron door. Formerly, a moving brick wall formed

the partition, which allowed the fleeing negroes to escape when his house varied from two to 17, found by the slave hunters, who did have a team and wagon and their pursuers came too close.

The number of fugitives in Coffin's house varied from two to 17, and the annual average was 100. No trace of them could ever be declared he must spirit them away (See HISTORY, Page 7-D)



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**10**

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**1**

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