

A Slaveowner in Iowa

In 1852 William Fletchall sold Lot 8, Section 30 in Middle Fork Township of Ringgold County to L. P. Allen, known as "Tune" Allen, a North Carolinian from Buncombe County of that State. With him came his wife, children, father, and other relatives to settle in their new home. But this was not all. He also brought two negro slaves — a boy and a girl, twelve and fourteen years old.

Some said Allen thought he was going to settle in Missouri. Others were of the opinion that he knew he was coming to Iowa, but that his farm was close enough to slave territory so that he could slip his negroes across the line if it ever became necessary. This could easily be true because the land he bought from Fletchall lay on the border between Missouri and Iowa. The buildings and family burial plot were but a few rods from the line.

Whatever may have been Allen's intentions, the slaves were brought to Iowa and held there for a year. Other early settlers in Middle Fork Township were largely from northern States and unsympathetic with their southern neighbor. There-

fore, sometime in 1853 "Tune" Allen decided to dispose of his "personal" property. This was accomplished by selling the slaves to a buyer from near St. Joseph, Missouri, for \$1100.

Slavery was not the only thing Allen's neighbors held against him. He was a habitual drunkard. And when he became intoxicated, he lost his reason. He would start chasing his family: up into the loft at one end of the house they would scramble, thence across the loft and down to the ground floor again. After a round or two of this violent exercise, "Tune" would become exhausted and fall asleep, to awaken somewhat sobered — at least until he again started to drink.

While L. P. Allen lived in Iowa, his father, three sons, and two daughters died and were buried on the farm. Incongruous to the people then, and to the infrequent visitor since, seemed the epitaph on his father's tombstone:

Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep
From which none ever wake to weep.

How could such folks ever seek rest with the Lord after the lives they had lived, wondered the neighbors. Of the children, the sons died in 1856, 1862, and 1863. The daughters, Rachel and Nancy, both died in November, 1865. Apparently wishing to leave the scene of so much unhappiness, Allen moved to Jackson County, Missouri.

There ended the sojourn of a slaveholder in Iowa.

Allen himself had but a short time to live. He died in an insane asylum that same year. Harvey Waugh, another Middle Fork resident, originally from Ohio and biased against the South, expressed the feeling of many of Allen's neighbors: "It doesn't look strange that a man who would bring slaves into Ringgold County, should some day go to the insane asylum."

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