

## Edward Delaney, Freed Slave Is Buried on Hazelwood Hill

On a shaded hill in Hazelwood cemetery is the last resting place of Edward Delaney, a former slave, who stays close by his master's family, even long after death.

How came a Negro slave to Grinnell, a town of a free state—a slave who served his master 71 years, then died a free man when 75 years old?

The story leads back to Maryland when Joseph Hays bought the little four-year-old Negro boy for his son Tommy, in the year 1790.

### Slave-Holders

When Joseph's grandchildren, Samuel, Abram, and Catherine, with a relative, Daries Thomas, came to Poweshiek county, they were called Slave-holders, because they came from south of the Mason-Dixon line, and were not given good land. They decided to go farther west and purchased horses and equipment.

Just as they were ready to leave, Henry Lawrence, one of the founders of Grinnell, came by, and, when upon questioning, he found they had wished to purchase land for their homes he took them north of Grinnell into Chester township, where

tracts were chosen for all the members of the Joseph Hays family who cared to emigrate. This land was entered at \$1.25 per acre.

### Bought For \$5

So came Edward Delaney to Grinnell, but he was not a slave. Joseph's son, Joseph, had bought him for \$5.00 to prevent his being sold with the property and gave him his freedom. He did not want to be left there and so he came west with the family.

He lived in a double frame house on the east side of Main Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. This was the home of Aunt Debbie Hays until her death in the late eighties. Here "Uncle Ned" lived and here he died.

In the Hays lot in Hazelwood, stands the simple stone bearing the bronze emblem of the D.A.R., the last resting place of Aunt Debbie Hays, a real daughter of the American Revolution. A few feet away under the tree, with a small stone, lies all that is mortal of Edward Delaney.



**BEING REMEMBERED**—Obscure and virtually unknown in Hazelwood cemetery, the grave of a former slave, Edward Delaney, will not be forgotten this Memorial Day. Mickey Shook, 5, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Shook, places a bouquet on the resting place of Delaney who died in 1861 at the age of 75. Material for accompanying article was submitted by Miss Nettie Bayley and Mrs. O. F. Parish of the Grinnell Museum Society.

## Body Of Faithful Slave Rests In Hazelwood Cemetery

On a shaded hillside in beautiful Hazelwood cemetery in Grinnell is the last resting place of Edward Delaney. A tree growing from the foot of the grassy mound testifies to the age of the grave; for the tree is more than two feet in diameter. A head stone of the style of fifty years ago bears witness that some one cared when the prairie sod was cut on the treeless slope sixty seven years ago—cared enough to furnish a last resting place in his own family lot—cared enough to ease the declining years, provide medical attendance and give Christian burial to a black man and to mark his grave with the stone bearing the inscription: Edward Delaney 1780-1861.

How came a negro, Edward Delaney, to be interred in a Grinnell cemetery? It is difficult at this late date and this far north to appreciate the real condition of the colored man born in slavery. Edward Delaney had no remembrance of father or mother. His color and his features testified to his pure African blood. He was sold as a slave in a slave state at an early age and the man who sold him was a planter named Delaney, hence the name on the headstone in Hazelwood.

Edward Delaney a slave for seventy years died a free man at seventy five. The man who stood long ago by the open grave, who, no doubt brushed away a tear as the clouds fell above the still form of "Uncle Ned" the man who gave his former slave a white man's burial and who raised the stone in his memory, had, in his possession a bill of sale testifying that Joseph Hays was the master and Edward Delaney his slave. But while legally the owner of a slave, Joseph Hays hated the institution of slavery, hated it to the extent that he cast the only vote east in his county in Maryland for John P. Hale, the Free Soil candidate for President.

It seems a long trail from Uncle Ned, the humble slave, who lies in Hazelwood cemetery to the immortal author of the "Star Spangled Banner,"

Francis Scott Key. Human destinies are curiously interwoven and had it not been for the friendship of Francis Scott Key and the Father of Joseph Hays, who bought Ned, Edward Delaney would lie in an unmarked grave, on some southern plantation.

Here is the story:

We shall have to go back to the stirring days of the "War of 1812." Almost within hearing of the guns of the British fleet as they sought to force an entrance to Baltimore Harbor by reducing Fort McHenry. Here in Carroll County, Maryland was the 400 acre plantation of Joseph Hays, the elder, grandfather of Daniel F. and Joseph T. Hays still living in Grinnell. Adjoining the Hays plantation was that of Col. John Ross Key, father of Francis Scott Key, who during the bombardment of Fort McHenry penciled the words of the National Anthem on a scrap of paper.

Colonel Key commanded a regiment of militia called out by President Washington in 1794 to suppress the "Whiskey insurrection" in Western Pennsylvania. It was in a company of Col. John Ross Key's regiment, composed of Carroll County men that Francis Scott Key and Joseph Hays friends from boyhood served side by side, as they had served in the War of the Revolution under Washington.

It was in about the year 1790 that Joseph Hays, then a young man of about 25 decided to buy a "little nigger boy" as a playmate for his eldest son Tommie. It was with this in mind that he drove to Baltimore and thence presumably by boat to the "Eastern shore" of Maryland. This was a long trip for those days before the advent of the railroad and steam boat. At the plantation of one Delaney where "pickaninnies" were plentiful, Hays purchased "Neddie" then four years old and took him home to Tommie as one would take a dog or a pony. It will be remembered that Maryland was a slave state and that Joseph

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Hays assumed obligations other than simple ownership when he bought and paid for Ned Delaney. While he assumed ownership he also assumed responsibility for his slave's maintenance. He had no right to free him without giving bond for his maintenance. This was a just provision as it prevented heartless owners freeing their slaves and permitting them to die without care when their usefulness was past, or to become public charges.

Then came the War of 1812, the burning of Washington, the defense of Baltimore and finally peace.

His story repeats itself and the average man fails to read its warnings. An incident in the life of Ned and indicative of the conditions following the second war with England is illuminating.

There were no railroads, few factories, and consequently little except local traffic. This was the era of canal construction and the movement of goods was slow and expensive. Each community had its own flour mill where the wheat of the neighborhood was milled. The finished flour was hauled to the cities by teams, stored in warehouses and distributed by the slow methods then in vogue. It was Ned's job to haul his master's flour from the local mill to Baltimore, some forty miles distant. Ned was at this time in his prime, a man of about thirty-five years of age. Shortly before peace was declared he went to Baltimore with a load of flour to be stored in the warehouse for future sale. We'll tell the rest in Ned's own report of the transaction on his return. Said Ned, "The Merchant said, 'Tell your master he'd better sell his flour; because it's going to go down.' I said, 'you say flour's going down? Then sell it.' He did and here's your money." The sale was made at \$14.00 per barrel. The next flour Ned hauled to Baltimore brought \$4.00 per barrel. This will sound familiar to Iowa farmers who held \$3.00 corn in the expectation of getting \$3.50 after the last war.

A resident of Carroll County at this time was one Geier later generally spoken of by the Hays clan as "old Geier." Evidently a man of prominence in his community, he was appointed Paymaster in the army during the war with England. Inasmuch as this position called for the handling

of considerable Government funds, it was necessary that Geier secure bondsmen. Bonding companies were then unknown and what more natural than that Geier look to his brother Masons for assistance. Joseph Hays and three neighbors all prominent Masons and all well to do planters in Carroll County signed Geier's bond. Final settlement of war claims is always somewhat slow. The temptation to mishandle Government funds is not "new under the sun." Whatever the reason for Geier's betrayal of his trust we have no record. Hays and his fellow bondsmen awoke one day to find that Geier had decamped with Government funds and that as honor-

able bondsmen, they would have to reimburse the government.

We can only imagine the feelings of these wealthy planters to find themselves beggared in late life through no fault of their own. When it appeared that his entire estate would go under the hammer to satisfy the claim of the government, Hays' first impulse was to protect Ned, then a healthy man, valuable as a servant, and as property subject to sale for debt. When it seemed sure that everything must go Hays sold Ned to his son, also named Joseph at the nominal price of \$5.00. A bill of sale was drawn up and Edward Delaney became the property of Joseph Hays, Jr.

Francis Scott Key now appears in the picture. He is now living in Washington and holding a prominent official position. Stirred by the plight of his boyhood friends he used his influence with Congress and secured the passing of a special act granting the bondsmen life leases on their plantations. In his presentation of their cases to Congress, Key argued that the obligation to the Government was through no fault of the bondsmen, that the men were old and would be thrown on charity in their declining years and that the granting of this respite would only keep the government out of the property for a few years at most. In the latter part of his prophecy Key was three-fourths correct. Three of the plantations soon passed into Government hands by the death of their owners and were sold to satisfy the claim. Joseph Hays, thanks to the intervention of Francis Scott Key and a good constitution lived to enjoy the use of his property for about thirty-five years longer.

Faithful to his master, who had prevented him from being "Sold south" Ned served the old master while the nominal property of the son. The old plantation served as a home for the elder Joseph and for his four sons and three daughters as well as for the orphan children of his son Abram. These three latter, Abram, Samuel and Catherine with a relative Darius Thomas were among the early settlers in Poweshieck and Jasper Counties.

Then came the death of the elder Joseph in 1852 at the ripe age of 90, having reared a large family established them for themselves in spite of his earlier misfortune, he passed on. The death of Joseph Hays terminated the life lease and after the necessary legal formalities occupying several months the Hays plantation went to the block, was subdivided into three

farms and sold by the government.

There is a sequel to the story. "Old Geier" took his stealings with him to Missouri, invested in cheap lands and grew wealthy. He became a man of prominence in his new community and had the effrontery to get himself elected to Congress. Francis Scott Key remembered the case of his former friends. It was too late to help them; but tradition has it that he went to Geier and compelled him to make restitution for at least part of the stolen funds under threat of prosecution.

Upon the death of the elder Joseph the Hays clan, numbering now about seventeen found themselves without a home. This was a contingency naturally foreseen and like prudent people they had been laying aside funds against the death of the aged head of the family. Also like prudent people they cast their eyes to the West.

A council was called and the question arose as to what would be done with Ned. Legally he was the property of Jos. Hays the younger, although he had always lived and worked for the elder Joseph. Ned was an old man now, able to do but little work and crippled with rheumatism. The owner was responsible for the slave and he must be provided for. It was decided to consult Ned himself. His verdict was "I'll stick to Debbie." Debbie with Mary, her sister both unmarried had kept the house for their father, and his family and had practically become the head of the family at his death.

With no definite goal in view the long journey toward the west commenced. Three wagons with seventeen people made up the party. Three the double frame house on Main Street

months, were required for the trip. Uncle Ned still legally a slave was with the party. Still a slave he came to the Ohio river at Wheeling. When he reached the Ohio shore two of the boys in the party lifted Uncle Ned so he could "crack" his rheumatic heels together, free at last on Ohio soil, but dependent on his white friends for care in his declining years.

Across Ohio, then fairly settled, on through Indiana, on through Illinois mud where a stop was made with relatives at Rushville. Uncle Ned enjoyed every mile of the trip. A negro was a curiosity in the north at that time. When the caravan passed through a settlement Ned was given a seat high on the top of the highest wagon. Here he rode in state, grinning delightedly on the small boys who scampered beside the wagons thinking a circus was coming to town.

After looking over Illinois lands, and stopping several places in eastern Iowa, the three land seekers arrived at Grinnell.

At this pre-war time the country was divided into two sections, the division being the Mason and Dixon line. Who Mason and Dixie were and why the line is a long story which it is not necessary to enter into here. It suffices to state that prejudices established in the east emigrated with the new settlers to the West. Those from points above the Mason and Dixon line were known by those farther south as "blue nose Yankees," "nigger stealers," etc.; while the Yankees retaliated by calling their southern brethren "nigger drivers," "slave holders," etc.

Now J. E. Grinnell and those of his associates who settled Grinnell and vicinity were among the "blue noses." Old settlers will recall that these "down easters" preferred settlers from their own section. It happened therefore that Thomas and the Hays boys were not received in Grinnell with open arms in spite of their well filled purses. Land men steered them out to the more undesirable lands on Bear Creek telling them the more desirable tracts were all taken. Disheartened at the prospect of finding what they wanted near Grinnell, the three men prepared to go on to land of which they had heard near Des Moines. They had provided themselves with horses and were breaking camp from their camping place near where the Spaulding Mfg. Co. buildings now stand when Henry Lawrence one of the founders of Grinnell came by. He stopped and asked, "are you men really looking for land to move on as settlers?" Upon being assured that such was the case he said "come with me. I'll show you plenty of good land." He took them north of Grinnell into Chester township where tracts were chosen for all the members of the Joseph Hays family who desired to emigrate. It is of interest to note that this land was entered at a price of \$1.25 per acre.

Having found the land the three scouts returned to Illinois and prepared for the long journey.

So came Edward Delaney to Grinnell. Old time residents will recall across from where the Buick garage now stands. This was the home of Aunt Debbie Hays until her death in the late eighties. Here Uncle Ned lived and here he died. Faithful to the last, "he stuck to Debbie and Mary." In the Hays lot in Hazelwood cemetery stands a simple stone bearing the bronze emblem of the D. A. R. the last resting place of Aunt Debbie Hays, a real daughter of the Revolution. A few feet away under the tree, with a similar stone at the head lies all that is mortal of Edward Delaney. He has "stuck to Debbie" even in death.