

# Emancipation Day

## Celebrations in Ohio County, KY

By Jerry Long

Emancipation Day celebrated on September 22nd commemorated the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln. Juneteenth (also referred to as Emancipation Day) was celebrated on June 19th. It also commemorated the end of slavery in the United States. On September 22, 1862, during the American Civil War, Pres. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared more than three million slaves living in the Confederate states to be free. More than two years would pass, however, before the news reached African Americans living in Texas. It was not until Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, that the state's residents finally learned that slavery had been abolished. The former slaves immediately began to celebrate with prayer, feasting, song, and dance. Juneteenth is still widely celebrated.

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Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 29 September 1897, p.3:

The colored people of Hartford celebrated Emancipation Day last week in quite a conspicuous and noteworthy manner. There was a big crowd in attendance and the procession which passed through the streets of Hartford contained several floats illustrative of the progress the colored race has made and the occupations they pursue since their freedom was declared. It was an orderly crowd and a pleasant event.

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Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 27 September 1899, p.3:

The colored folks of Hartford and vicinity celebrated emancipation day last Friday by a parade through the streets and a picnic at the Fair grounds. It was a very respectable turn-out and did much credit to those who participated.

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Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 28 September 1898, p.3:

Emancipation Day was celebrated by the colored people of this vicinity last Thursday in elaborate style. They had a big parade, in which were many floats, highly decorated, representing all the avocation of the darkey. It was a great day for the colored people and highly enjoyed by all who participated.

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Hartford Republican, Hartford, KY, Friday, 29 September 1899, p.2:

#### EMANCIPATION DAY.

A foe years ago we colored people of this county decided we would set apart the 22d day of September in each year, for the purpose of celebrating the day on which our fathers were given their freedom. But last spring we had a meeting here in Hayti, called by the President of our Emancipation League, and it was thought best not to have the celebration this year on account of the smallpox in some of our neighboring towns, that were more unfortunate than ourselves, and so wo thought that it was all over, when the President had so decided. But a few days before Emancipation day a revered Majors, now pastor of the Colored Baptist church here, styled himself leader of the colored people of Ohio county, without ever consulting any of the leading brethren, and attempting to celebrate the day of our freedom and, of course, it was a failure. Everybody knew it was only to make the said Majors a few of those mighty dollars, that look as big as moons in his eyes, but many of us went to see the races he bad advertised and to hear the speakers that he said would deliver addresses. The races proved a humbug and fraud, so the was entertained by a few offhand speeches. First was a Mr. Jackson, from Pleasant Ridge, Ky., who made a few remarks. Next to follow was the Revered Piles, who made a good talk, then came forward the revered Majors. He had no starting point and found no stopping place, but just broke off. He was reckless and embarrassed from the very start and handled his subject in about the same way. He said he was sick when he got up to talk, – and most of us thought so before he ran down, –but would say a few words, anyhow, especially about the election. He led off by saying he was not a Democrat and did not like that party. He also said he loved the Republican party, but said he had got sore on that party and intended to set down on it, because the leaders fed him on sweetened wind, and invited us all to stay with him. Now, if the reverend Majors is as free from Goebel's money as I am, let us reason together just a little. Will the gentleman tell me and my people where and when the Democrats ever did anything for the negroes, or oven promised us anything excepting just on election times and every negro that has any good old horse sense knows what that is for. Now, I'd like to know what hope the reverend brother has to get office from the Democrats, for he said that was what he wanted. All the Democrats want with us colored fellers is to put them in office and then kick us out like we were so many hounds. Now, on the other hand, I'd like to show

the reverend brother what the Republican party has done for us colored folks. The greatest and best thing they did for us was to tear the chains that bound us down in slavery, from our poor souls and made us free and happy people. Now, if any colored man says the Republican party didn't do this, he either don't have any good old horse sense, or he never read any history. But I believe the reverend Majors said Abe Lincoln did not have nothing to do with his freedom, and all sensible negroes knows that Lincoln did free the colored race when he wrote that immortal proclamation emancipating the American slaves. After Lincoln made us free the Republican party made us voters and gave us equal rights to the whites. Besides this the Republican party in the Northern States let our children go to school with the white children. Do the Democrats do us that way? No, I say. They won't oven let us ride in the same car on the railroads with them. In 1883 the Republican party nominated Asberry for Register of the Land Office of Kentucky, but of course the Democrats beat him, as they have always done the whole Republican ticket.

Now, my colored friends, I don't like the steps this reverend brother has taken. He came here a stranger and put himself up as a leader of our Emancipation League, when he had nothing to do with it, besides this he professes to be a minister doing work for the Master and preaching his good word to our people and along with this ho is selling drinks to that class of our people that don't care for nothing. He says he is selling Buck Pop and those lawyers say it is against the law. Are we going to take the advice given us at the Fair grounds Friday and just let any old thing pull us around? We cant afford that, we never will amount to anything if we follow the advice of this reverend brother. We won't have any such stuff put in our heads. Let's be men and walk up and vote for the party that shot for us on those bloody battlefields.

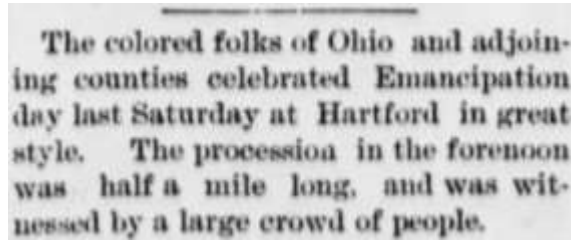
#### CRIT PARKS.

[Crittenden ('Crit') Parks is the author of the preceding article. He was born about 1844 in Kentucky. He was a veteran of the Union Army during the Civil War. He served in the 118<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry. He is listed in the 1870, 1900 and 1910 censuses of Ohio County, KY. He worked on flat boats, digging wells, as a railroad hand and farming. He married Louisa Morton, 25 May 1871 Ohio County, KY and Sena Brown, 27 January 1883 Ohio County, KY. He died on 25 November 1915. He and his wife, Sena (1854-1915) are buried in the Hayti Cemetery, in Hartford, Ohio County, KY. He has a veteran's monument on his grave.]



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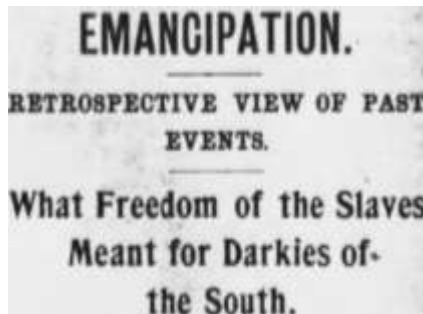
**Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 26 September 1900, p.3:**



The colored folks of Ohio and adjoining counties celebrated Emancipation day last Saturday at Hartford in great style. The procession in the forenoon was half a mile long, and was witnessed by a large crowd of people.

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**Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 3 July 1901, p.1:**



**EMANCIPATION.**  
RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF PAST  
EVENTS.  
What Freedom of the Slaves  
Meant for Darkies of  
the South.

The New and Prosperous Era.

Houston, Texas, June 19, 1901.

EDITOR HERALD: – This typical city of the South presents a picture to-day that carries the mind back forty years, to a time when events pointed with certainty to the possibility of such pictures, all over the South, as we see in Houston to-day. This Is Emancipation Day, “June-teenth,” as it is facetiously called by some, and the negroes are celebrating it with vim and enthusiasm. A big parade is passing along Main street, with band of music flags, banners and flowers in profusion – floats carrying iron foundries, machine shops and other industrial concerns, with crews at work as they go through the street – carriages, many of them literally covered with lowers and banners with finely dressed negroes of all colors, sizes and sexes riding in them. Some very black, some nearly white and some of all the intervening shades between the two colors The men with high silk hats, and the women and girls all in their very best “bib and tucker.” All of them from the old cornfield darkey down to the kitchen wench and her “pickaninny,” are “dressed to kill” for the occasion. Then, besides the moving parade, which contains also a large troop of horsemen after the style of “cow-boy cavalry” – negroes – the sidewalks are packed and jammed with more negroes of all ages sizes and conditions – to view the grand pageant that they take so much pride in. Here and there in the crowd may be seen some old, black, wrinkled head, with nothing but a black scalp between it and the heavens, and a scant fringe of white tufts of kinky wool maiming from ear to ear around the back of his head, to mark him as one of the “old timers,” who could tell of

cotton fields and overseers in the old days “befo de wah,” where the burning sun was only a little less hot to his back than the lash of the drivers’ whip when he shirked.

Perhaps he could tell of some “Old Kentucky home,” where he was parted from parents, wife and children and “sold down the river,” never to see them again. The fact that they were all black – his parents, his wife and children and himself – did not ease his sorrows and hardships. His master, the owner in those days may have treated him well, just as they treated a horse or mule well, to get all the work that was possible from them, but negroes, horses and mules often had harsh masters, who used the whip to compel them to hard tasks, and sometimes to satisfy an ugly, senseless temper.

But what a change for both negro and masters of those old days! No master, no owner now. No whip of the swearing overseer drives a gang of black men and women to hard tasks in the hot, burning sun, with all their toil going for the benefit of their masters, who usually sat in the shade with another “nigger” to fan him and fill him up on mint julip. The hard work of the negro now is for himself and family, from whom he cannot now be separated by being sold or traded like stock, according to the will or whim of the owner. They are free, and not one could be found in this jolly crowd who would not shudder at the thought of going back into slavery again. Can anyone indorse the old contention that slavery and matters for the negroes were better for them than freedom? If so, it must be some former owner of slaves, who has never got over the idea that he was robbed by their freedom. The old idea that slavery was right or good for anybody was a mistaken one, and the most of the people who used to think so have changed their minds and harbor such an idea no more. Those who were sincere and had no negroes to lose, as well as those who had negroes and did not want to lose them, have all had plenty proof of that they were in error. And the proof is still accumulating, like a rolling snow ball, as time rolls by, and those who are willing to dispute it or becoming fewer and fewer. But disputed or not, by many or few, avails very little, for the old system of slavery in this country will never, never bother us again.

Whatever of blame or praise should be attached to the South for dividing the country to keep their slaves, or to the remainder of the country for keeping the parts together again for self-preservation as a nation, it is not my intention now to distribute that blame or praise. Doubtless most of the participants on both sides were sincere and what seemed to them was right and just. There was an abundance of manly valor and chivalry on both sides, and the contest was waged mainly by men of a truer, nobler stamp on both sides than other armies of other days could muster on other battle fields. But whatever of nobleness and valor may be claimed or conceded for either side, and however conscientious every contestant may have felt, the fact or conviction is forced upon us that at least one side was wrong. Maybe not wickedly wrong, with a full realization of the right, but perhaps mistakenly wrong, with a distorted vision of what was right and best.

After much history and much blood, the stains of which are visible yet, the contest ended at Appomattox. The Southern hosts hauled down and rolled up what they vainly had thought was the flag of a new nation, and came back home into the Union, under the flag that now floats over all, and the black of the whole South – all of them – millions of them – old negroes and young negroes – men, women, boys, girls and “pickanninies,” were free; slaves no longer. Absolutely free; and who can measure the meaning of that word to them? One might imagine their glad shouts would reach to the moon and back again. Slaves no longer, and no longer the property of a master to be goaded and worked and taxed like horses, hogs, mules and sheep.

They are black yet, by a decree of nature, so that cannot be changed; they are negroes yet, but the ignorance and poverty that passed with them across the threshold of freedom, as they

entered upon their brighter future, have given away to great advancement in education and prosperity.

In their start for themselves they had no education, and it is said by one authority that they had less than ten cents apiece in money.

A considerable percentage of them are now in good circumstances and fairly well educated and the tendency is still upward.

G. M. Rowe.

[The preceding article was written by George M. Rowe (1842-1916). He is listed in the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 censuses of Ohio County, KY. He was a dry goods merchant and a postal employee. He later resided in Kansas City, MO and Houston, TX. During the Civil War he served in the Union Army (17<sup>th</sup> KY Volunteer Infantry.)

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**Hartford Republican, Hartford, KY, Friday, 26 September 1902, p.2:**

**Emancipation Day.**

The colored people of Ohio county celebrated the 38th anniversary of the Proclamation of the Emancipation of the colored race in the United States here Monday.

A great number of the colored people were out to do honor to the anniversary of that day that must ever be a hallowed one to the colored race of this country.

For two centuries and a half the Negro smarted under the sting of the lash of his white master, and it is little wonder that they now, especially the older ones, who have felt that sting, should turn out to celebrate the anniversary of the day upon which the cruel shackles fell from their wrists.

In the celebration here Monday the colored people formed a procession at Hayti and paraded the principal streets of the town after which they repaired to the McHenry Grove and spent a pleasant day.

A number of colored and white orators recounted the thrilling experiences of slave days and the subsequent era of freedom to the enthusiastic throng.

We stood on the street and watched with interest the procession of exemplifying the progress of a race in a little more than a third of a century. The silvered heads and bent backs of the older colored folks, brought up historic memories of the long ago, when wife, husband or child was put upon the block and sold and separated from those they loved. Thank God those cruel days are over, and now all men are men.

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