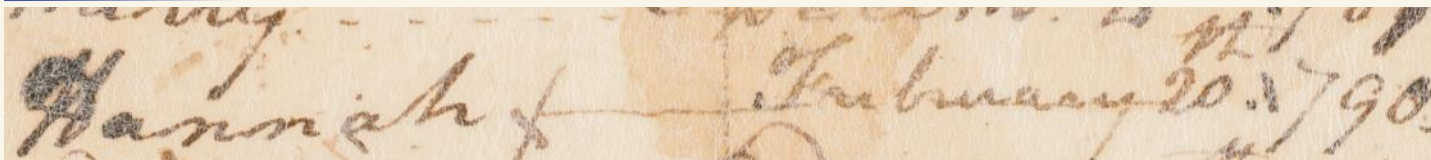


HANNAH

BORN FEBRUARY 20, 1790

February 2022



Hannah was born the same year Isaac and Nelly Hite acquired her parents, as discussed in the features about Frank (June 2021) and Abba (August 2021). She came to Belle Grove around six months old; as mentioned last month, Isaac Hite Jr. traded Truelove's eldest daughter, Peggy, to his cousin, George Hite, for Hannah. As an infant, Hannah was likely oblivious to the change of location, except that perhaps her mother was busier, as the wetnurse to Nelly's baby girl. No records discuss Hannah's childhood, but it is likely she helped her mother with nursery chores in the Manor House.

Hannah, the young woman, made a choice that had epic consequences: the freedom of her children. No evidence exists the Hites arranged couples at Belle Grove. By appearances it seems that young people chose for them-

selves and mostly among themselves. Hannah chose a spouse from outside the plantation, Emanuel Jackson. Their children, Daniel, Emanuel Jr., Frank, and Betsy Ann, were not freed out of goodness by the Hites. They were freed because their father approached the Hites with proposals to pay good money for them, and the Hites agreed to the sale. This transpired over a decade spanning the 1830s and 1840s. The total amount of money that changed hands—in the partial paperwork we have—was \$1,450 (or \$49,300 today). If a proposed sale of Daniel's wife and children actually took place, the amount goes up to \$2,450 (or \$83,300 today).¹

Free Blacks in Southern states in the years leading up to the Civil War had to carry their freedom papers on their person at all times, were subject to

harassment, kidnapping and re-enslavement. For strategic reasons, Black parents purchasing their children out of slavery became their temporary owners, and manumitted (or freed), them when it was safe, such as when they reached legal age and/or when they left Virginia. In the case of the Jackson family, everyone relocated to Pittsburgh, a long and arduous journey 180 years ago. Belle Grove is in the midst of extensive research about their lives there. Sale paperwork for Emanuel and Daniel exists, and it is documented that all of Hannah's and Emanuel's children migrated there, except for Adams, whose fate is yet unknown.

¹ Inflation calculator at officialdata.org

The image of Hannah's name above is from Isaac Hite Jr.'s *Commonplace Book*, Virginia Museum of History and Culture (Mss5.5.H67375.1_19b).

WHO WAS EMANUEL JACKSON SENIOR?

Frederick County tax rolls show numerous Jackson listings over four plus decades, including a Manuel and an Emanuel. Enslaved persons names were often casually documented; they could be the same man, or two. Could they be father and son? Emanuel is taxed for multiple horses, indicating he earned his living as a teamster. In frontier Shenandoah Valley, the wealthy purchased their house-

hold goods, tools, and clothing from businesses in Alexandria and Baltimore, which were shipped by wagon. Such a long journey required trusted and road-savvy waggoneers or teamsters, normally Black men, enslaved or free. Manuel Jackson may have worked this long-haul route, perhaps even bringing goods to the Hites. Assuming he required at least overnight lodging, he would have

stayed the only place Black people were allowed—in the enslaved quarter. He may also have carried the Hite's products, made or produced by the enslaved laborers, back to the coast.

In 1809, Emanuel was about 25 and Hannah 19. Each seemed a likely catch for the other, and presumably her parents saw his merits, too. In 1816, a Frederick County deed reveals the term of

Continued next page

slavery for a mulatto man named Emanuel expired in 1821, upon payment of \$250 by himself. Once he bought himself free, Emanuel appears to have had lived for a while in Charles Town, which was then in Virginia. By 1840, Emanuel established a homeplace in Pittsburgh and began accumulating money to purchase his children with Hannah. Though never literate himself, he succeeded as an independent teamster, and bought land in 1840 and again in 1845. He was so respected he was allowed to pay his turnpike tolls on account. He retained lawyers to take defaulted clients to court for payment. In ill health throughout at least the 1840s, he died October 1847, perhaps surrounded by all his children whose welfare he so fiercely protected. Though all the touchpoints of his life may not be known yet, there is no doubt he accomplished a lot.

WHAT WAS THEIR LIFE LIKE AS FREE PEOPLE?



In this short newsletter, it is hard to express how much freedom meant. Had the Jackson family remained at Belle Grove, standard housing was a one-room wooden cabin with crude furniture, shared with their large family. The Hites issued only two sets of clothing a year and provided a limited supply of food. They lacked the opportunity to accumulate personal wealth while performing work

This issue produced by Robin Young and Kristen Laise with proofreading by Craig Morris.

**NEXT MONTH WE WILL HONOR
Milly born 1819 & Mary born 1821**

HANNAH'S FAMILY



Hannah's children were: Daniel, born in 1810, Adams (1811), Emanuel Jr. (1815), Frank (1818), and Betsy Ann (1820). They were not necessarily purchased in birth order. Younger children, who fetched lower prices in the slave trade, were purchased first. It must have been bittersweet for Hannah to send them away from her one by one, but she knew their future as free persons was worth the heartache. No evidence has come to light that Hannah

assigned by their enslavers, who also discouraged literacy. These family members were recorded in U.S. censuses after emancipation as unable to read and write. Their pool of potential spouses was limited, and all offspring were born into slavery.

As free men, their families bore their last name, Jackson. All the Jackson children married, and odds are increasing, as research continues, that Daniel's wife, Matilda, daughter of Sarah, did arrive from Belle Grove. The other spouses were Pennsylvania born. The Jackson family bought more land in the South Side Flats neighborhood.

Pittsburgh records document how the Jackson family accumulated personal wealth. Emanuel Jr.'s family had "a good two story brick house of 5 rooms, Hall etc. good cellar under the house"¹ on a half-

acre of land. The personal property probate inventory of Daniel, listed "a parlor set, dining room chairs, a dining table, two beds and bedding, a bedroom set, three carpets, a cook stove, four pictures and a life insurance policy"²

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All Hannah's grandchildren could read and write. They had freedom to choose their occupations, to own property, and to conduct their lives on their terms. Free to develop their talents in a state that abetted their unlimited potential, they prospered. Generations of dozens upon dozens of descendants spread out across many states, and into all types of careers, including business owners and physicians.

¹ Pittsburgh Deed Book Vol. 373, p. 247.

² Orphans' Court Docket, Volume 69, p. 323, #376 Dec 1887.

To see the freedom documents, visit tinyurl.com/393wx6bz

Research is underway about the 276 men, women, and children enslaved by the Hite family at Belle Grove Plantation in Middletown (Frederick County), Virginia. Enslaved individuals made the plantation a success. Since 1967, Belle Grove has been a 501c3, nonprofit historic site and museum. [Understanding and uplifting the contributions of the enslaved community is an ongoing effort and priority.](#) If you wish to help, consider volunteering or donating to Belle Grove, Inc. at P.O. Box 537, Middletown, VA 22645 or online at www.bellegrove.org/support/donate.

Belle Grove Plantation

336 Belle Grove Road • P.O. Box 537 • Middletown • VA 22645
info@bellegrove.org • www.bellegrove.org • 540-869-2028