



Museum Hours

March - December

Wednesday - Saturday

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sunday

12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Monday & Tuesday

By Appointment

January - February

By Appointment

1508 Locust Street
St. Louis, MO 63103
314/421-0325
www.campbellhouse
museum.org

Andrew W. Hahn,
Executive Director

Shelley M. Satke,
Assistant Director

Ann Delaney and
Tom Gronski,
Newsletter



CAMPBELL
House Museum
SAINT LOUIS

Did Robert Campbell Own Slaves?

For years, the question as to whether Robert Campbell owned an enslaved person was a qualified yes. It was believed that any enslaved person within the Campbell household was the result of Virginia's dowry, a legacy from her slave-owning father. These people were never heard from however and were presumably quickly emancipated or sold. Current research however reveals a more complex picture.

There is no evidence that Robert owned an enslaved person during his years in the fur trade or in St. Louis prior to his marriage. As his marriage to Virginia approached however, the complexities of her estate did in fact come into play. Virginia's father, Hazlett Campbell, had died in 1833, a wealthy merchant and slave owner in North Carolina. Virginia was only 11 at the time and a court commissioner managed her inheritance until her marriage or her 21st birthday.

In December 1840, Virginia's mother Lucy Kyle advised her daughter to learn more about her inheritance, knowing full well that Walter Otey (the husband of Virginia's sister Eleanor and a slave-trader) was actively seeking his own share. But Virginia had no legal rights to the inheritance until she turned 21. Instead, the estate became vested to Robert upon his marriage to Virginia in February 1841. In August 1841, Lucy Ann Kyle transferred ownership of "Negroes Caroline, Simeon, and Hazlett as his own and for his third part of the Negroes of Hazlett Kyle, deceased." One-third of the "Negroes of Hazlett Kyle" went to Lucy, who decided to emancipate them, and one-third to Walter and Eleanor Otey, who either worked or sold them.

Following his marriage, the enslaved people of Robert and Lucy Kyle had remained in North Carolina, but Lucy had growing concerns about Walter Otey's business coupled with her own desire towards emancipation. In February 1842, Robert decided to take his new property to St. Louis and Lucy arranged with him to transport her enslaved people (an man and woman, presumably a husband and wife, and an adult male named Robert) to Ohio and freedom.

There is every indication in family letters that Robert's enslaved people were all young children. In October 1841, the enslaved girl Caroline is described as "just at an age now to be contaminated by hiring her out." A young male, Simeon, appears to be slightly older and is "in the country" working. The youngest, Hazlett ("Hazy" in family letters), is sent to help nurse a new baby "just that he may be learning something" and in



December 1841 is described as "so young." Research into the lives of enslaved children indicates they were initiated into basic work skills at age 5 or 6, and that between the ages of 8 and 12 would have assumed adult work responsibilities, including working the fields.

By the end of February 1842, Robert and his enslaved children were in St. Louis. Letters indicate a reasonable adjustment ("I am glad to hear that Caroline is a good girl") – at least as perceived by the slave-owners – but by July, all three had been placed (or hired out) to William Sublette at the Sulphur Springs farm just southwest of the city. Caroline could do housework and Simeon could work the fields. Little Hazy's job was "to keep off the flies" from the newborn James Campbell. There are isolated references to the three enslaved children over the next few years, with Simeon and Hazlett still residing at the Sublette farm in March 1844. The 1847

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In Memoriam

Zoe Desloge Lippman died February 2010. Zoe was the daughter of Joseph Desloge, who was one of the original donors to save the furnishings of Campbell House. Zoe served Campbell House in many capacities, including the Board of Directors, as a major fund raiser for the most recent restoration..

Joseph Francis Gleason died March 2010. He was the husband of Jane Piper Gleason, who has been an active member of the Board of Directors for more than 30 years. Joe supported Campbell House in many ways over the past 15 years.

Margaret K. Mackle died February 2010. Margaret became a docent here in 1994 and served as Docent Coordinator and on the Board of Directors. During her active years at Campbell House, she spent at least one day a week scheduling volunteers for each month and special events.

Marvin Mueller died June 2010. Marvin was once quoted as saying, Campbell House “is a monument of St. Louis’ past and there are not too many of those left and it must be kept as long as possible.” Marvin worked tirelessly towards this goal for many years as a volunteer and on the Board of Directors.

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St. Louis city census lists Robert as having two enslaved males, ages 10-18, which fits the age range for Simeon and Hazlett. But in 1849, no enslaved males are listed in the Campbell household, and we lose track of Simeon and Hazlett.

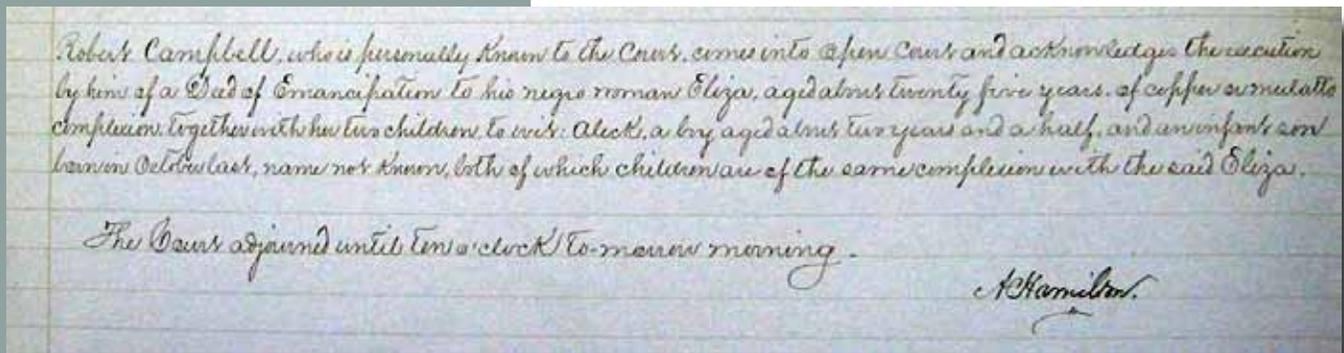
The fate of Caroline, and of other enslaved females in the Campbell household, is more complicated. The last reference to Caroline is in July 1845 when she is at the Sublette farm but has a cough and must see the doctor. The 1847 St. Louis city census lists an enslaved female under age 10, and the 1849 city census lists an enslaved female age 10-18. This could be Caroline, or it could be a person named Eliza, who Robert would eventually emancipate in January 1857.

Much of the information in family records regarding “Eliza” is conflicting. As early as June 1843, Virginia refers to Eliza as helping to care for one year-old James, but it is unclear if this is the enslaved Eliza or a hired “colored girl.” Because names were not listed in census records, it is impossible to differentiate Caroline and Eliza’s time lines. In November 1854, the Campbells purchased #20 Lucas Place (the Campbell House), and by February 1855, only one enslaved person, a female (age 21-45), is listed with the Campbells. In all likelihood, this person is Eliza. Family letters during June 1855 (while Virginia was in Philadelphia purchasing furniture) refer to “Eliza” caring for the first son named Hazlett Campbell, but this could be an Irish servant named Eliza Owens who is listed in the 1860 federal census.

The 1856 St. Louis city census again lists one enslaved female (age 21-45), who is very likely Eliza. However, another enslaved female (age 5-10) is also listed and this person is unknown to us. One year later, on 24 January 1857, Robert Campbell emancipated Eliza, a 25-year old enslaved female, as well as her two sons:

“Robert Campbell, who is personally known to the court, comes into open court and acknowledges the execution by him of Deed of Emancipation to his negro woman Eliza, aged about twenty five years, of copper or mulatto complexion, together with her two children, to wit: Aleck, a boy aged about two years and a half, and an infant son born in October last, name not known, both of which children are of the same complexion with the said Eliza.” (see image below)

Why was Eliza emancipated in January 1857, fully eight years before slavery was



Eliza’s emancipation record from the St. Louis Circuit Court.

the CAMPBELL HOUSE MUSEUM

Since opening on February 6, 1943, the Campbell House Museum has served the greater St. Louis area as one of the region’s premier historic property museums. The Museum not only preserves the Campbell’s house, but also their collection of original furniture, fixtures, paintings, objects and thousands of pages of family documents. Included in these documents is a unique album of 60 photographs of the interior of the house taken in about 1885. In 2005 the Museum completed a meticulous five-year restoration that returned the building to its opulent 1880s appearance, when the house was one of the centers of St. Louis society.

abolished in Missouri? We don’t know for certain, but several circumstances may have contributed. Eliza already had a young son, and in October 1856 had another. In November 1856, the first Hazlett Campbell, who had been so close to the servant Eliza, died of the measles. And sometime in late 1856 or early 1857, Lucy Kyle (who had emancipated her own enslaved people) came to live at the Campbell House. We gain some insight from the journal of Sarah Lindsey, a Quaker, who visited Lucy Kyle at the Campbell House in April 1858: “At one time they held a few slaves but Virginia Campbell not liking the system, nor the care of young Negroes, they were set free. Their servants at the present time are Swiss, German and Irish.”

And that is the last reference we have of the enslaved people who belonged to Robert Campbell. A comprehensive review of the thousands of documents in the Mercantile Library collection is ongoing as we search for more details regarding the Campbell household and the issue of slavery.

Original Artifacts Return to Campbell House

After the settlement of the bevy lawsuits triggered by the 1938 death of Hazlett Campbell – the last surviving member of Robert and Virginia Campbell’s thirteen children – the Campbell household items were put up for auction at Selkirk’s in St. Louis. Lot number 383 from that auction was purchased by Dr. George Dunn. Dr. Dunn was the great-grandson of Andrew Campbell, Robert Campbell’s oldest brother. Eventually, Dr. Dunn’s son, Mr. Robert Dunn, inherited item 383. Earlier this year, Mr. Dunn’s daughter and grandson delivered this exciting donation to Campbell House on his behalf.

Selkirk’s Catalog describes item 383 as “Benares Hand Hammered Brass Water Bottle and Tray. XIX Century. Circular tray and bottle are chased with allover designs developing flower forms, scrolled leafage, leonine figures, personages and diaper patterns. It is stated by members of the Campbell household that the foregoing tray and bottle were presented by General U. S. Grant to Robert Campbell, father of the deceased.” Item 383 was purchased for \$20 and went to Dr. Dunn’s home in Princeton, Minnesota, where it remained until this year.

President Ulysses S. Grant and the First Lady were dinner guests at Campbell House in 1873, 1874 and 1875. Newspapers records that on one occasion, crowds gathered in front of the house cheering and encouraging the President to make an appearance himself. At the urging of Virginia Campbell, he did, somewhat reluctantly, greet the crowd briefly.

Mr. Dunn continues to live in his boyhood home in Minnesota. His daughter, Ruth Dunn, recalls playing with the brass water bottle and tray as a child – especially at Christmas when it was often presented as a gift of the Magi in pageants enacted by she and her siblings. She recalled during her visit here that one of her siblings received a jump rope for Christmas and proceeded to stuff it inside the bottle. Unfortunately, when she tried to retrieve the rope, one of the handles was detached and remains in the bottle to this day!

The brass water bottle and tray have been returned to their original position, according to the 1885 pictures, in

the parlor on the small table to the right of the door near the piano.

Last year, Mr. Dunn donated yet another Campbell treasure from the Selkirk auction: “Catalogue Number 315, Comprising scarf pin and four studs. Gold-set semi-precious minerals in the form of scarabs.” The scarf/stick pin is the body of the scarab with two semi-precious stones and legs and antennae of gold. The scarab and studs are on display in the bookcase of the library on the third floor. It is unclear whether these belonged to Robert or Hugh, but as you can see in the image to the left, it is certainly a unique addition to our collection and it reveals much about the style and taste of the Campbells and their time.

Campbell scarab stick pin and shirt studs.



1900 Benares Hand Hammered Brass Water Bottle and Tray XIX Century
 [383] Circular tray and bottle are chased with allover designs developing flower forms, scrolled leafage, leonine figures, personages and diaper patterns. 20
 It is stated by members of the Campbell household that the foregoing tray and bottle were presented by General U. S. Grant to Robert Campbell, father of the deceased.

(above) Photograph showing the bottle in the Campbell parlor, circa 1885 and excerpt from the 1941 Campbell estate auction catalog at Selkirks.



Ruth Dunn and her son returning the “Grant bottle” to the Campbell House parlor.



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Visit Campbell House during the holidays to experience the splendor of a Victorian Christmas, and be sure to stop by the Museum Store for a unique assortment of books and gifts for everyone on your list! *(Pssst....all purchases are sales tax-free!)*



We are pleased to unveil our newest exhibit for the holidays featuring a collection of colossal-scale vintage circus posters, dolls and a Schoenhut miniature big top. The exhibit runs through the end of March. The Museum

Experience the Greatest Show on Earth at Campbell House Museum!

is open by appointment only in January and February, so call us at 314/421-0325 to make your reservation!

CAMPBELL HOUSE MUSEUM

1508 Locust Street
 Saint Louis, MO 63103
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