

Our African American slave history is important to us and it is currently being demolished in Missouri.

Let me begin with some background history.

My name is Gary Fuenfhausen and I am currently the President of Missouri's Little Dixie Heritage Foundation. Our mission is to preserve and educate the public about the history and culture of an area of Missouri known historically as "Little Dixie." A major part of our mission has been the preservation of our region's extant slave housing and the history of the African American people who once inhabited these spaces. Of the extant slave housing we had in 1860 we estimate only about 1% survive (of the 13,300 original buildings only about 130 still stand).

Little Dixie is a 17 county region where 52% of Missouri's slaves lived and where held in servitude. Our region once mirrored the Upper South, culturally, agriculturally, economically, and politically. County slave populations in Little Dixie ranged between 20 and 40% African American slave and in some townships it was 50%. This is compared to our State's average slave population that was only 10% in 1860. It is also here where the State's largest slave owners lived, or those deemed as a "planter." Little Dixie is where the majority of the State's hemp and tobacco was produced, the region owning 18% of the Nation's total hemp crop. At one time cotton was also cultivated in Little Dixie. Because hemp was almost exclusively used in the binding of cotton bales across the South, Little Dixie was further bound politically and economically with the Deep South. During the Civil War, our region provided much of the State's Confederate support, both monetarily and in troop numbers. It is partly for this reason that Missouri ranks 3rd in the Nation for the most Civil War battles and engagements.

Naturally, because of our history, another commodity of Little Dixie was slavery. Several well-known Deep South dealers called our region home and were in the business of selling "Little Dixie" human flesh. The most noteworthy of these is the famous John R. White, who lived in Howard County, Missouri, where he and his children owned numerous plantations and mansions. What is referenced by Ken Burns in his famous documentary on the Civil War.

From 2007 and thru 2013, three of our important extant historic slave structures were maliciously destroyed by their owners in Lafayette and Clay County, Missouri. The first was in 2007, when a large local farmer bullied an owner to buy her historic antebellum farm, which included the original c. 1859 house and extant slave quarter. The farm was known as "Old Oaks." Before the elderly person who owned the land died, the farmer is said to have told her he would eventually get the farm and raze her beloved historic home and slave house. This threat came true in 2007 after her family's estate administrators finally gave into to the farmer. This farmer is well known in the County for wanting to buy historic farm properties and destroy the homes and outbuilding there on.

A few years after this event, I was contacted by a concerned member of the Atkins Farm historic site in Gladstone, Clay County, Missouri. The Atkins Farm at that time still retained an extant slave house, which is where the family's African American slave cook and family once lived. The building had been mislabeled by historic consultants unfamiliar with extant slave housing as a Milk House. After the concerned member of the Atkins farm consulted with me and my recognition of the building as slave housing, I was soon called by the City Administrator who verbally raked me over the coals as not knowing what I was talking about. Within a short time the building was razed. Several months later I was contacted by a historic consultant who was employed by the City who governs and has oversight of the house and farm museum, and this person clearly told me he agreed that the structure was slave housing. I explained the events that occurred with the City and I never heard from him again.

In reference to this story, please see:

<http://boards.rootsweb.com/localities.northam.usa.special.southern-20--20-plantations/727/mb.ashx>

The most recent and unjust destruction of a slave house was the collusive efforts of the City of Lexington's governing bodies, as well as the SHPO Certified Preservation Commission of Lexington, which occurred from 2011 to 2013. The land owner, Rebecca Browning, who at the time served on the Preservation Board and the local Lexington Historical Society and Museum board, wanted an extant slave house demolished for her personal patio and garden area. This slave building was listed on the National Register as a contributing structure. After consulting with our group and Joseph McGill, founder of the National program known as the Slave Dwelling Project, Mrs. Browning became enraged and spent the next 2 years manipulating the City and historic groups into allowing her to destroy this building, while fighting both of our extant slave preservation organizations. Finally in 2013, she was given permission and immediately had the building dozed. As soon as this slave house was destroyed, she had a post "dozing" party in celebration (of which I have several photographs).

For further understanding of the Browning story, please see the following:

"Please read. We need your voices."

<https://www.facebook.com/TheSlaveDwellingProject/posts/387578671359809>

"Possible slave quarters to be torn down

Foundation hopes to save structure."

http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/possible-slave-quarters-to-be-torn-down/article_02a6b9fe-06db-11e3-b087-10604b9f6eda.html

Our Little Dixie extant slave housing is important to us, because each building tells the story of the enslaved African Americans who inhabited these spaces. We also know that each time one of these buildings is destroyed, it provides the naysayers who believe these stories are irrelevant proof that this history never existed.

Please use this document in any manner that may help us to save and preserve what few extant slave houses still survive in our Little Dixie region.

Sincerely,

Gary Gene Fuenfhausen, President

Missouri's Little Dixie Heritage Foundation

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