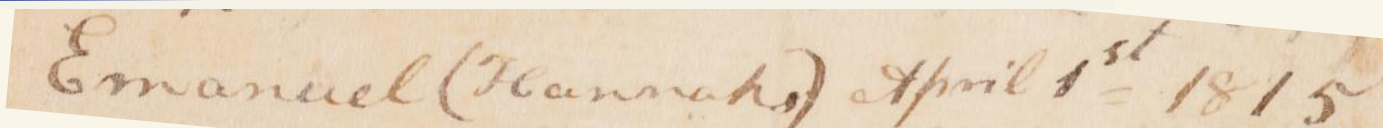


## EMANUEL JACKSON BORN APRIL 1, 1815



Emanuel (Hannah) April 1<sup>st</sup> 1815

### A SAGA BEGINS:

In 1837, young Emanuel Jackson set off from Belle Grove, a copy of the legal deed selling him out of slavery in Virginia in his pocket. He went to live in a house at the intersection of Liberty and Washington Streets in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that belonged to his father, the man who bought his freedom, Emanuel Jackson Sr. What could be more fitting? He is described as five-foot-six, with “a yellow complexion.”<sup>1</sup>

Young Emanuel is the lodestar of Belle Grove’s five-year effort to trace this family into freedom. The first lucky break came by discovering the deed for his purchase, and more followed.

His journey took several days by steamboat and stagecoach. On the latter, Blacks were ticketed after

whites had boarded, and were not served at any of the taverns where the coaches stopped.<sup>2</sup> Another option might have been catching a ride with teamsters headed north through Charles Town.

Jackson Sr. now owned three adjacent lots from which to run his teamster business, just half a block off the Turnpike. The property provided stables for the horses he owned, and parking for his wagons. It is likely he initiated his sons into this line of work, as their first employment as free men. The Birmingham neighborhood, on the flat land along the south side of the Monongahela River, was perfectly situated to connect, via the turnpike, to roads leading to Ohio on the west, Philadelphia on the east, and Virginia on the south. It attracted not only free Blacks from the

Northern Shenandoah Valley, but a community of teamster families running independent family businesses, which combined to take on large jobs. They socialized and intermarried. Indeed, the Team Drivers International Union formed in 1887, leading into the Brotherhood of Teamsters Union in 1903. There is evidence of “brotherly” traditions within the biographies of both Emanuel Jacksons: cooperation to boost each other’s wealth, apprenticing young drivers, and looking after each other’s interests.

Emanuel Jr. might have developed horse-handling skills at Belle Grove, where Isaac Hite Jr. raised, bred, stood to stud, and raced horses. Undoubtedly, men held in slavery by him were stable hands, riders, and

*Continued next page*

### FREEDOM FOR THE JACKSON FAMILY

Four of the six children born to Hannah Thornton (February 2022 issue) of Belle Grove, and her spouse, free Black Emanuel Jackson, were purchased into freedom by him; the fifth left no historical footprints and the sixth died. The odds of freedom for Emanuel and his siblings were all but non-existent, as Virginia law was stacked in favor of the enslavers. The 1865 General Emancipation was two to three decades in the future. The Hites had freed just a single slave, before they entered multiple business arrangements to free Hannah’s children, which earned them ready cash.

Frederick County and Virginia history present multiple examples of legatees contesting emancipation of slaves held by elder generations. Very possibly the signature on Emanuel Sr’s document was “examined” five years later. The documents Belle Grove has found shows that the Hites honored the agreements made by their deceased. Son Isaac Fontaine Hite appeared invested in assisting his mother implement his father’s intentions. The 1837 bill of sale for Emanuel Jr. is a masterpiece of unified family approval of his sale, written by Isaac Hite Jr.’s son-in-law, attorney Phillip

Williams. It is ironclad, and concluded the sale promptly upon closure of probate. While paperwork is lacking, the fact that brother Daniel’s wife and children are documented as living in Pennsylvania suggests their sale was concluded after Emanuel Sr’s death around 1847-8.

Only some of the emancipation records and correspondence have survived, so the order in which the children were freed, or when and how they left Virginia, will take additional research. To read some of these records, visit [bellegrove.org/about/enslaved/jacksons](http://bellegrove.org/about/enslaved/jacksons).

possibly jockeys for local rural races. Emanuel's grandfather, Frank Thornton, was Hite's coach driver. A teamster needed to be skilled with horses.

In the 1840 Census, which only used head-of-household names, Birmingham is a hamlet of 653 souls, engaged in manufacturing and trades, zero enslaved, but 99.9% white. In fact, only the very last family enumerated is Black: Emanuel Jackson Sr.'s with two males and one female 10-12, one male 25-35, one female 30-55, and a male over 55.<sup>3</sup>

When Emanuel Jr. was freed February 3, 1841 at age 25, he set his feet on the same path to maturity and prosperity that the Belle Grove enslaved community had watched the Hite children take. Emanuel found a young woman to marry and bought his first parcel of land in August 1846, where his family is recorded as living in the 1850 Census. He next bought the first of his Centre Street lots on Centre Street, about 2,000 square feet, nearly half an acre. It appears they built a new house there, and by 1853, began 17 years of residency. In November 1866, he bought the lot next door to build stables and have yard space associated with his business, now an acre. He was able to pass on these lots to his sons in his will and the horse to his wife, transferring wealth across generations, something an enslaved person could never do.

1 Emanuel Jackson Sr Freedom Paper to Emanuel Jackson Jr., City of Pittsburgh, February 3, 1841.

2 Emanuel Jackson Sr. to Isaac Fontaine Hite, December 6, 1846.

3 1840 Federal Census Pennsylvania. There was a single black woman living in a white household, likely a servant.

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

**NEXT MONTH WE WILL HONOR  
Carter born May 3, 1806**

## THE BIRMINGHAM NEIGHBORHOOD OF PITTSBURGH

The Birmingham neighborhood transformed around the Jacksons. For decades, the extended Jackson family lived within a six-block radius. By 1850, neighborhood residents were tradespeople, other laborers, a German bricklayer, and a carpenter on either side, a mix of 60/40% Blacks and whites, though the town, which had grown nearly six-fold, to 3,732 residents, was still 2% Black.

In 1860, on Centre Street, the neighborhood was 30% Blacks (or the Census category of "mulatto"), 70% whites, with a policeman and shoemakers as next-door neighbors.

Shoemakers were the earliest union to organize in Pennsylvania in 1794.



1828 Pittsburgh from View of the United States, Historical, Geographical, and Statistical..., by William Darby, Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1828, p. 101.

## EMANUEL'S FAMILY



Emanuel's bride was Catherine Smith, a Pennsylvania girl three years younger, who could read and write. Their marriage spanned twenty-five years, during which they raised six children: Catherine and Ann, Daniel, Frank, Robert, and George. The census records two people living with them: her widowed mother, Elizabeth Smith, age 50, and the man who may have been his employer/business partner, Lewis Robinson, a 35-year-old teamster.

The family was also community builders, joining AME Churches, and social lodges like the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows. In 1869, Emanuel Jr. joined ten other men, including in-laws of his wife, as Trustees buying land to develop the Lincoln Memorial (Colored) Cemetery in the Hill District, to serve the growing Black community. Whether it was functioning a year later when he passed away, around

age 55, is unclear. It is now defunct, with burials transferred to Woodlawn. His probate inventory of 1870 left everything to his wife and children, land to his sons, and \$500 apiece to his daughters. His widow received money and personal possessions worth \$167 (\$3,884 in today's money).<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-1870's, Catherine and her sons were either unable, or chose to not make a large payment on a mortgage, for the house/property and lost it. The property may no longer have served individual needs, as the sons were of marriageable age and perhaps preferred their own establishments. It's not currently possible to trace the family after Emanuel's death, but more research is underway that might provide information on grandchildren, location of burials, and localities where descendants lived. We hope to provide an update within the year.

1 Inflation calculator [officialdata.org/us/inflation](http://officialdata.org/us/inflation) and Emanuel Jackson's will probated May 5, 1870, (No. 123, Vol. 14, Page 205).

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](http://www.bellegrove.org/support/donate).

## Belle Grove Plantation

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