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Volume 10

ANSLOW BROS.  
Publishers

CAMPBELLTON, N. B., THURSDAY, MAY 21 1908

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Number 42



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## HOW UNCLE TOM'S CABIN WAS STARTED BY MRS. STOWE

The death of Mrs. John H. Law recently in Chicago recalls the association of two southern families, the Tichenors and the Overakers, with the writing of Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Mrs. Law, whose maiden name was Georgia Overaker, was the last of the original Overaker family at Natchez, Miss., who came North during slavery time and settled in Cincinnati. She is survived by her husband, John H. Law of Chicago, and six children: Mrs. Laura Law Meek, Charles Green Law and Miss Lucy A. Law of Chicago, Mrs. Charles W. Bell of Cincinnati, Mrs. A. S. Taylor of Cleveland, and Mrs. John Haddock of New York, and a niece, Mrs. C. C. Hearn, of Port Totten, N. Y.

The connection of the Overaker family with Mrs. Stowe's book is shown in the following article published by Laporte some time ago and headed, "How Uncle Tom's Cabin Came to be Written."

If there is anything in foreordination Harriet Beecher Stowe was predestined to write "Uncle Tom's Cabin." She did not intend to do it. She said that for many years of her life she avoided all reading upon or allusion to the subject of slavery. But in Cincinnati it was thrust upon her at every turn.

An incident which increased her interest in the problem of freedom was the coming to Walnut Hills of a family from the far South, who for conscience sake had separated themselves from the associations of their lifetime and sought a home in the then unbroken forest on the banks of the Ohio. Here the Tichenors and Overakers, a family of aristocratic English descent, made for themselves a home in the southern style, the first of those really feudal estates of which so many now crowning the banks of the Ohio and the crests of Cincinnati's hills.

This family brought with them a retinue of house servants in order to get them free. They were scattered among the various families of this lovely village, some being engaged at one time or another in Prof. Stowe's family and some in that of his next neighbor, also a professor in the seminary. One of these neighbors has said that she has seen Mrs. Stowe sit all afternoon watching the children of the two families and the young blacks at play.

It was then and there that Mrs. Stowe knew the original of Uncle Pete, likeness in unflinching courage. Topsy was a stray bit of ebony humanity that some unrecorded way came to be one of the picaninies perched on the porches of the Overaker mansion in New Orleans, where the family had a winter home. Around the quarters of the orphan errands or played with the dogs on the Tichenor plantation at Natchez.

She was such a little imp of blackness that "that limb was past saving," and so she was left among the little hands, who were to work out their freedom there on the plantation at Natchez. But the case of the abandoned waif appealed to the sympathy of Mrs. Stowe's neighbor, and the eldritch Topsy was brought North and placed in the family of the young professor to be trained for service.

It was then and there that the effort to develop her into a reasonable being was not a shining success. Joan—for that was her real name—drifted into the abandoned stratum of Cincinnati life and was seen no more by her former friends until the day of Mrs. Tichenor's funeral.

Black Sam also, he of the "oboloboration faculty," was at service in the same family, but he will be best remembered by the act of putting the beechnut under Haley's saddle when they were about to start for Elizabethtown. Others of the small fry named were of the same group.

It was at Walnut Hills also that Mrs. Stowe knew the original of Uncle Pete in "Dred" or "Nina Gordon" as it was afterward called. He was then an African, a black as Colored Williams, and he certainly was of a rockfast and deepest back dye as mortal flesh could take. Like that faithful old man who took care of the Peyton children and always spoke of himself and them as "we P. O. folks," the devoted retainer of the professor families for odd jobs always spoke of himself and them as "we ordinary folks." Peace to his gay ashes! He died a few years ago.

At the time of the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Mrs. Stowe was in the midst of a financial depression and stagnation in many business quarters than the country can afford to enjoy. Business is going to pick up rapidly, however, as soon as the election is over. It will resume the condition which has been normal to it during some years past.

In a general way it can be said that the industries of the country have held up well against the depression.

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