

AN OLD LETTER

The following letter written forty three years ago by Richard C. Young, Washington City, to Esther Young, a colored woman then living in Whitehall, was recently found among the old files in the county clerk's office of this county.

Mr. Young had resided in Whitehall before locating in Washington City, having moved there from Kentucky. He was at one time clerk of the House of Representatives, was commissioner of the Land department succeeding Gen. Shield under President Polk, and was judge of the Superior court.

His cousin, John Bristow, of whom he speaks, was Captain John Bristow, who at one time resided in Whitehall and afterwards in Wilmington, commanded a company in the Mexican war, and was an uncle of the late B. B. Bristow, ex-secretary of the U. S. Treasury. His "brother" Colby, was Colby Young, who taught school in Wilmington about the year 1841 and afterwards kept a hotel there, but he had moved to Washington City at the time this letter was written.

The Mr. Whiteside mentioned was either Judge L. T. Whiteside, now of Whitehall, or his brother Rev. A. J. Whiteside as they were both living in Wilmington at that time.

Judge Worcester was the White hall post-master mentioned.

Uncle Edward (or "Uncle Ned" as he was called in Whitehall), Aunt Dinah and Rose were colored people living in Whitehall, formerly slaves in Kentucky, owned by the Youngs and brought to Illinois by them. Aunt Lucy was a colored woman in Kentucky, who had been given her freedom by the Young family. Uncle Ned and Aunt Dinah will be remembered by all of the old citizens who were residents of Whitehall in 1842.

Capt. Bristow had attempted to kidnap "Aunt Esther" and her four children with a view of running them off and selling them into slavery, had driven his wagon in front of her door to load them in, but was prevented from carrying out his intentions by Col. J. C. Winters, who happened upon the scene and served notice upon the Captain that if he attempted to carry them off, then or thereafter he would do so at his peril.

THE LETTER

Washington City, D. C. March 15, 48.

To Esther Young:

I received your letter dated March 2d this morning and regretted very much to hear that an attempt had been made to carry you and your children to Kentucky, for the purpose of subjecting you and them to slavery. I regret this on many accounts. I have been very anxious for the welfare of Cousin John Bristow and my sister Louisa--but my God! what can he expect to gain by such a violation of law, and all the rights of religion and humanity: I do hope for his own sake that he will desist from such an intention, if he has any feeling for the helpless condition of yourself and children. You are unquestionably free as well as your children, by the laws of Illinois and could gain your freedom, even in a court in Kentucky, and if you should be kidnapped and run off, with your children, get someone to write to me or to brother Colby, where you are, and we will see that right takes place. The courts in the slave States will be just as ready to do you justice as the courts in Illinois.

I have written to Gov. Carlin, and to Mr. Cavarly at Carrollton, and to the Postmaster at Whitehall, to see that your rights are not violated, and Brother Colby has written to Mr. Samuel Higbee at Whitehall, and Mr. Whiteside at Wilmington, on the same subject.

I should think that it would be difficult to procure any one to steal you off clandestinely, as by so doing, he would be guilty of the crime of kidnapping, which in Illinois, is a penitentiary offense. But I think from the letters that Brother Colby and myself have written in your behalf, that no further attempt will be made, and if there should be the people will not permit it to be done.

Tell Uncle Edward that I made all the necessary arrangements for Aunt Lucy to go to Illinois last fall, but that when the time came for leaving she was unwilling to undertake the journey and could not be persuaded to go. I was much disappointed at her refusal, as she had previously promised me to go, and I had made all the necessary arrangements to advance the money for the journey.

Give Uncle Edward, Aunt Dina and Rose my best wishes for their welfare. Write again and let me know what further may be done or attempted. We are all well.

RICHARD M. YOUNG