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One of the Antiquities of the Probate Court Records of Jersey County

The following quaintly phrased testimony copied from the probate court records of Jersey County and dated Jan. 6, 1840, describes a contract between Thomas L. McGill and Nathaniel Hamilton, justices of the peace, and Aaron Noble for the apprenticeship of a colored boy in accordance with the laws of those days:

This Indenture made and entered into this sixth day of January A D 1840 between Thomas L. McGill, and Nathaniel Hamilton, two Justices of the peace in and for the County of Jersey and the State of Illinois of the one part and Aaron Noble of the Same County and State of the second part Witnesseth That the said Justices of the peace by virtue of the law of the State of Illinois in such cases made and provide have plan and by these presents do plan and bind out as an apprentice a poor Colored Child named Nathan who has no parents in this State and is unable to maintain himself and is now the age of sixteen years to said Aaron Noble to learn the art of farming of the said Aaron Noble after the manner of an apprentice to dwell with and serve the said Aaron Noble from the day of the day of the date hereof to the twentieth day of April A D 1845 at which time the said apprentice will be twenty-one years of age. During all of which term of time the said apprentice shall be under his said master and well and faithfully keep his secrets and all his lawful commands at all times and every where be ready to obey. He shall do no damage to his said master nor knowingly suffer any to be done by others. He shall not worst the goods of his said master nor lend them unlawfully to any. At cards, dice or any unlawful game he shall not play. Matrimony he shall not contract during his said term of service. Taverns, alehouses or places of gaming he shall not frequent or resort from the services of his master; he shall not absent himself but in all things and at all times he shall demean himself and behave as a good and faithful servant or apprentice ought during the whole term aforesaid.

And the said Aaron Noble binds himself to cause said apprentice to be taught to read and shall give unto said apprentice a new Bible and two new suits of clothes suited to his condition at the expiration of his said term of service in testimony whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this day and year above written.

Thomas L. McGill (seal)
Nathaniel Hamilton (seal)
Aaron Noble (seal)