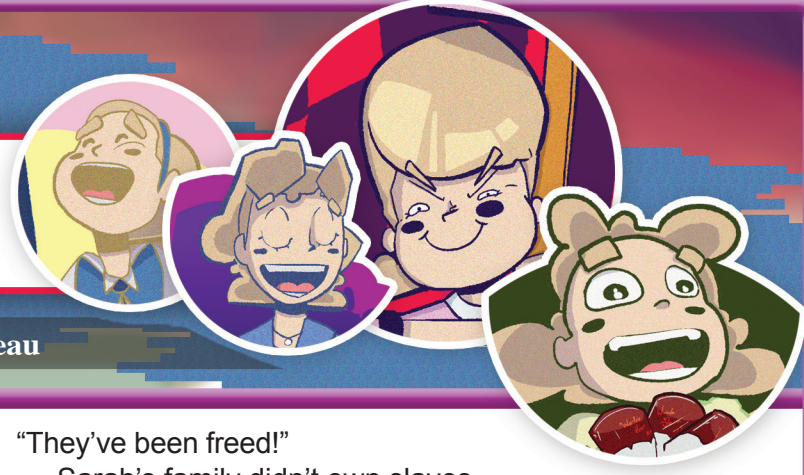


Generations of Missouri

Written by Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau



Dred and Harriet Scott Chapter Two

Annie, age 48 & Sarah, age 8 | 1857

Sarah stood in a crowd on the steps of the courthouse next to her grandmother. It was a beautiful spring day with fluffy clouds floating above the muddy Mississippi. Sarah could feel her Grandmother Annie's thin hand clinging to hers as they stood among the onlookers. Sarah would much rather be spending such a spring morning playing with neighbors. But her grandmother had insisted that they walk down to the courthouse together.

"Grandmother," Sarah whined. "What are we waiting for?"

"Hush now, Sarah," her grandmother told her, craning her neck to see above the crowd. "We're waiting to hear the outcome of a significant legal case. I know it's hard to be patient," she told Sarah. "But my father brought me downtown on another important day, and now it's your chance to see history!"

In Sarah's mind, history was something that happened a long time ago to old people!

The crowd quieted down when a man in a suit came out of the courthouse.

"Judge Alexander Hamilton has formally approved freedom for Mr. and Mrs. Dred Scott!"

There were shouts, jeers, and cheers; some sounded angry, and some sounded joyful.

"Did you hear that?" Sarah's grandmother asked excitedly.

"They've been freed!"

Sarah's family didn't own slaves, but she knew others who did. She saw them in her community, just as her grandmother had, throughout her lifetime. The adults around her seemed to be arguing a lot about slavery. Some people wanted there to be slaves while others wanted slavery to end. The anger from both sides seemed to be reaching a boiling point.

Standing side by side, Sarah and Grandmother Annie watched the Scotts leave the courthouse. They looked tired, weathered even. But Dred and Harriet stood with their shoulders straight and their backs proud.

As they began the walk home, Annie told Sarah a little bit more about the case.

"The Scotts have been fighting for their freedom in the courts for over a decade now," she told her. "Just a few months ago, their case went all the way to the Supreme Court! But the judges said that people of African descent were not intended to be included as citizens in the United States Constitution. The Supreme Court did not grant the Scotts their freedom."

"So, how did they get to be freed today?" Sarah asked.

"Their owners now live in Massachusetts. They transferred ownership to the Blow family here in St. Louis, and the Blows emancipated them."

"Emancipated?" Sarah asked.

"Freed."

Sarah wondered what it would feel like to be "owned" and then "freed." She'd been free for her entire life. She and her family had always been citizens.

She listened to the strident voices debating the day's events. She pictured the Scotts standing weary yet proud on the courthouse steps.

The tension in the air bothered Sarah. It felt as if something big was coming. She held her grandmother's hand the entire way home.

NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

Make a list of legal words in the newspaper, like decision or Supreme Court.

