Albert was born in Lincoln County, Kentucky around the year 1817. He was born a slave, because slavery was still legal in the United States. In 1829, when Albert was just twelve years old, a man named Duff purchased him and moved him to Madison County, Kentucky, where in 1831, Albert was sold to a lady named Jane Mackey, who lived on a farm.\(^1\) In 1841, Albert was able to purchase his freedom from Jane Mackey, and later went on to purchase a horse and buggy, which was not a common sight to see in Richmond Kentucky, especially for a freed black gentleman.\(^2\)

The fact that he was able to save up his money, which he received from Jane Mackey\(^3\), and buy his own freedom is a prime example of someone moving from their ascribed status, to a better achieved status. When he was still a slave, he was considered a stranger, because he had possibly been part of a forced migration, when Africans were brought to the United States to provide slaves for the large plantation owners. Sadly, these were all inter-related parts in the machine of cotton farming, which was a massive industry in the 19\(^{th}\) century. Slaves were considered the bottom of the ladder, and had almost no rights. So for a slave to purchase themselves from their master was not a common occurrence. However, it was not as uncommon for a master to free their slave, either while they were alive, or after the master died.\(^4\)

\(^1\) *Shenago Valley News* (Greenville). "The Days of Slavery." April 20, 1888.

\(^2\) ibid

\(^3\) ibid

Manumission is most known from Thomas Jefferson freeing his slaves, and the amount of slaves that achieved freedom from him.\(^5\)

Albert was married in c. 1853 to Margaret Embry, who had 3 children of her own.\(^6\) When he married her, he actually mortgaged her, her children, and all of his property, until he was able to purchase them back, after which the mortgage was to be declared void and of no effect.\(^7\) However, Margaret died in 1860, and was buried in the Mackey family plot of the Richmond Cemetery.\(^8\) In an 1860 census for the town of Richmond Kentucky, Albert is listed as being a barber, as well as being illiterate\(^9\). Since he had no education, the latter part of the census is not very surprising to see. The amount of educated free slaves who were literate was not very high, since in 1870, the percentage of blacks who were illiterate was \(\%79.9\), while the percent of illiterate whites was \(\%11.5\)\(^{10}\), so one can assume that the rates were very similar in earlier decades.

Literacy is an important part of the world today. However, it was not as important in earlier centuries, since there was much less use for it because of the lack of proper education, as well as the lifestyle that most people were involved in. However, with literacy came a higher social class, in which the people with the most resources, such as education, resided. But, since Albert was a barber by profession, he had a resource that a lot of former slaves had, which was money. With his job, he was able to pay off the mortgage on his wife, children, and property, as well as purchase several plots of land.\(^{11}\)

Albert eventually married again, this time to Susan C., whom he married while she was still a slave, and purchased her freedom.\(^{12}\) And in the 1870 census, is illiterate, whereas his wife can read but not write, and all of their children (both Susan’s and Margaret’s) are able to read.

\(^6\) Madison County Order Book 7. 1853.
\(^7\) ibid
\(^8\) Blanchette, Stephanie. RE: MACKEY FAMILY. 2015. E-mail.
\(^9\) ibid
\(^11\) Madison County Order Book 7. 1853.
\(^12\) Blanchette, Stephanie. RE: MACKEY FAMILY. 2015. E-mail.
and write. Albert, as a barber, probably learnt his trade from an immigrant barber who had set up a good reputation, since it was an easy trade to learn. When Albert set up his own barber shop, he also owned a restaurant from which he sold cakes and candies, as well as a painter for a brief time, for which he is remembered for when he painted “Madison House” on The Climax office, when it was still a hotel. Sadly, Albert Mackey died in 1888, when he was 70 years old. He went from an ascribed status as a slave, to owning $10,000 - $15,000 worth of property, which was a massive amount for any former slave to acquire. Thus he beat the system that his ascribed status set up for him, and managed to assume a role with the other proud folk who had achieved a high status in society.

Blanchette, Stephanie. RE: MACKEY FAMILY. 2015. E-mail.

13 Blanchette, Stephanie. RE: MACKEY FAMILY. 2015. E-mail.


15 Blanchette, Stephanie. RE: MACKEY FAMILY. 2015. E-mail.


Madison County Order Book 7. 1853.


