

Letter from freed slave to former master draws attention



By Eric Pfeiffer | The Sideshow – 6 hrs ago

A newly discovered letter from a freed former slave to his onetime master is creating a buzz. [Letters of Note](#) explains that in August of 1865, a Colonel P.H. Anderson of Big Spring, Tennessee wrote to his former slave Jourdan Anderson, requesting that Jourdan return to work on his farm.

In the time since escaping from slavery, Anderson had become emancipated, moved to Ohio where he found paid work and was now supporting his family. The letter turned up in the August 22 edition of the [New York Daily Tribune](#).

Some excerpts:

Sir: I got your letter, and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this, for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Colonel Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again, and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me that Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

On the "good chance" offered by the former slave owner:

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here. I get twenty-five dollars a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy,—the folks call her Mrs. Anderson,—and the children—Milly, Jane, and Grundy—go to school and are learning well. The teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday school, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated. Sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks; but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Colonel Anderson. Many darkeys would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

And then Jourdan explains that anything his former master could offer, he's already earned on his own. Other than some back wages:

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department of Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go



ca. 1860's, USA. Freed slaves in Southern town shortly after the Civil War. © Bettmann/CORBIS

back without some proof that you were disposed to treat us justly and kindly; and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At twenty-five dollars a month for me, and two dollars a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to eleven thousand six hundred and eighty dollars. Add to this the interest for the time our wages have been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing, and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams's Express, in care of V. Winters, Esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past, we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there was never any pay-day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

And after a few more jabs about how his children are now happy and receiving an education, Jourdan concludes his letter with:

Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

You can read the full exchange [here](#).

Other popular Yahoo! News stories:

- [Seattle woman "marries" building to protest its demolition](#)
- [Capitol architect wanted to reanimate George Washington's corpse](#)
- [Actor "beyond shocked" after seeing leg amputated in altered ad](#)

Copyright 2012 The Sideshow

Copyright © 2012 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved. | Yahoo! - ABC News Network | /