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REDISCOVERY OF THE RICE FAMILY PLANTATION CEMETERY IN RAYTOWN

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Tim and Janet Morgan family, including Maddie, the family's dog turned archeologist. Photo courtesy the author.

a second stone had been uncovered in the Morgan's backyard. Boessen also reported distinct depressions on his mother's side of the fence line. They were advised to mark the exact location of the stones that had been removed and to faintly excavate for others until help could be procured in spring.

Meanwhile, Historical Society volunteer Kathleen Tuhoey began assembling research materials documenting the sacred area for the Raytown residents. Tuhoey has worked for nearly 15 years on the reclaiming and preservation of Pitcher Cemetery where one of Jackson County's Revolutionary War patriots is interred.

[Editor's Note: We ask that you please respect the privacy and property rights of the Raytown residents mentioned in this discovery piece. As you will see at the conclusion of this article, meaningful steps are being taken to preserve the sanctity of this private burial site, while at the same time making the above-ground markers available to the public in a reverential way.]

The small, ancient cemetery of one of Jackson County's earliest families was re-discovered last autumn by two families on Rose Lane in Raytown. It was an especially exciting find for *at least* two initial reasons: 1) The graves are some of the earliest recorded, extant burials in Jackson County, and 2) The Rice family's plantation home has been nicely preserved as an historic site for the public to enjoy . . . the Rice-Tremonti Home, 66th Street and Blue Ridge Boulevard, in Raytown.

Tim and Janet Morgan's golden retriever/Labrador, Maddie, gets credit for unearthing a peculiar stone that turned out to be the tall, thick, ornately carved marble headstone for Sallie Rice, wife of Archibald Rice, who was born in 1794 and died in 1852. Michael Boessen, the son of their next-door neighbor, Mary Cox, contacted the Jackson County Historical Society about what should be done after

RICE, WHITE, AND TREMONTI FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Archibald Rice, a cotton planter, his wife Sarah "Sallie," their six children and slaves, settled south of Independence in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833. They had emigrated from Caswell County, North Carolina, to Monroe County, Missouri, in 1826. The family moved west to the present-day Raytown area around 1837 and by 1844 the cotton-turned-corn planter had built a large home in a semi-circle of slave cabins on 700 acres (only about five contiguous acres survive today).

Archibald died in 1849.

Sally was listed in the 1850 U.S. Census. The enumeration included her son Coffe (sic.), aged 26; and, daughter Minerva, aged 21. Sally then owned 16 slaves, who were listed solely by age and gender:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 32 year old male | 7 year old female |
| 25 year old male | 5 year old female |
| 56 year old female | 5 year old female |
| 27 year old female | 2 year old female |
| 25 year old female | 3 year old female |
| 18 year old female | 2 year old female |
| 14 year old female | 5/12 year old female |
| 7 year old female | 5/12 year old female |

Much, if not all of Sally's property, slaves included, went to her son Coffee upon her death in August 1852 (an investigation of Sally's probate/estate file is available for investigation on microfilm). Coffee, his wife Kitty and her slave Sophia "Aunt Sophie" White, were likely already living at the Rice plantation.

In 1860, there were 13 slaves enumerated in the E. C. Rice household. One 36-year-old female was likely Sophia; she had previously appeared in the 1850 Census as a 40-year-old slave of Kitty's mother, Martha R. White. (As you can see, African-American slaves' precise ages were not known, and were likely estimated.)

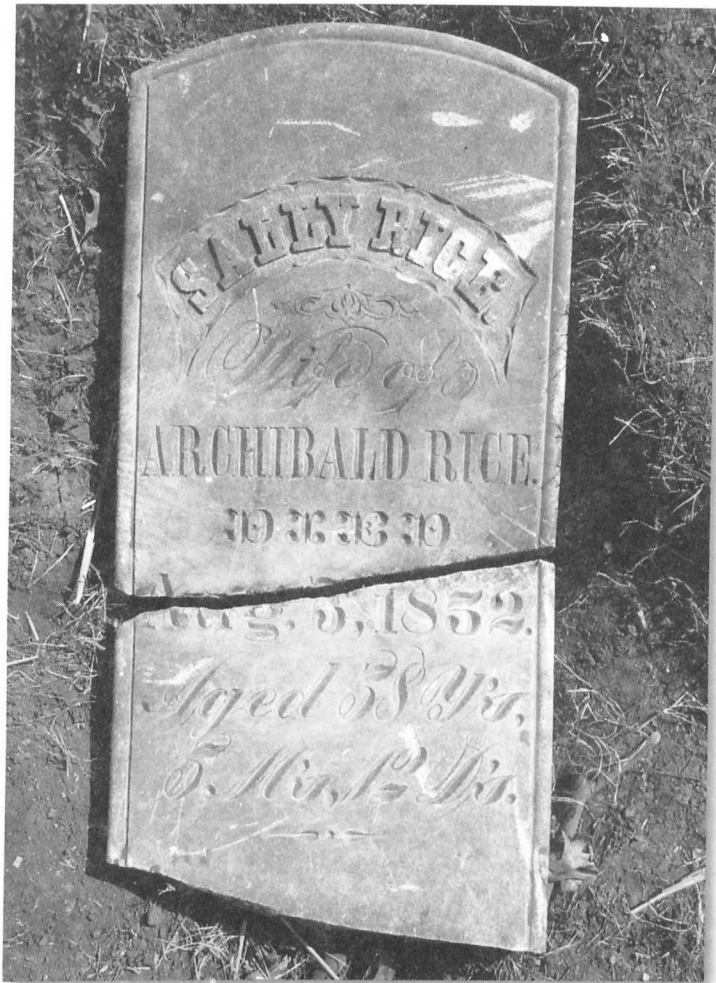
The Tremonti family were the last, long-time private owners of the property, which is now part of the historic site's legacy.

The historic log structure known as "Aunt Sophie's" slave cabin, however, may be more recognizable to passers by than the Rice home. The cabin has weathered many years and has a fascinating story in itself, not only because it has lasted all these years and for what the cabin it represents, but because of one of its former occupants.



Mary Cox, her son Michael Boessen and family. Photo courtesy the author.

"Aunt Sophie's" cabin was the last of several such cabins to remain after a widened Blue Ridge Boulevard was built in 1914. It was dangerously close to demolition when Blue Ridge was further widened into four lanes, encroaching onto the property in 1970. At that time, an age-old stone wall along the west edge of the property was removed, it lying along the County's right-of-way that had been in place since 1929.

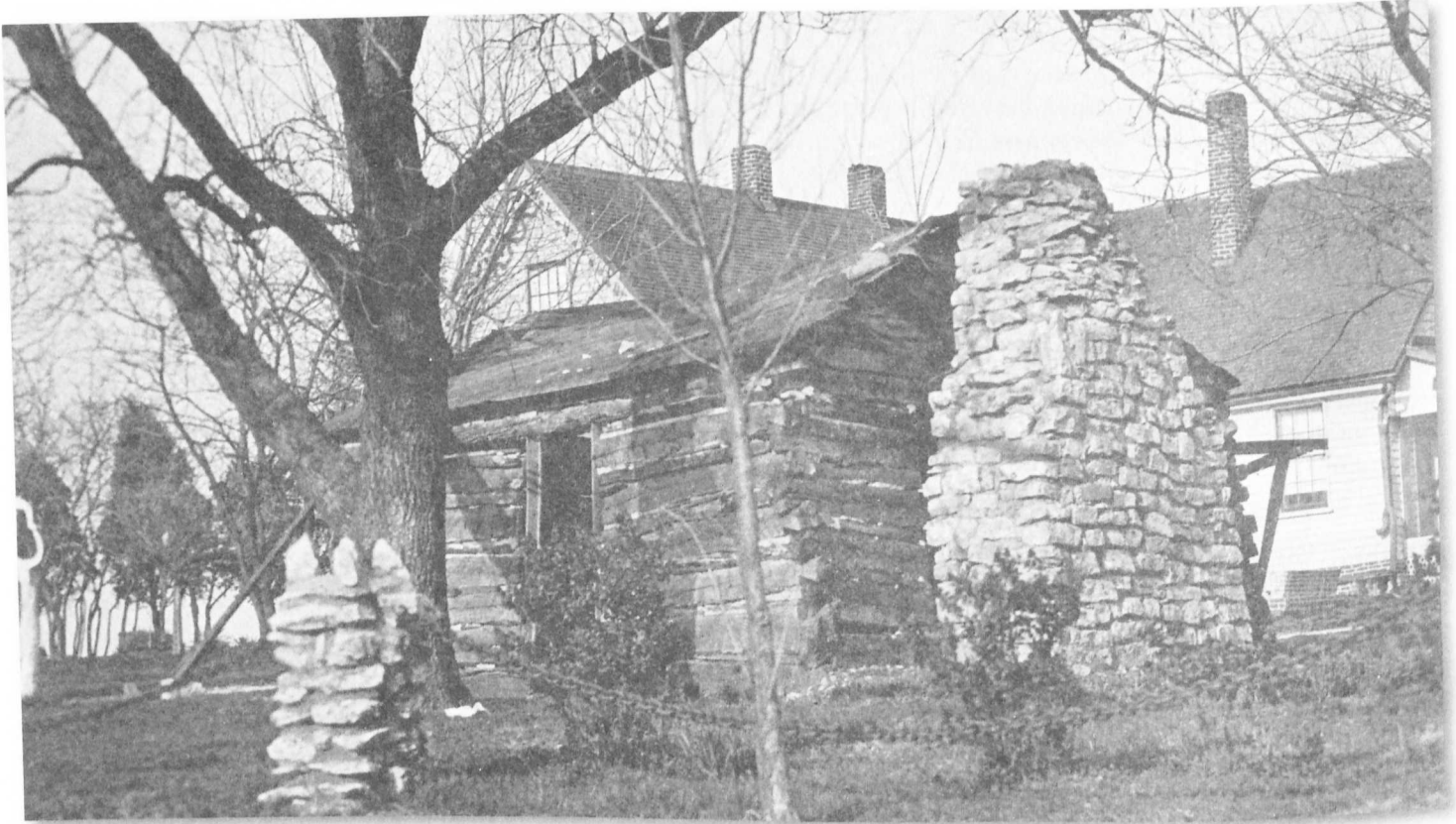


The beautifully carved marble headstone of Sallie Rice. Photo courtesy the author.

Originally consisting of three rooms, Sophia lived and worked from the cabin that overlooked the wagon road serving as the Santa Fe Trail (and later the Oregon-California Trails). Sophia fled with her owners to Texas after Order No. 11 was issued during the Civil War. Remarkably, the Rice plantation home and Sophia's cabin were untouched during the mass destruction that occurred when the Order was enforced. Even after emancipation, Sophia stayed on with the Rice family, who returned to Jackson County after the war.

Sophia White never married. She remarked once that she had never had time. She claimed she was a 15-year-old slave when she became the personal nurse to her master's daughter, Catherine "Kitty" Stoner White, who was born August 11, 1832. That would make Sophia's birth about 1817. Then, when Kitty married E. C. Rice on November 11, 1850, Sophia (then about 33 years old) was given to Kitty as a "wedding present." Slave Schedules (separate enumerations of the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Census) for the Rice family near Raytown and White family near Lee's Summit help to substantiate these reminiscences.

Stories have survived that tell of Sophia visiting with people in her later years about all she had seen pass by her way Raytown grew from a small village. She cooked the meals



Aunt Sophia "Sophie" White's slave cabin (PHL4373)

for the household over her own cabin fireplace and carried the food into the "big house." According to Ethylene Ballard Thurston, Sophia scorned the modern cook stove inside the family's house.

For part pay, Sophia was given young livestock that she tended and sold. She was also allowed to peel, dry and sell all

the apples she wished from the large orchards on the property. She apparently loaned money to "Mr. C" (that's Coffee Rice) each year for the interest he paid her. Her savings had grown to \$750 when she died around the age of 79 on March 29, 1896; she left it to her mistress' daughter, Anne (Rice) Lane Dunn.



Rice Tremonti Home. Photo courtesy the author.

RICE PLANTATION CEMETERY THEN & NOW

The last known record of the *Coffee Rice Cemetery* was in 1934 when the Kansas City Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, prepared a tombstone inscription index of the cemetery's then existing nine stones. Roberta Bonnewitz' published materials, several county history books, and Annette W. Curtis' study of African

American slaves in Jackson County are invaluable resources.

The name of the cemetery attributed by the DAR is somewhat of a misnomer. One would think that Coffee Rice would be buried there since the cemetery bears his name, but Coffee (or, Elihu Coffee Rice) is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Independence with his wife Catherine "Kitty" Stoner (White) Rice (as well as Kitty's former African American slave, Sophia "Aunt Sophie" White.). Coffee owned and for many years lived on the land his father homesteaded in 1844, and that is likely how the name was attributed.

Those known to be buried within the stone wall of the Coffee Rice Cemetery are:

STONES FOUND THUSFAR

[with editorial background in brackets]

Sallie Rice, wife of Archibald Rice died August 5, 1852, aged 58 years, 5 months, 12 days [according to online calculators she was born about February 24, 1794. Until confirmation with other sources, these kind of calculations remain only approximations.]

Martha B. Rice died November 24, 1838, aged 16 years, 3 months, 9 days [born August 15, 1822]; footstone found, too.

Mary Ann, wife of John H. Ish, born March 25, 1827, died March 1, 1851 [Mary Ann Franklin married John Ish in Jackson County February 7, 1850.]

Louisiana Rice born March 10, 1835, died February 3, 1848; footstone found, too.

Quintiller Rice born October 1, 1831, died July 31, 1848; footstone found, too.

STONES NOT YET FOUND

Archibald Rice born about December 18, 1782, died October 14, 1849 according to DAR inscription; only his footstone with initials "A. R." have been found thus far.

Mary Rice born about July 20, 1820, died November 8, 1826 [Printed histories report the Rice family coming to Jackson County in 1833; the DAR's inscription may,

therefore, have been inaccurately transcribed from their 1934 tombstone reading.]

Minerva R. Rice born about April 9, 1829 [Minerva Rice married Andrew J. Stone in Jackson County December 24, 1850; she died and left four young children (Juliet, age 8; Sally, 6; Jacob, 4; William, 2) between 1858-1859. Andrew's 1860 Census enumeration reported he had married Julia S. "within the year."]

Sarah R. Stone died May 25, 1866 [likely daughter of Andrew and Minerva who appears in the 1860 Census with Andrew and then wife Julia.]



Larry Grantham uncovering the headstone of Mary Ish, revealing vital statistics contradicting written tombstone inscription records on file. Photo courtesy the author.

NO STONES EXTANT

The eastern wall of the cemetery today runs parallel along the east property line between two lots in Raytown's Colonial Garden subdivision. Outside the east wall (which is on the east side of the fence line) there are visible depressions the size of graves. State Parks Archaeologist, Larry Grantham, is quite sure they are unmarked burials of slaves that once toiled on the Rice plantation. These burials

would have taken place between about 1837 and the early 1860s when E. C. Rice abandoned the property under Order No. 11 and went to Texas.

SACRED SPACES, ARTIFACTS PRESERVED

These families are dedicated to doing the right thing. The Morgan's are respectfully planning a private memorial garden over the location of the cemetery that remains in the corner of their back yard. At the time this article went to press, it has been reported that the stones, most of which need restoration, will be transferred to the Rice Tremonti Home a couple blocks away.

The Jackson County Historical Society is encouraging Friends of Rice Tremonti Home officials, who intend to create a mock cemetery on the home site, to produce reproductions for outdoor display so that the originals may be preserved and avoid future deterioration and vandalism.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO COMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND ONLINE AT JCHS.ORG.