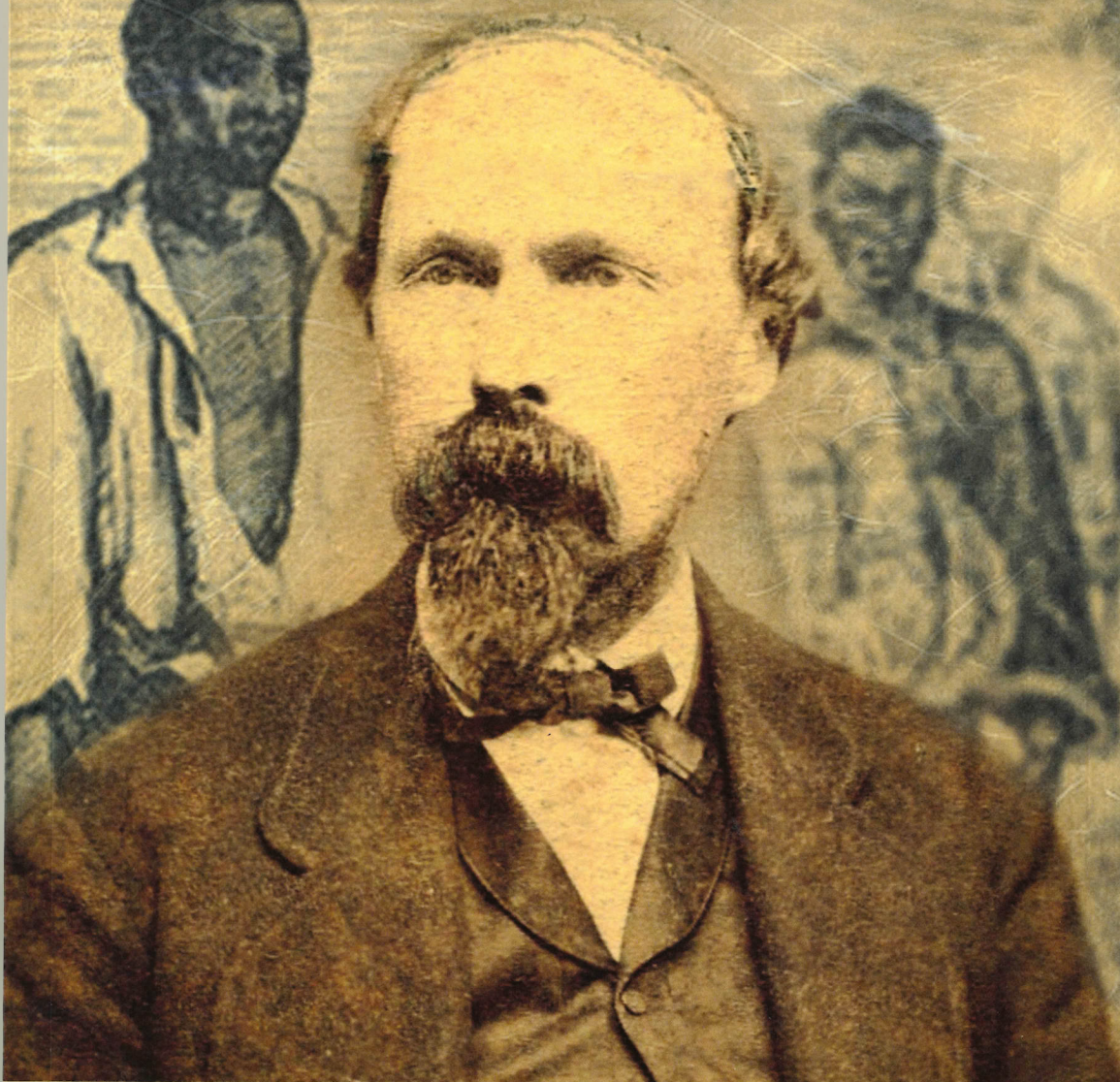


Robert K. Summers



THE DOCTOR'S

SLAVES

Samuel Mudd, Slavery, and The Lincoln Assassination

The name Milo Simms appears in the 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1888 Washington City Directories. The name is distinct enough that this is probably the same Milo Simms who was Dr. Mudd's slave. His occupation is listed variously as servant, laborer, oysters, and junk.

Lettie Hall, Louisa Cristie, and Frank Washington were still living on the Mudd farm in 1870, according to that year's federal census.

Sixty years later, Lettie gave an interview to the *Butler Eagle* (Pennsylvania) newspaper recounting John Wilkes Booth's visit to the Mudd farm. The March 16, 1929, newspaper article read:

Butler Woman Cooked Breakfast for Booth after He had Killed Lincoln at Close of Civil War

From the days of Lincoln to the present is a far cry, but there dwells in Butler a colored woman whose life spans that long expanse of years, and she is Mrs. David Brown Dade, wife of a colored Baptist minister, living at 210 Mulberry street, who claims the distinction of having cooked breakfast for that arch-conspirator, J. Wilkes Booth, the morning after he assassinated President Abraham Lincoln, in April 1865, almost before the thundering of the guns during the dark days of the Civil War had subsided.

Cooking breakfast for Booth, however, was not by design on the part of the Butler woman, but rather a matter of duty. But let Mrs. Dade tell the story in her own words.

"I was born a slave in Maryland," she began. "When I was quite small, my mother and father were sold and I never knew where they went. So far as I know, I never saw them again. Dr. Samuel Mudd was a son of Dr. Henry Mudd, who owned a lot of slaves in his day, but Dr. Samuel Mudd did not keep any slaves, as his wife did not believe in slavery. She took my younger sister and I to raise, and she was very good to us. My sister's name was Louisa, and mine was Lettie Hall.

"My master, Dr. Samuel Mudd, lived in Chester County, Md. One morning when I was about 15 or 16 years old (I never knew my age), my master called me about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and said:

"Lettie, get up quick and get a fine breakfast, for we have some distinguished people here for breakfast, and get Louisa up to serve. I never knew anything else but to obey. So I got up, killed a chicken, and had the finest biscuits I believe I ever baked. I put cream in for shortening, and they were so pretty and nice.

"A Mr. Harold, who had come horseback with Mr. Booth, came down with the family to breakfast, but Louisa was ordered to take Mr. Booth's breakfast upstairs where Dr. Mudd was setting his broken leg. I learned later that Mr. Booth gave my sister two 25-cent pieces, and told her to give me one.

"I shall never forget that first piece of money I ever had. I wanted to put a hole in it and a string to put around my neck, but my master said that would spoil it, so he put it away for me. I did not get to see Mr. Booth, as I was in the kitchen downstairs, but sister said he was a very handsome man.

"When breakfast was over, Mr. Booth was helped into his saddle, and both he and Mr. Harold galloped on down the road. In a short time the United States soldiers rode up and surrounded our house. My, but I was scared!

"They hurriedly searched the house, although my master told them those folk had gone on down the road. I heard one man, who seemed to be the leader, say 'He's not here. We are losing time.' And then they rushed out of the house, got on their horses and galloped on down the road. I heard later that they found Mr. Booth that day in a barn and shot him there."

Mrs. Dade told her story to J.A. Roberts, 501 West Jefferson street, upon a request received recently from one who is compiling a book entitled "Unwritten History of the Negro in the United States," to look up the local woman, which Mr. Roberts did.

Mrs. Lettie Hall Dade, the last of Dr. Mudd's slaves, died on Saturday, April 18, 1936 in Butler, Pennsylvania.