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Elwood W. Christ  
*Gettysburg College*

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## **Abstract**

Like many Decembers in the greater Adams county area, the beginning of the winter usually is a collage of intermittent warm spells spliced amongst Arctic days with cold Canadian northwest winds. Amid the hoopla, as Gettysburgians prepared for the 1873 Christmas holidays during the week between the 17th and 24th of December, a person had, as Alfred Lord Tennyson so eloquently described, "Crossed the Bar." But in the local newspapers there had been no notice of declining health. No death notice appeared. Possibly the cost of five cents a line "for all over four lines- cash to accompany the notice" was too much for the family. Or did not the publishers of Gettysburg's two newspapers consider the passing of another Black-American as newsworthy for their readership? The only printed evidence of the passing of a grand dame of Gettysburg, a human link dating back to the very founding of the town, was a short legal notice regarding the filing of Letters Testamentary printed directly below the death notices in the 24 December Star and Sentinel. Sidney O'Brien had died.  
[excerpt]

## **Keywords**

Adams County Historical Society, ACHS, Adams County, Pennsylvania History, Slavery, Slave, Servant

## On The Trail of Sidney O'Brien: An Inquiry Into Her Family and Status:

**Was She a Slave or Servant of the Gettys Family of Gettysburg?  
Was Her Daughter, Getty Ann, a Descendant of James Gettys?**

by Elwood W. Christ

Like many Decembers in the greater Adams county area, the beginning of the winter usually is a collage of intermittent warm spells spliced amongst Arctic days with cold Canadian northwest winds. Amid the hoopla, as Gettysburgians prepared for the 1873 Christmas holidays during the week between the 17th and 24th of December, a person had, as Alfred Lord Tennyson so eloquently described, "Crossed the Bar." But in the local newspapers there had been no notice of declining health. No death notice appeared. Possibly the cost of five cents a line "for all over four lines — cash to accompany the notice" was too much for the family. Or did not the publishers of Gettysburg's two newspapers consider the passing of another Black-American as newsworthy for their readership? The only printed evidence of the passing of a grand dame of Gettysburg, a human link dating back to the very founding of the town, was a short legal notice regarding the filing of Letters Testamentary printed directly below the death notices in the 24 December *Star and Sentinel*. Sidney O'Brien had died.

During the past ninety years, many armchair historians have based what they know of Sidney O'Brien on an article written by Gettysburg attorney William Archibald McClean concerning the life of James Gettys which appeared in the 13 May 1908 *Gettysburg Compiler*:

An interesting fact in the life of the proprietor appears in his will, that he was a slaveholder, and he bequeaths his one slave to his wife. Slavery came to an end in Pennsylvania in 1820 and the proprietor must have been among the last owners of slaves in the county.

This slave, Sidney, was a young mulatto girl at the time of the death of the proprietor, and lived many years afterwards and is still well remembered by a number of citizens of this place. She was a bright woman with many of the old-fashioned virtues of her people. She lived many years in a small cabin where Breckenridge Street extended begins. She married one of her race by the name of O'Brien and was well known in this section as Sidney O'Brien. She had but



one daughter, to whom she gave in part the family name to which she had belonged as a slave and this fact would indicate that her experiences with the Gettys family as a chattel must have been pleasant ones. The daughter, Getty Ann O'Brien, married Greenberry Stanton and was the mother, among other children, of Samuel Stanton of this place.

In the 19 April 1912 *Gettysburg Compiler*, the relationship between Sidney and the Stanton family was again referenced in the obituary of Samuel M. Stanton, Sr. The reporter noted that "he was a grandson of . . . Sidney O'Brien . . . and] Her daughter, Getty Ann O'Brien, [had] married Greenberry Stanton. . . ."

We need, however, to ask how much of William A. McClean's article and Samuel Stanton's obituary was accurate. Unfortunately for us, no documented direct Gettys descendants currently live in Adams county. However, members of the Stanton family still do. That family's verbal tradition holds that Getty Ann was the child of Sidney, a slave of James Gettys. But family belief also holds that James Gettys was Getty Ann's father.

What, then, is the documentable story behind Sidney O'Brien? When was she born? Who were her parents? When was Sidney's daughter, Getty Ann, born, and who was her father? Looking for possible answers, I examined the last will and testament of James Gettys and other pertinent documents associated with his estate that might shed some light on our questions concerning Sidney.

On 15 March 1815 Gettys included in his will the following provisions:

I Give, Bequeath & Devise my whole Estate Real, Personal & mixed of what kind & nature the same may be, or whatsoever found, unto my well beloved wife Mary Gettys & my two sons James Gettys and Robert Todd Gettys to be divided equally amongst them share and share alike, to hold them their heirs and assigns forever . . . [and] I give and bequeath to my well beloved wife *my Mullatoe [sic] girl Sidney, over and above her shares as aforesaid* [Emphasis added].

Gettys also appointed his wife and Alexander Cobean as executors of his estate. Although Gettys's will did not specify that Sidney was a slave, she is treated in the will as if she were property.

Indeed, tracking James Gettys's family entries in the existing Cumberland township (1762-1806) and Gettysburg (1807-1830) tax and census records, Dr. Charles H. Glatfelter found that Samuel Gettys

(James's father), James, Isabella Gettys (James's mother), and John and Elizabeth Flemming (James's brother-in-law and sister), were assessed intermittently for slaves. However, the last years that these Gettys family members were assessed for slaves were the following:

|                                    |      |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Samuel Gettys (died in 1790) ..... | 1783 |
| John or Elizabeth Flemming .....   | 1783 |
| James Gettys .....                 | 1805 |
| Isabella Gettys .....              | 1814 |

Unfortunately, contradictory evidence was found in the 1800 and 1810 Federal census records for Adams county. In those two records no "slaves" were listed as residing in Isabella Gettys's or James Gettys's households. The 1800 census record, however, indicated that three "freed persons other than Indians not taxed" lived in James Gettys's household and one lived with his mother. In the 1810 record, thought, Isabella's name did not appear, James Gettys had one freed person living in his house.

Dr. Glatfelter also noted a listing of slaves in Gettysburg's septennial census of 1807. That year, a slave named "old Doll" was reported to be forty-five years old. The 1814 septennial census noted that Isabella Gettys owned, or was responsible for, a slave named Doll, aged 70 years. Significantly, in these two census records, James Gettys's name did not appear as a slaveholder.

One problem with tracking Sidney through the Gettys family is the fact that not only James Gettys, Sr., but also his wife Mary and mother Isabella died during the month of March 1815. Since neither of these ladies left a will, existing probate and court documents suggest their properties were probably inherited by sons James Gettys, Jr. (born ca. 1798-1800) and Robert Todd Gettys (born 14 May 1808). Since both sons were under the age of 21 years in 1815, the judges of the Adams County Orphans' Court appointed David Edie as their guardian.

Thus, because Sidney was to be given to Mary Gettys, and because she died shortly after her husband, technically Sidney would have become the joint property of both sons. But since they were minors, Sidney's disposition probably was held in limbo until at least James Gettys, Jr., turned 21.

Another abnormality in the settlement of James Gettys, Sr.'s, estate is that an inventory of his personal property was not filed with the courts until 1822, seven years after his death and about the time that James, Jr., turned 21 and about a year before Alexander Cobean, the surviving



executor of James Sr.'s estate, died. Probably due in part to Cobean's failing health, James Jr. had to close out his father's estate, for he filed a bond so he could serve as the estate's administrator *de bon non*. Within the "Inventory and Appraisement . . . taken on several days in the month of March Ad 1815" but filed 12 May 1822, the notation appeared that "The time of service left of a Malatta [sic] girl named Sidney supposed to be between seven and eight years," was valued at \$200. This notation suggests that Sidney was not a slave. We need to ask, what was her status?

Dr. Glatfelter suggested that my next avenue of inquiry would be to check the *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania* specifically "An Act For The Gradual Abolition of Slavery," passed by the state assembly on 1 March 1780. As many legal documents were, and still are, the act's legalese leaves the layperson pondering the legislators' precise meaning. After several hours pouring over the document, I was able to translate its general relevance to our questions.

First and foremost, all persons, "as well as negros and mullatos," who were born within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania after the passage of the act, would not be deemed as servants for life or slaves. Secondly, all servitude for life or slavery of children, due to the status of their mothers, would be taken away, "extinguished and forever abolished."

However, special conditions were laid out for "negros and mullatos." Every black born within the commonwealth after the passage of the act, who would have been born into slavery, would remain a servant of their mother's master until the child reached the age of 20 years. The child would be liable for correction and punishment by his or her mother's master, but would also be entitled to relief if mistreated. If the slave and/or child were abandoned by his or her masters, the overseers of the poor for that particular jurisdiction would, by indenture, bind out any child as an apprentice for a time not exceeding the 28 year old age limit.

The act also made it mandatory for all slaveowners to register by 1 November 1780 to the clerk of the Court Record in Philadelphia or at the Court of Peace in their resident county. Clerks were to record the slaveowner's name, occupation, name of county, and township or municipality. They were also required to list the names of their servants for life or slaves, noting their age and sex, until they reached the age of 31 years. After 1 November, no "negros or mullatos" would be deemed slaves unless their name appeared on the list. There was a two-dollar registration fee.

Thirdly, the slaveowner's heirs and assigns would also be liable to the overseers of the poor for neglect of their slaves' servant children until they reached the age of 28 years, or until they were officially released from their committment, with the paper being legally executed and recorded in the court house of their county of residence.

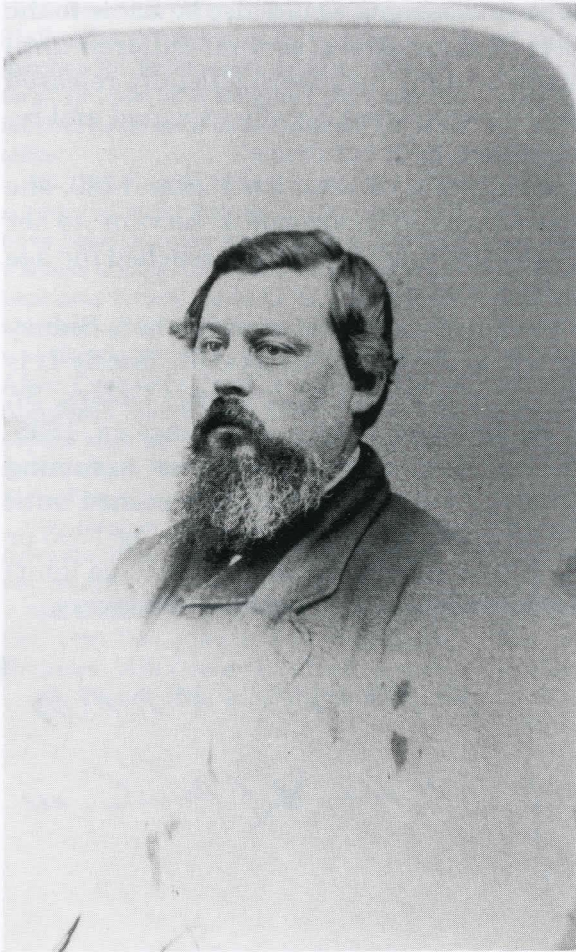
According to the act, then, if Sidney had been born after 1780, she would fall under this legislation and would be deemed a "servant" to her mother's master (or to his/her heirs or assigns) until she reached the age of at least 28 or 31, or set free from servitude.

According to James Gettys's inventory and tax records, then, Sidney had some eight years of service left to the James Gettys, Sr., family. It is therefore evident that Sidney was not the slave of James Gettys, Sr. Rather, she probably was the daughter of a slave who, since ca. 1805, belonged not to him, but to his mother, Isabella. Moreover, assuming Gettys's inventory entry implied that some eight years remained until her 28th birthday, Sidney probably was born sometime during 1795 or 1796 and would be freed about 1823 or (if we use the 31 year age limit) 1826, pursuant to the 1780 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery.

fourth day of October A.D. 1811  
 signed, sealed, and  
 published in the presence of  
 Sidney O'Brien  
 of  
 Wm. H. Dughrinbaugh  
 Adams County, Pa.  
 This day before me, James C. Danner  
 Register for the Probate of wills and Grants in the  
 Adams, Allegheny and Armstrong Counties, Pennsylvania  
 appeared John Danner & Wm. H. Dughrinbaugh

Fig. 1: Excerpt of Sidney's last will and testament: note Danner's signature at left. (ACHS).





**Fig. 2: Augustus J. Cover, Gettysburg attorney who served as Sidney O'Brien's executor. (ACHS)**

Sadly, very little documentation was recorded of, or by, the black community. However, we were able to verify some general data on Sidney and her daughter, Getty Ann, which we found in Sidney's estate papers, federal and state census records, Orphans' Court documents, Gettysburg and Cumberland township tax records, and bibles in the ACHS's collections.

Sidney O'Brien's last will and testament, dated 24 October 1871, was probably written by her executor, Gettysburg attorney Augustus J. Cover. In her will she bequeathed to her "grandson," John W. Stanton, "all the real and personal property of which I may [own when I die] . . . after paying all debts and funeral expenses." Witnesses to her signing the document with her mark were prominent

Gettysburgians Joel B. Danner and William H. Augenbaugh.

Based on the date her will was filed at the Adams county courthouse, we suspect that Sidney died sometime during the week prior to 22 December 1873. Since that day was a Monday, she might have died on the previous Wednesday, Thursday or Friday (the 17th, 18th or 19th) or during the weekend.

Although Sidney's burial was not noted in the press, she, indeed, was buried. In the "First and Final Account of A. J. Cover, Executor of the Estate of Sidney O'Brien, Deceased," filed on 15 May 1876, cabinet mak-



|                            |                        |             |                |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| " 5                        | Jas. Caldwell          | erjing sale | 2 50           |
| " 6                        | A. Co. Strickhouser    | attendance  | 25 00          |
| " 7                        | S. H. Cleary           | Bill        | 1 50           |
| " 8                        | A. Bollinger           | wood        | 5 62           |
| " 9                        | John Beams             | work        | 1 00           |
| " 10                       | W. H. Aughinlaugh      | appraiser   | 1 00           |
| " 10                       | J. B. Danner           | in          | 1 00           |
| " 11                       | Garlach & Trimmer      | Coffin      | 18 00          |
| " 12                       | Mr. Ruff               | Bill        | 3 00           |
| " 13                       | William Thompson       | Dig grave   | 3 00           |
| " 14                       | Reuben Robison         | Permit      | 2 50           |
| " 15                       | Register & Clerks fees |             | 11 50          |
|                            | A. D. Cover accountant |             | 23 43 \$131 65 |
| State of Pennsylvania 1873 |                        |             |                |
| Adams County               |                        |             |                |

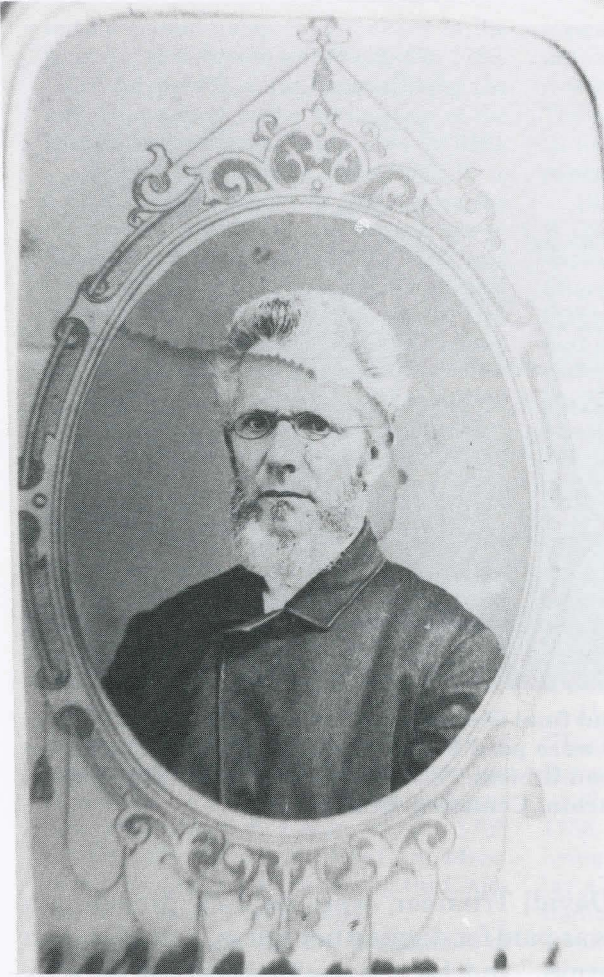
Fig. 3: Excerpt from the first and final account of the estate of Sidney O'Brien. Note that Garlach & Trimmer were paid \$18 for a coffin; William Thompson dug her grave for \$3; and Reuben Ribison charged \$2.50 for a burial permit in the Sons of Good Will (now Lincoln) Cemetery. (ACHS)

ers "[Henry] Garlach and [David] Trimmer" were paid for providing a coffin. A William Thompson was paid for digging her grave, and a Reuben Robinson was paid for a "permit." Indeed, a notation recorded on a fly leaf of the minute book of the Society of the Sons of Good Will Cemetery noted Robinson's receipt of the money from Sidney's estate. Today, the Sons of Good Will burying ground is the eastern section of the Lincoln Cemetery located directly north of the Gettysburg Hospital.

During her last years, Sidney must indeed have lived on very modest means. John M. Huber and David E. Johns filed Sidney's "Inventory and Appraisement" on 24 January 1874. Her personal estate, which included a bed, six pieces of furniture, a stove, three "Iron pots," and an ax, totaled only \$8.15.

Since her personal estate was inadequate to cover costs, Cover was forced to petition the Orphans' Court on 26 January 1874 for permission to sell Sidney's house and lot located on South Washington Street ad-





**Fig. 4: Joel B. Danner, prominent Gettysburg citizen who witnessed Sidney signing her will. (ACHS)**

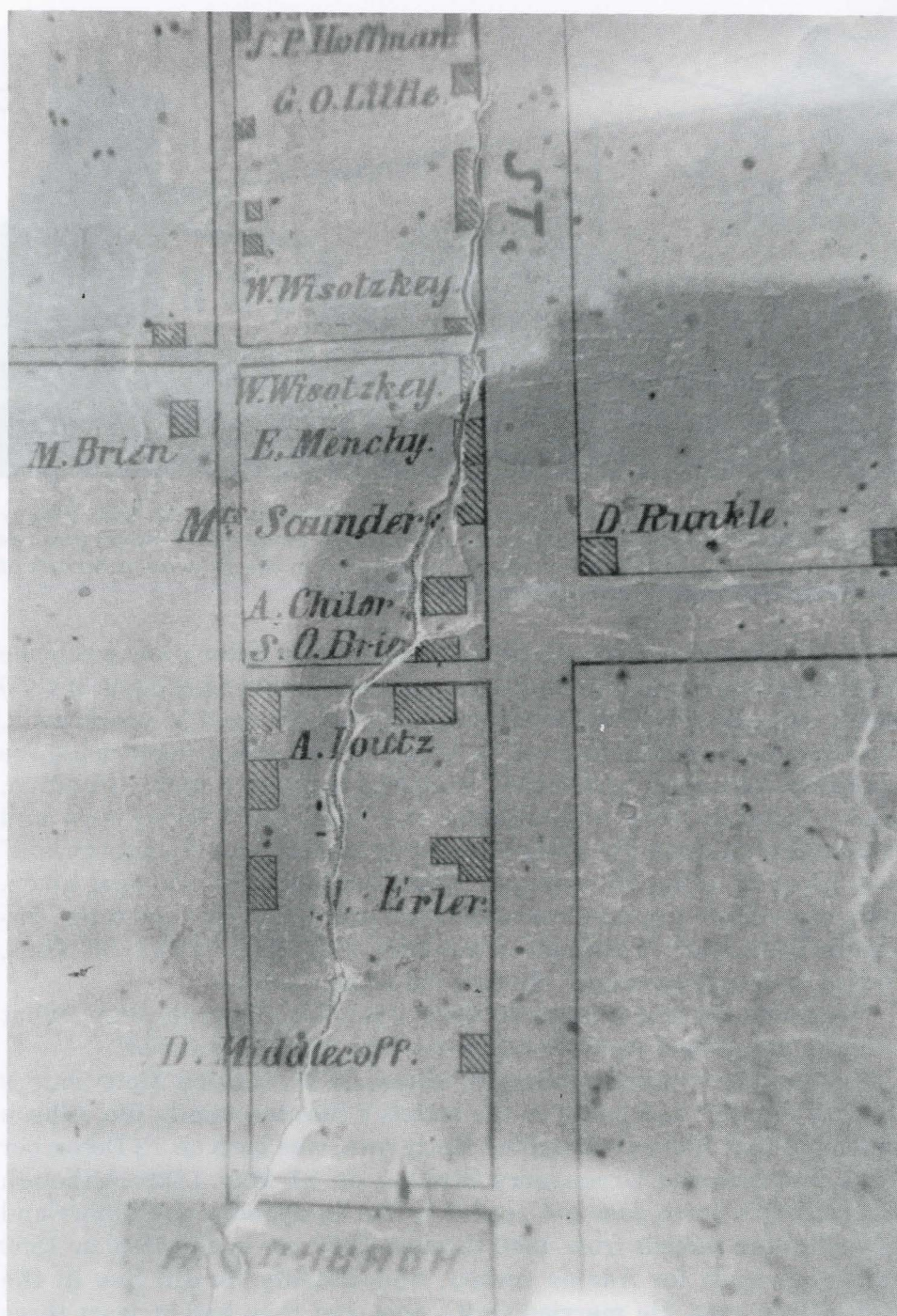
Washington Street, the Adam Pfoutz House. In effect, this is the southern majority of the eastern 142' section of the 100 block of present Breckenridge Street.

joining the properties of Adam Pfoutz on the south and Singleton Weldon on the north. According to the "Order of Sale of Real Estate of Sidney O'Brien, Deceased," filed 16 March 1874, on 21 February Sidney's real estate was sold to Louis Strouse for \$113.50. The O'Brien home was described in a public sale notice, published by Cover in the 28 January 1874 newspapers, as being a "one-story frame weatherboarded House."

Based on research conducted by the Gettysburg Historic Building Survey Committee between 1987 and 1990 and J. G. Sidney's 1850 Plan of Gettysburg, Sidney O'Brien owned a 30' x 142' lot on the west side of South Washington Street situated between the former site of St. Paul's AME Zion Church's parsonage and 301 South

**Fig. 5: (Right) Section of the 1850 Map of Gettysburg. Sidney's home can be seen at the center, just west (left) of the end of Breckenridge Street where it joined with South Washington Street. Moses Brien's residence can be seen at upper left. (ACHS)**









**Fig. 6: Intersection of Breckenridge & South Washington Streets, 1999. Sidney O'Brien's home stood between the stop sign and the parked SUV. Adam Pfoutz's house can be seen at left. Ann Chiler's home stood in the lot seen to the left of St. Paul's AME Zion Church. (Elwood W. Christ)**

We could not, however, find a record of how old Sidney was when she died. Checking the Gettysburg census records, the census taker in 1850 noted the residents in Sidney's household: Sidney, aged 50 years; John, 10; Greenberry, 8; and Samuel, 6. Although the census taker noted the children's surnames as "Obrine," according to Stanton family tradition, these children were undoubtedly the children of Getty Ann and Greenberry Stanton (Sr.). However, in the 1860 record, "Cydnia Briant" was listed as being 66 years old. Thus, based on the two ages given, Sidney was born sometime between 1794 and 1800. This age range corroborates our earlier estimate of her birth year as ca. 1795-1796. Thus, Sidney was approximately 78 years old when she died.

What about Sidney's daughter, Getty Ann? When was she born? What was her parentage? And when and to whom was she married?

In an article written by James H. Allison, M.D., entitled "Gettysburg's 'Oldest' Family" and found in the society's Stanton family file, Allison indicated that Sidney's daughter, Getty Ann, was born on 12 December 1821 and married Greenberry Stanton on 21 May 1839. Although Greenberry's name does not appear in the Gettysburg or Cumberland township tax records from 1840 through 1850 nor in the 1840 or 1850 census records for Adams county, undoubtedly he did live in the Gettysburg area. He married Getty Ann, and they had at least three



children by 1850. Allison noted that the birth and marriage dates came from a bible that Getty Ann gave to one of her sons in 1846.

The Stanton family bible, published in 1840 and in the historical society's collection, has inscribed on the inside of the front cover: "John William Stanton[,] Bible Presented to Him by His Mother April 12th, 1846." On the front leaf is the signature "Getty Ann Stanton." Unfortunately today, there are no other genealogical notations in this bible.

Nonetheless, in another Stanton family bible, published in 1872, and recently donated to the society by the late Catherine Stanton Carter (which had at one time belonged to Harriet Ciata Stanton), are found several notations. Two of these notations, written on fly leaves of the 1872 bible, give Getty Ann's birth and marriage dates.

However, several pages of family records, pasted or taped to fly leaves in the back of the 1872 bible, are not original to this publication. One page is pasted directly to the inside of the back cover. We suspect that these pasted pages may have originally been part of the 1840 bible which some Stanton family member cut out and pasted in the 1872 edition. We also suspect that the person who pasted the page onto the back cover transcribed entries from the side of the page that would be covered up when pasted onto the inside of the back cover of the 1872 bible.

Thus we suspect that Allison's dates are probably accurate. But can other official records be found that may reveal more on Sidney and her relatives?

The earliest reference to Sidney's owning property in Gettysburg was found in the 1834 tax record. By the fall of 1833, Sidney had acquired her house and half lot, assessed at \$100, from a Samuel Kitzmiller—the South Washington Street lot which she retained for some forty-one years. Perusing the earlier tax records for Gettysburg, we also found references to Getty Ann. The earliest notation referring to either woman was found in the 1827 tax record, compiled the fall of 1826. Therein, in the section listing poor children, the assessor wrote the name "Sidney Ann Brown," which was crossed out. The following year, again in the poor children's section, appeared the name "Gettys Snively," aged 6 years. Very noteworthy in this record was the association of another person with Getty Ann's name. In a column that appears to be reserved for the names of parents, stepparents or guardians, was the name "Old Doll." In the 1831 tax record, the name of "Getty Ann Snively" appeared again in the poor children's section, then aged 9 years. This official information confirms Getty Ann's birth year as 1821, and in turn suggests that the date of Getty Ann's marriage may also be as accurate.

More importantly, a slave named “Old Doll” was associated with Isabella Getty’s name in the 1814 tax record. In the last will and testament of Sally Flemming (James Gettys, Sr.’s, niece and daughter of John and Elizabeth Flemming), dated 6 April 1815 and probated two days later, she bequeathed “to black Doll a new dress.” In Sally’s obituary that appeared in the 19 April 1815 *Adams Centinel*, we learn that about half of her life was “devoted to the care of an aged Grand-mother [Isabella Gettys] who was deprived of sight.” These references imply that Doll had been a slave in the Gettys family household for some time and that she and Sidney may have been related.

The ages given for Doll in the septennial census records suggest that she was born ca. 1744-1762, making her a contemporary of James Gettys, Sr. Due to the disparity between Doll’s given ages, possibly Doll and Sidney may have been either grandmother and granddaughter or mother and daughter. We suspect, based on the stipulations in the 1780 act, however, that Sidney and Doll were more likely mother and daughter.

Another confusing side to this story involves Sidney’s marital relationships. Listed simply as Sidney in Gettys’s will, her daughter Getty Ann is listed with the last name Snively or Snavelly. Moreover, after 1833 Sidney is frequently referred to as Sidney O’Brien, and is referred to as Sidney O’Brien in William A. McClean’s 1908 newspaper article.

Then there is the listing of a Sidney Ann Brown in the poor children’s list in the 1827 Gettysburg tax record. At face value, the 1827 entry may have been a clerical error in recording the name of a poor child, “Sidney Br[iant],” the mother of “[Getty] Ann.”

Sidney’s name changes could also suggest that shortly before becoming a free person in either 1823 or 1826, she met and married a man named Snively. Unfortunately, neither anyone with the name of Snively or Snavelly appeared in any of the Adams county tax records in the 1820s, nor did any appear in the census indices for the years 1820 or 1830 for Adams county. Several Snively families did reside in Cumberland, Franklin, and York counties of Pennsylvania, as well as Washington and Frederick counties of Maryland. So, if Getty Ann was a daughter of a man named Snively, he may have been a transient who resided in Adams county less than a year, or he may have never been listed in tax records, which also seems to have been the case with Greenberry Stanton.

Although the entries in the Stanton family bible imply that about the age of 18 years Getty Ann married Greenberry Stanton, his name was not listed in the Gettysburg tax records from 1840 through 1850, nor was it found in the 1840 or 1850 census records for Adams county. How-



ever, he did have a shop in Gettysburg. Two advertisements appeared in the local newspapers as early as 8 April and 3 May 1844 issues of the *Compiler* and *Adams Sentinel*, respectively: "Green B. Staunton, Fashionable Barber and Hair-dresser," had moved his shop to a location "in West York [Chambersburg] street."

Referring back to the 1850 census record for Gettysburg, what is baffling is the fact that the names of Getty Ann or Greenberry Stanton do not appear at all, but that their children are listed in Sidney's household. Although Greenberry Stanton seems to have disappeared, the name of a "Getty Staunton," a Black woman aged "42," who resided in the household of a David Martin, "Book Seller," did appear in the 1850 census for the borough of Carlisle, the county seat of Cumberland. Our Getty Ann would have been only 29 years old that year, not 42. Nevertheless, the Carlisle census taker made mistakes recording ages. He noted that David Martin was only 5 years old.

One possible scenario, then, might suggest that Greenberry moved to Gettysburg, met Getty Ann, and that they had at least three children. Recalling that Getty Ann gave the 1840 bible to her son John in 1846, Getty Ann and Greenberry may have left their children with Sidney that spring, giving the bible to their oldest son, John, before leaving town to find a better life. Possibly their search for that better life led them some thirty miles north of Gettysburg to Carlisle where the name of Getty Staunton appeared in the 1850 census.

What about Sidney's marital status? As suggested by the Gettysburg tax records, by at least the fall of 1833, Sidney had taken the last name of O'Brien. Curiously, the surname O'Brien (O'Brian, O'Bryan) did not appear in the Gettysburg or Cumberland township tax records until the 1841 tax year. In the record book for Cumberland township that year, compiled the fall of 1840, an Abraham "Obryan" was first assessed for a house and lot and an occupation. Checking the 1840 census for Cumberland township, at that time five children all under the age of 10 years and a man and woman both between the ages of 36 and 55 lived in the "Abraham Brien" household. Indeed, this Abraham Brien, later referred to as Abraham Bryan, became one of the noted citizens and property owners in Gettysburg's black community. Checking the 1850 census records, Abraham Bryan, born in Maryland and aged 48 years, resided with Catherine, born in Virginia and aged 39 years. The census taker also noted that their oldest child was born in Pennsylvania about 1837.

Five years later, in the 1845 Gettysburg tax record, the name of a black man named Moses O'Brien began to appear. According to the 1850 plan of Gettysburg, a "M. O'Brien" owned a dwelling located at the southwest corner of present Warner and United alleys—only 100 feet away from the site of Sidney's house on South Washington Street. As noted in the 1850 census record, a 57-year-old "Moses Obrine" resided in town with Hester, aged 47 years (both born in Maryland), and three children, the oldest one born in Pennsylvania about 1843. Moses's name disappeared from the Gettysburg tax records by the fall of 1860.

In conclusion, what can we say about the relationships among the Gettys family, Sidney O'Brien, and Getty Ann (Snively) Stanton short of performing DNA tests? The record implies that Doll most likely was a slave of the Gettys family and that about 1795 she gave birth to Sidney. Of curious note, in the 1850 census, Sidney is listed as being "black" and the Stanton children as "Mullatto," while in James Gettys's estate papers and the 1860 census Sidney is listed as a "mullatto." This raises the question, what is Sidney's parentage? Since she was listed in James Gettys, Sr.'s, will and the 1860 census as a "mullatto," the bulk of the evidence suggests she might have been of mixed parentage. If Doll were considered to be of strictly black descent, then the possibility exists that Sidney might have been the daughter of Doll and James Gettys, Sr. But no written evidence or verbal tradition supports this scenario.

The Stanton family verbal tradition, however, indicating that Getty Ann was a daughter of Sidney and James Gettys, Sr., cannot hold. Gettys died in 1815, six years before Getty Ann was born. Nonetheless, Getty Ann could have been the daughter of Sidney and James Gettys, Jr. Both Sidney and James Jr. were about the same age. With their parents' deaths in 1815, James Jr. and his brother Robert Todd Gettys would have inherited Sidney's remaining time once they reached the age of 21. When James came of age, and assuming she was not serving in the Gettys household, he conceivably might have taken possession of Sidney about 1821, the year Getty Ann was born. Robert Todd Gettys probably was not the father, for he was only 12 years old when Getty Ann was born.

It is also curious to note that Sidney's and Getty Ann's names begin to appear in the Gettysburg tax records in the poor children's section about the time James Gettys, Jr.'s, name disappeared from them and about the time his brother, Robert, died in 1827. James left town and eventually settled in Athens, Tennessee. Did James abandon Sidney and Getty Ann, making them wards of Gettysburg's supervisors of the poor? Or is it coincidence that at the time James left Adams county, Sidney was



pronounced free according to the stipulations of the 1780 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery within the commonwealth? However, one fact seems to stand in the way to corroborate that Getty Ann's father was a member of the Gettys family: why was she referred to in the tax records as Getty Ann Snively?

What is the truth about Sidney O'Brien and her family? As with so many facts concerning our county's history, we may never know all the details. In essence, God only knows.