

## Dred & Harriet Scott

Lynne Jackson strives to keep legacy of her great-great-grandparents in forefront of American history  
by Marty Harris



*Lynne Jackson with a portrait of her great-great-grandfather, Dred Scott. Jackson was photographed inside The Old Courthouse in Downtown St. Louis, the site of the first two trials of the pivotal Dred Scott case in 1847 and 1850. photo by Diana Linsley (click for larger version)*

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As the great-great-granddaughter of Dred and Harriet Scott, St. Louis-area resident Lynne Jackson is well aware of the couple's impact on American history.

Through the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation, she is working so that others are sure to learn of their legacy as well, and of Scotts' courage in pursuing the landmark Dred Scott vs. Sanford U.S. Supreme Court.

Jackson's latest effort at commemorating Dred and Harriet Scott is in the commissioning of a life-size bronze sculpture of the couple for eventual installation at the place where the case all began – The Old Courthouse in Downtown St. Louis.

### A History Lesson

In 1846, slaves Dred and Harriet Scott filed two individual lawsuits in St. Louis Circuit Court at The Old Courthouse in Downtown St. Louis in an effort to win their freedom from slavery. (In 1850 the two lawsuits were combined into one). They argued their freedom based on the time they lived with their slave owner in Illinois and Wisconsin Territory where slavery was not permitted.

This began an 11-year legal battle culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Dred Scott vs. Sanford of March 6, 1857. The country's highest court ruled against the Scotts.

"The decision opened the door to slavery from coast to coast," said Jackson, who is related to the Scotts on her father's (John A. Madison Jr.) side of the family.

The court ruled that slaves were personal property, that the Scotts were not citizens, and that, therefore, they had no right to sue. The court also ruled unconstitutional the Missouri Compromise of 1820, stating that Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in the new territories, Jackson explained.

The ruling outraged Northern sympathizers and became one of the major catalysts leading to the Civil War, Jackson said.



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photo by Diana Linsley (click for larger version)*

Not only did the court ruling push the country to the brink of war, but it motivated Abraham Lincoln to run for President and ultimately resulted in the establishment of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S.

Constitution.

"In little more than a decade after the decision, our nation abolished slavery, granted equal citizenship to all and guaranteed the right to vote regardless of color," according to the foundation's website.

No thanks to the courts, events eventually led to the Scotts' emancipation.

For the Scotts, the long legal battle was really a family effort and not without sacrifice, Jackson said. The Scotts' two daughters, Eliza and Lizzie, were placed in hiding for their own protection.

"I do believe that as time went by they (the Scotts) understood the national magnitude of the case," Jackson said.

Jackson is proud of her great-great-grandparents.

"It's a good feeling to know that my forefathers had the strength of courage and the conviction to stand up for what they believed in," she said.

### **Keeping The Legacy Alive**

In 2006, just prior to the 150th anniversary of the Dred Scott Decision in 2007, Jackson started the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation.

"I started the foundation because I realized it was a very important case – important to who we are as a nation today," Jackson said. "Given the family history we have, I felt like we could do something to honor them (the Scotts) and to signify the importance of their case."

Through the foundation, Jackson and 40-plus organizations participated in the year-long commemoration which ended in a gala celebration in 2008.

"It was quite memorable," Jackson said of the anniversary year. "That was the beginning."

The goals of the foundation can be found in its mission statement: "To educate the public of the critical impact of the Dred Scott Decision and the struggle for freedom of Dred and Harriet Scott through commemoration, education and reconciliation."



### **The Scotts In Bronze**

*This two-foot bronze maquette, created by well-known sculptor Harry Weber, depicts Dred and Harriet Scott. (click for larger version)*

Since the 2007 commemoration, a goal of the foundation has been to erect a life-sized statue of Dred and Harriet Scott. The Dred Scott Statue Campaign has raised about half of the \$250,000 needed for the statue through a capital campaign and penny drive, Jackson said.

"It's very possible that it will happen in 2012," she said.

Well-known Sculptor Harry Weber will create the bronze sculpture. Weber's large body of work includes the 2010 sculpture of Chuck Berry and the 2009 image of Stan Musial.

Ruth Ann Hager, reference specialist in the Special Collection Department of the St. Louis County Library and author of "Dred & Harriet Scott: Their Family Story," was on hand for the October 2010 unveiling of the two-foot bronze statue maquette.

"The statue of Dred and Harriet Scott captures their essence, both as a married couple and as individuals each suing for freedom," Hager said. "This statue will draw people, it will hold them and it will make them think – even after they leave.

"This life-sized statue will be a tremendous asset to the area because, once again, sculptor Harry Weber has brilliantly captured history as it happens," she added.

### **Teaching The History**

Jackson is also committed to educating both children and adults. She is available to speak to groups, is working on an educational DVD, and has created a coloring book which tells the story of the Scotts in "a nice, simple way."

"People have heard of the case and are becoming more aware of it," Jackson said.

Reconciliation is the third goal of the foundation.

"We have reconciliation forums with descendents of individuals whose ancestors fought for civil rights, including abolitionists and presidential descendants," Jackson said. "We'll be having our second Dred and Harriet Scott Reconciliation Forum later this spring."

### **The 15th Amendment & The Dred Scott Case**

For Black History Month, Jackson will serve as keynote speaker at the "15th Amendment Commemoration Event" on Saturday, Feb. 4, 10 a.m., at the Ulysses S. Grant Historic Site, 7400 Grant Road near Grant's Farm.

"We are deeply honored to commemorate the passage of the 15th amendment with a presentation by Lynne Jackson," said Timothy S. Good, park superintendent. "Ms. Jackson represents the legacy of the men and women who struggled for the freedoms we cherish today.

"From her great-great-grandfather who sued for his family's freedom, to Ulysses S. Grant, who as the 18th President of the United States passionately and publicly fought for the 15th Amendment, to the civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 1960s, Ms. Jackson continues to ensure that our past is remembered through her work with the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation," he added.

Jackson said she will be sharing the relationship of the Dred Scott Case to the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and some observations on their history and current issues.

"I love to research and read and learn new things," Jackson said. "I always try to have new information that people don't hear all the time."

The event at the historic site is free, but reservations are required by calling 842-1867.

"There are so many things going on," Jackson said of the foundation. "It's a labor of love."

To learn more about the history of Dred and Harriet Scott, visit the foundation's website at [www.thedredscottfoundation.org](http://www.thedredscottfoundation.org).