

## Downstairs, Part One

I've been asked a few times about the servants who worked for the Phelps family. Though there is not a lot of information that can be found, there are "snapshots" that can at least give some idea of who these people were.

I'm starting this topic with the ex-slaves who worked for the Phelps family. It's rumored that Sherman Phelps didn't want non-Whites to walk along the sidewalk in front of his home. This has not been actually documented, which makes it mythology until some written diary, letter, or newspaper article proves or disproves it. However, it appears that Sherman hired at least four ex-slaves and in his will his left money to three employees who were African-American ex-slaves.

The longest employed by the Phelps family was the carriage driver, Andrew Jackson. Andrew (1847-1917) was born into slavery in Madison County, Georgia. He was hired by Maj. Edward B. Stephens of the 137<sup>th</sup> NY as personal "body servant". Stephens, a quartermaster, brought the teenage Andrew back to Binghamton at the end of the war when he returned in 1865. For Andrew, this must have been the opportunity of a life time. Shortly after arriving in Binghamton, Andrew was hired by Sherman Phelps, he remained an employee for Robert and Hattie Phelps, and after Hattie's death in 1882 Andrew was the caretaker of the Phelps mansion until 1888 when the property was purchased by G. Harry Lester. After that, Andrew resided with Miss Mary Lockwood, a very close friend of Sara Phelps (Sherman's niece) until his death in 1917 of pneumonia. Sherman Phelps left Andrew \$2,000 in his will written in 1878, and Robert also left Andrew \$2,000 in his will written in 1881.

Etta Davis was hired as a cook sometime between 1875 and 1880. She was born in 1834 in Virginia. Outside of the 1880 Federal Census, there is no record of Etta.

Mr. Samuel and Mrs. Henrietta Moore were left cash by Sherman in his will. The couple may have never lived in the Phelps home, but maintained their own residence as indicated by census. What this couple did during their employ in the Phelps home is unclear. Samuel and Henrietta were both born during the mid- to late-1820s in Maryland, and had one son born in 1840 (James H.) in Maryland. After Sherman's death, Samuel worked as a carter and Henrietta as a laundress. Henrietta is listed in 1900 Federal census as a widow and living with her son James.

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