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MONUMENT TO SLAVE WHO SPLIT CHURCH

Kitty, innocent cause of Southern Methodist secession, is memorialized by Atlanta man.

By WYLLY FOLK ST. JOHN

An 87-year-old Atlanta man has just erected a monument to a slave girl, surely one of the most unusual monuments in existence. It is a memorial to the stubborn conscience of a Methodist bishop in the face of controversy, and to the devotion of a slave. The master was Bishop James O. Andrew, of Oxford, Ga.; the slave girl was Kitty Andrew Shell. And the Atlanta man who has cut their story in enduring marble is H.Y. McCord, 1226 Ponce de Leon Avenue.

In peaceful old Oxford Cemetery, where so many well-known Methodists are buried, this handsome pillar over her long-forgotten grave is inscribed with the story of Kitty, probably the most famous slave, outside of Uncle Tom and Topsy, who ever stuck by her master even to the point of causing him considerable unintentional embarrassment. It was Kitty who was the innocent cause of the split in the Methodist Church in 1844, by which the South seceded from the North that many years before 1861, as far as Methodists were concerned.

When Mr. McCord, who has been well know and beloved in Atlanta for many years, put up this monument to Kitty, in February of this year, he was also, in a way, erecting a memorial to Bishop Warren A. Candler, who was his great friend. "I promised Bishop Candler, before he died," said Mr. McCord, "that I would keep alive the history of Kitty." And if Kitty is ever forgotten, it won't be Mr. McCord's fault. Besides setting up the monument, he bought Kitty's cottage and moved it from Oxford to Salem Camp Meeting Ground, where it is a permanent museum for historical Methodist treasures. He also wrote the story of Kitty had had it printed in scroll form, to be kept under glass at the cottage.

It is an interesting story. Kitty was a mulatto slave girl bequeathed to Bishop James A. [sic] Andrew by "a good woman of Augusta," a Mrs. Powers, of whom no more is known than that. The will stipulated that Kitty, who was 12 at the time, was to be educated and given her freedom and sent to Liberia when she reached the age of 19.

But Kitty didn't want to leave the Bishop and Mrs. Andrew, who had been so kind to her. She refused to be sent away across the ocean. The bishop, being a humanitarian, couldn't square it with his conscience to force her to go against her will. Even though it caused him probably the most trouble any bishop ever had to go through, he was steadfast in his intention to provide Kitty with a home as long as she wanted to stay with him.

When she was 19, in 1842, Bishop Andrew sent Dr. A.B. Longstreet, then president of Emory College, and Professor George W. Lave to interview Kitty and make a disinterested report of her decision. Dr. Longstreet told Kitty what he knew of Liberia, of its climate, and how long it would take to get there, and that she would be free there to work and keep what she made by her labor. The prospect didn't appeal to Kitty. She declined to go. The bishop couldn't, by the laws of Georgia at that time, free her unless she would leave the state—and she had nowhere to go, even if she had wanted to, which she stubbornly didn't. So the bishop built for Kitty a cottage in his back yard, and told her, "You are as free as I am." She lived in that cottage until she married a Negro named Nathan Shell, and went to a home of her own.

But the abolitionists of the North were not satisfied with what Bishop Andrew did about Kitty; and the storm gathered over the issue of whether or not it was right for a bishop to own slaves. "Bishop Andrew didn't believe in slavery," said Mr. McCord, "and he was a slave owner only accidentally. He inherited a slave boy named Jacob, from his first wife, but proposed to set him free as soon as Jacob could leave the state and take care of himself. When the bishop married his second wife, he automatically became the owner of her property, including slaves, but he immediately made a deed of gift of them to his wife, to avoid the technicality of owning slaves himself.

"The Northerners fussed about Bishop Andrew's slaves for two of three years, and finally in 1844 the conference deposed him, with no just cause. The Southern folks wouldn't stand for this, recognizing the extreme injustice of it; so they split and organized their own conference, electing Bishop Andrew as head of the new Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

The slave boy Jacob, who drove the bishop's team, must also have refused to leave his master, for he is buried in the same lot with Kitty, their graves directly behind that of Bishop Andrew. A big oak tree is growing out of Kitty's grave. Formerly marked only by a small square of granite, with no name, the grave was not identified as Kitty's until recently, when Mr. McCord's inquiries uncovered an old Negro woman, Katie Mitchell, whose mother had known Kitty and was present when she was buried. Katie took Mr. McCord to the cemetery and showed him to graves of both Kitty and Jacob, and on the spot she pointed out he put up the monument, with the following inscription:

"Sacred to the Memory of Kitty Andrew Shell.

"Kitty was a slave girl bequeathed to Bishop James O. Andrew by a Mrs. Powers of Augusta, Ga., in her will when Kitty was 12 years of age, with the stipulation that when she was 19 she was to be given her freedom and sent to Liberia.

"When she reached the age of 19, Bishop Andrew had Dr. A.B. Longstreet, who was then president of Emory College, and Professor George W. Lane to interview Kitty. They did. Kitty declined to do to Liberia, saying she preferred to remain with Mrs. Andrew at Oxford, Ga.

"Under the laws of Georgia at that time, Bishop Andrew could not free Kitty unless she would agree to leave the state; so he built for her a cottage in his back yard and told her, "You are as free as I am."

"Kitty lived in that cottage, a free woman, until she married a man named Nathan Shell and went to her own home.

"The ownership of this slave was the cause of the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844.

"Kitty's cottage was purchased by H.Y. McCord and moved to Salem Camp Ground in 1938."

Soon the grass Mr. McCord is having sown around the monument will be green, and Kitty's memory will be the greener, too. "Bishop Candler would be pleased," said Mr. McCord with satisfaction, as he looked back at the stone. "He would indeed."

Since it was in 1938 that Mr. McCord, who had been a Methodist for 73 years, bought Kitty's cottage and moved it to Salem Camp Ground, he was able to discuss his plans for it with Bishop Candler. Mr. McCord had to buy the whole lot, where the Andrew home stood until it was burned several years ago,

in order to get the cottage, and it cost \$225 and took two days to move it on rollers to the Camp Ground in Newton County. Mr. McCord when restoring it tried to preserve the original appearance of the cottage as far as possible. He couldn't approximate the old-fashioned shingled roof; but the new roof is green to match the shutters. The outside of the cottage is white; the pine-board interior is cream-painted. All the wood is the same, except for one place where the wall is patched on the inside. The rough-hewn floor is just as Kitty's feet knew it. The two rooms have wide fireplaces, white-washed; and there is a deep closet in one.

The walls are hung with pictures and framed historical documents that have to do with Methodism in Georgia and were donated by various interested people. Portraits of famous Methodist bishops, including Bishop Atticus Haygood, Bishop Candler, Bishop James E. Dickey and Bishop Andrew at two different stages of his life, were done by Lewis Gregg, Atlanta artist. The antique furniture was also donated. The leather chair that belonged to Bishop Andrew himself, Mr. McCord says, "was sent to me by his great-grandson, Walter Andrew Striplin, from Gadsden, Ala. Bishop Haygood's seek, built specially to keep him from having writer's cramp, because he did so very much writing, was sent all the way from California by his daughter, Mrs. Mamie Otis. And here is a cane, which was first Bishop George F. Pierce's and given to Bishop Haygood by Mrs. Pierce after he husband's death."

The cottage also contains Confederate relics, and pictures of General Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, as well as a quaint old print of the Battle of Atlanta, and a lot of framed Confederate money hanging over the fireplace in the second room. The place of honor over the mantel in the first room is held by an engraving of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South that convened in Nashville, Tenn., on May 1, 1858. It is recorded that Bishop Candler once said, "No more interesting building can be found in Georgia than Kitty's cottage, which is a monument to Bishop Andrew's tenderness and Kitty's responsive affection."

Mr. McCord says in his scroll that during Mrs. Andrew's last illness, Kitty was tireless in her attention, "watching by her bedside, reading the Scriptures, and singing the sweet songs of Zion to her dear Miss Amelia. Toward the close of her long illness, when the other nurses were exhausted, Kitty could with difficulty be persuaded to retire for rest. Before Mrs. Andrew died, she called Kitty and said: 'Kitty, you have been very kind to me, and I love you as if you were my own child. Be pious, serve God, and promise me that you will meet me in Heaven!'

The pledge was given, and Mrs. Andrew said: 'Come kiss me,' and the slave placed her ardent kiss upon the lips of her dying mistress."

Kitty was universally respected by the citizens of Oxford. When she was married and moved to Nathan's home nearby, Bishop Andrew's children spent much of their time with "Mammy Kitty," taking her their childish griefs and troubles to settle. There is no record of when Kitty died, Mr. McCord says, and no personal description of her. "I'd give a hundred dollars for a picture of her," he said.