

Sandra McWorter Marsh remarks at New Philadelphia on Free Frank Freedom Day, September 13, 2021

Thank you

This is an important event. Frank McWorter, Free Frank, was a pioneer in many ways. He was a man for his family, for his community, and we are all coming to understand he was a man for the freedom of this country. It is personal with me as I am his great great grand daughter.

But today, I want to make a few remarks not about Frank McWorter. We in the New Philadelphia Association have this top on our agenda and feature Frank in everything we do. Today I want to make a few comments not about McWorter men, but about McWorter women. The missing story in genealogical projects is often the women, since the line of transgenerational flow is often linked to last name and that tends to follow the men. Even women born as a McWorter get married and take another name. And who are the local history keepers? So many are women. So its time to make an effort to talk about the women in every family generational stories.

Next to Free Frank, was **Free Lucy**, his wife and partner in family and freedom. Lucy was the first in the family to be freed, while she was pregnant so the next children would be born free. She managed to find ways to care for her children, some free and others enslaved. What a remarkable woman she must have been. She made the journey from Kentucky to Illinois and was central to establishing a home here in Pike County. She lived to be 99, 52 years of that as a free woman.

Lucy gave birth to 17 children. Seven survived and three of those were females. One was named **Sarah** (1811 – 1891). Sarah was freed in 1843, because her father Frank came back to Kentucky to buy her

freedom. She lived free for 48 years. She was a determined woman. She took up the task and the resources that Frank left in his will to implement his desire to free the rest of his family. Without the skill of reading and writing, as a single woman, following her father's example she made the journey by wagon back to Kentucky from Illinois to buy her three children from three different owners. She effected these three transactions in one single day. This was a woman with great fortitude and diplomatic skills.

Frank's son, Solomon, married **Frances Jane Colman** from Springfield. Following Lucy's example, Jane became the matriarch of her time. She became that grandmother of mythic proportions, mentoring her girls and disciplining her boys, while supporting her husbands economic work and scientific creativity.

Solomon's son, Arthur, married **Ophelia Walker**. The Walkers were a family like the McWorters. They came out of Missouri, and did that by also buying their freedom. In the small town of New Philadelphia the Walker women married McWorter men. Ophelia died early but we were heartened to learn that a seamstress in Springfield is researching her family – the Walkers—so we hope to learn more. Ophelia's role as parent was completed by grandmother Frances Jane.

Arthur's son, Festus, my father, married **Alice Broady**. Alice was from Chicago, daughter of a railroad worker and an immigrant German woman. Festus was country and western, while Alice was jazz in the revolutionary era of Be Bop. They anchored us in the tradition of New Philadelphia and the advanced cultural developments of big city Chicago.

Lucy, Jane, Ophelia, Alice. These were the women who nurtured the McWorter family down to me, who shared life with their partners the

McWorter men, and who were central to community development in the frontier town of New Philadelphia.

As a McWorter woman I learned from even more McWorter women: my father's sisters Thelma, Bernice, and Ellen, and their cousins Alberta and Gladys. These five women grew up in the settlement of New Philadelphia and attended high school in Barry, Illinois. They mastered the skills of cooking, sewing, family caring and communication, family genealogy, and devotion to family and community. And the skills of their professions and occupations: teachers, social workers, and boarding house and restaurant owner.

We women are at least half of every story, and without that half there is no story worth telling.

Frank, we love you great great grandfather, and every time we say that from now on we will add that we love Free Lucy as well.

All praise is due to the women of New Philadelphia and every family and community.