

Antique Trucks

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While I don't know much about these trucks, I believe they are dated from the 1920s. They were found in my Grandma, Frances Molock's basement by the new owners in 2010. I came into possession of these trucks in September 2015.

Knowing nothing of these trucks, I was approached at the 2015 Emancipation Day Picnic by Brian Courtney. He had knowledge of their whereabouts and asked if I would like to have them. My heart was racing with true disbelief: "Of course", I said, not knowing what to think about this new revelation from the past. I was so excited that someone would want to give up such a treasure from my family's history. I was sure it was the power of my Grandmother, combined with divine intervention. Acquiring these artifacts was truly a blessing.



Why was I designated as the caretaker of my family heirlooms? What story was I to tell? My Grandmother, Frances Molock, was so secretive about her family history, always promising to tell the story later. I had never heard any stories about these trucks, let alone any of the other hidden treasures in her basement. She probably did not even remember these trucks were in her basement!

The Molock family home was located at 242 11th Street West. It was a parcel of land, lot B, bought by Francis Ebenezer Molock in 1884, from William Manners. There he erected his family home, raising John (born in 1865), William (1868), George (1870), Francis (1873), Maggie (1876), Mattie (1877), Charles (1879), Elizabeth (1883) and Hugh (1885). He passed away on or about October 8, 1910, at the age of 74. He was an escaped slave from Maryland, and my Great-Great-Grandfather.



According to a distant relative in Atlanta, Georgia - Elaine McGill, who has been working on our family history, Francis Ebenezer Molock escaped from slave owner James Waddell on September 20, 1856. He left behind his grandmother, Kitty Molock, his mother Emily Morris, and his 10 year old brother named Caleb. He travelled to Wilmington, Delaware, where there is a record of him at an Underground Railroad safe house. Elaine McGill has

followed his trail to Philadelphia, where on September 27, 1856, he spent time at the home of William Still.

William Still was a well-known Abolitionist, born a free Black in Burlington County, New Jersey, in 1821. In 1872 he published a book about the Underground Railroad that told the stories of escaped slaves.¹ William Still has chronicled Francis Molock's visit in his narratives. He reported "the arrival of five from the Eastern shore of Maryland".² These were: Cyrus Mitchell (alias John Steel), Joshua Handy (alias Hambleton Hamby), Charles Dutton (alias William Robinson), Ephraim Hudson (alias John Spry) and Francis Molock (alias Thomas Jackson).

What stories did Francis Molock tell William Still (if any at all)? I wonder if this is where my grandmother got her sense of untrustworthiness toward her own family and friends? She always seemed to be on guard for something my generation had not experienced. William Still states in his memoirs "as a general rule, the passengers of the Underground Railroad were physically and intellectually above the average order of slaves."³

Did my Great-Great-Grandfather have memories of the slavery auction blocks as William Still has described? "The horrors of the block, as looked upon through the light of the daily heart-breaking separations it was causing to the oppressed, no pen could describe or mind imagine."⁴ Was this the cause of my Grandmother's secretive tendency?

¹ Still, William. *The Underground Railroad* (1872). New York: Arno Press, 1968

² *Ibid*, p. 286.

³ Still, William, *The Underground Railroad* (1872), retrieved from https://archive.org/stream/undergroundrailr00stil/undergroundrailr00stil_djvu.txt

⁴ *Ibid*.

Her Grandfather worked at gathering spare parts of many materials to construct such a surprise for the children. The wheels appear to be made of mason jar lids, the body appears to come from wall strapping, and the cab from an old discarded toy. What ingenuity!



In speaking with my father, George Harding, (born in 1944), these trucks were toys he played with as a child. His uncles George (born in 1916), Gordon (1923) and Donald (1938) also found enjoyment with them.

I can only imagine the happiness these toys brought to my father and Great Uncles, when presented to them: most likely wide-eyed enthusiasm and eternal joy!