

Gray Huckabee

Autograph Letter Signed from an Alabama Slaveholder to the Notorious Virginia Slavetrader Robert F. Lumpkin

Greensboro, Ala.: 1847

\$1200

Two page Autograph Letter Signed. Huckabee, a North Carolina-born planter who moved to Alabama after the soil became depleted. In this letter sends a check (not present) as interest on his bond (presumably for the purchase of slaves), however, the bulk of the letter reports on his slaves, including some purchased from Lumpkin. Despite the fact that owners in the Deep South prohibited literacy among their slaves, the marginally literate Huckabee takes some pride in the fact he has a literate slave:

You mention... that you wood like to know what had become of the girl Emly. I still own her. She has a husband and has had one child but lost it. She has one of my men for a husband. He is my farmer & the most valuable boy I own. He can read and wright, weighs my cotton, sets down the waits correctly and thinks as much of his honor as a white man could do. I also have this Boy Charles - him and Emly both are members of the Baptist Church.

Huckabee thinks less of the other slaves he purchased from Lumpkin: "All the Negroes I purchased from you except the Boy Matt are a liar and doing wicked." He concludes the letter in the hopes they can have a leisurely visit and conversation together, but if not consoles himself in the hopes they will meet in the afterlife.

Lumpkin was a well-known slave trader, proprietor of the infamous Lumpkin's Slave Jail also known as "The Devil's Half-Acre" in the Shockoe Bottom section of Richmond, where he conducted his trade in slaves. Ironically, despite his reputation for cruelty, he impregnated and eventually married one of his slaves, Mary Lumpkin, who inherited his property upon his death in 1866. Mary eventually sold the land and the buildings became the location of the historically black school now known as Virginia Union University.

A frank and interesting letter. [BTC#435644]

I feel very much like I would like
to have the Pleasure of seeing you and
having a long and friendly Talk with
you My health is and has been very good for the
last four or five years also. The health of my
family is good may the Lord bless you
and should we not meet again in this
Poor world may it be our happy lot
to meet in that better world where Parting
is no more from your sincere but
unworthy Brother in Christ
Gray H. Walker