

HERBERT LANIER'S CRYING SALE  
by Louise Pettus

When Herbert Lanier died in York District in 1844, he was 48 years old. He left eight young children. John, his only son, was not quite 21. The court appointed Lanier's son-in-law, Benjamin Sturgis, to be administrator of the estate.

Because there was no will and the creditors would have to be satisfied, it was ordered that the estate be appraised and then sold at auction.

The circumstances following Herbert Lanier's death are typical of the time and place.

Lanier was a small farmer and sometime merchant who had moved with relatives from North Carolina to Lancaster District's Catawba Indian Land. He married a Miss Moore, daughter of Capt. John Moore and Olivia Jane Park Moore. Later they leased 175 acres on the Fort Mill side of Sugar Creek.

At the time of his death, Lanier owed \$1,108.11 in notes and on store accounts. This was typical. There was little cash and estate records are filled with examples of indebtedness.

Papers filed in the York County Probate Office show that Lanier owed money to 15 individuals. His notes varied in amount from \$2.88 to \$221.12.

The "crying sale" (auction) took place Jan. 7, 1845. The auctioneer received \$5 as his fee, but missing in the records is any reference to what was fairly common practice at such sales—free whiskey for the patrons. Some estate auctions had on hand as much as 16 gallons of whisky with the intention of making it easier for the buyers to part with their money.

The estate goods were grouped into categories: household furniture, tools and farm implements, farm produce, livestock and slaves. Nothing was held back except the land that was sold later.

All the household furniture was sold. Samuel Schooley purchased Lanier's "rifle gun" for \$5. James Stewart bought a "lot of books" for \$1. The son-in-law paid 50 cents for the Bible.

John Lanier purchased pots, a rack, one "spider" (frying pan, a lot of jugs, knives, 100 lb. of salt pork, lard, a tub, churn and a side saddle.

There was one lot of blacksmith tools and one lot of "smith coal." All of the farm tools were sold.

Four purchasers got the 14 swine. John Lanier paid \$5 for a "dun cow and calf." The six other cows and yearlings sold for \$9. There were five horses and 18 geese (25 cents apiece for geese). In those days, geese were the farmer's equivalent of modern insecticides. The 18 geese would do an excellent job of snappy up pesky insects. They would also furnish eggs and down for mattresses and pillows.

At the end of the sale list was the notation, "deduct for geese sold missing—\$1.50." Did the geese fly the coop? Wiley Glover bought the beehive for 56 cents.

Total sales at this point, were \$423.65. Then the slaves were offered. Dr. W. A. Ardrey gave his note for \$462 for "one negro man Allen." Theodorick Webb paid cash for "one negro woman Sophy, \$175" and "one negro boy Dan, \$149." G. Tharp gave his note for "one negro girl Patience, \$350." The auctioneer's gavel had separated a family.

The slave family constituted more than half the sale value of Herbert Lanier's estate. Less than a month later, the 175 acres were sold at \$2.25 an acre to Lanier's son, John, "the last and highest bid," for \$393.75.

Not until May 1854 were all the Lanier estate accounts balanced. Nine years after his death, the eight heirs received \$49.80 each as their legacy from the estate of Herbert Lanier, great uncle of famed poet Sidney Lanier.

[Herbert Lanier's daughter, Olivia Jane Lanier married Robert Newton Perry and their one child, John James Perry, was the father of our grandmother, Eudisia "Dosh" Jane Perry Rodgers. John James Perry married Clara Elena Morrow, daughter of Allen Morrow and Clarissa Spears and they had four daughters, our grandmother Dosh, Rena who married Sam Kell, Bess who married Ernest Crane and Mary who never married. After Clara died, John James Perry married a widow, Effie Marze Rogers and had a number of children including Aunt Nancy Perry Wilson (wife of Cecil Wilson), Eva, married Buddy Cannup, Ollie who married Grier McGuire, Ruth, John Hunter (who married Ida Pettus (Hall Pettus's sister) and Robert Perry.]