

The Story of
*Albert
Cheatham*

Illustrations by _____

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A History Mystery

History is mysterious. There are all sorts of things we do not know about the people who lived before us. Sometimes we can read people's letters and journals to learn about their lives, but what if they never wrote anything down? Perhaps their lives were ordinary, or maybe they were full of exciting adventures. It's up to us to search for new information and to learn as much as we can with the materials we have.

African American slaves often could not read or write, so there is a lot about their lives that we do not know. Sometimes, though, we can find clues to help us.

One thing we do know is that a boy named Albert Cheatham was born a slave in 1844 in the American South. In many ways, Albert's life was a lot like others, but in some ways he was extraordinary.

Do you keep a journal? If you do, what do you write about?

Many Years Later

The middle part of Albert's life is a big mystery. We do not know what he did from the time he left the Union Army to when he was much older. In 1880, there are records that tell us he was living in Louisville, Kentucky. He was married to his wife, Laura, and they had a son named Llewellyn. Albert had learned to read and write, and he worked in the lead and oil business.

Albert died in 1921 when he was 76 years old. He is buried in Cave Hill National Cemetery in Louisville. This cemetery is for veterans and others, such as politicians, who held public office.

There are many things about the past that are mysteries to us today. Even though there are parts of Albert's life that we do not know, the things we do know can help us imagine what life was like for him so long ago.

*What do you think happened to Albert
after the Civil War?*

Escape from Slavery

When the Civil War began, Albert was a teenager. Sometime during the war, he escaped to the North. Escaping from slavery was very dangerous. Slaves who ran away had to travel long distances and risk being captured. Albert eventually made it to Indiana and went to live with the Porter family in Corydon. The Porters had a daughter named Attia, who wrote about Albert in one of her letters.

Indiana was a free state, which meant that slavery was illegal. Some people in Indiana were abolitionists, and wanted slavery to be illegal everywhere. Other people believed slavery should be allowed to continue in the South. Still others felt like slavery was none of their concern and wanted to stay out of the fight.

If you were a slave, would you risk running away?

Joining the Army

In August 1864, Albert was 19 years old. He joined the Union army and enlisted in the 28th US Colored Troops in Indianapolis. He was serving as a substitute for a white man named James Faught. Faught had been drafted into the army, but he was able to pay Albert to take his place. During the Civil War, it was acceptable to hire a substitute to take your place in the army if you could afford it.

African Americans who fought in the Civil War faced a terrible risk. If they were caught by Confederates, they were often forced back into slavery in the southern states.

Albert went to Virginia with the rest of his unit, but he never fought in any major battles. Army records tell us that Albert was often sick, and he spent a lot of time in the military hospital. He left the army in August of 1865 after the Civil War was over.

Why do you think someone would pay for a substitute to join the army for them?

Morgan's Raid

In July 1863, Confederate General John Hunt Morgan, along with 2,400 of his cavalry troops invaded Indiana. The soldiers on horseback crossed into the southern part of Indiana from Kentucky, and began raiding towns. One of the towns was Corydon. The Confederate soldiers captured Albert there and took him with them as they continued on through Indiana.

60,000 volunteers banded together to fight off General Morgan and his men. They fought against them and cut down trees along roads to make it harder for the Confederates to travel. Before long they had pushed General Morgan out of Indiana.

Somehow Albert escaped from the raiders. He made his way back to Corydon and his home with the Porters. Attia Porter wrote in a letter that General Morgan's raiders, "kidnapped [Albert]...but he got away."

*Would you defend your home state against
Morgan's Raiders?*