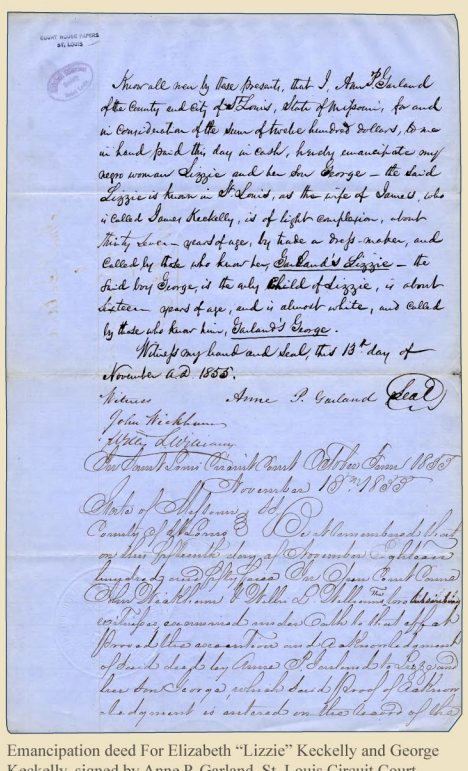
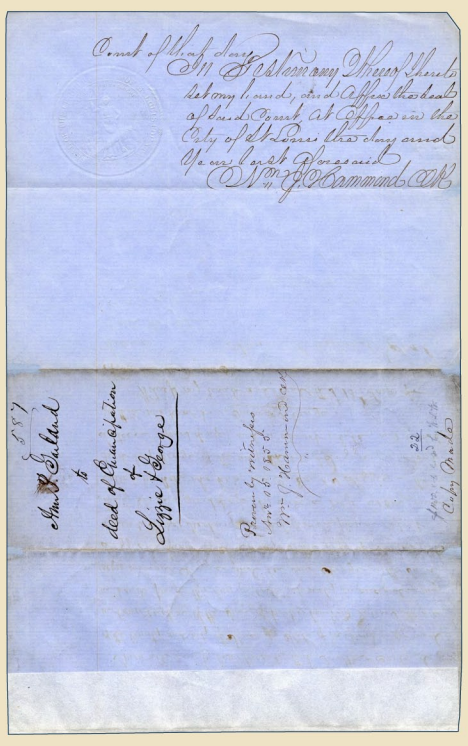
DIVIDED LOYALTIES
CIVIL WAR DOCUMENTS FROM THE MISSOURI STATE ARCHIVES

MISSOURI BEFORE THE WAR





Emancipation deed For Elizabeth "Lizzie" Keckelly and George Keckelly, signed by Anne P. Garland, St. Louis Circuit Court, November 13, 1855.
Missouri State Archives

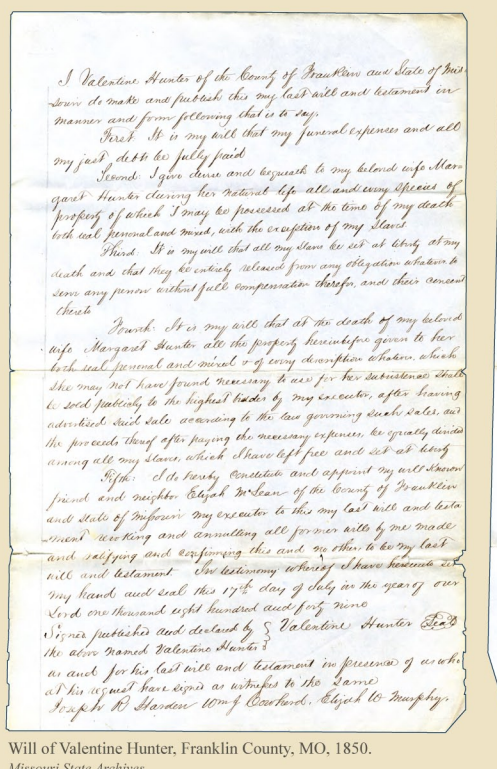
Elizabeth Keckelly

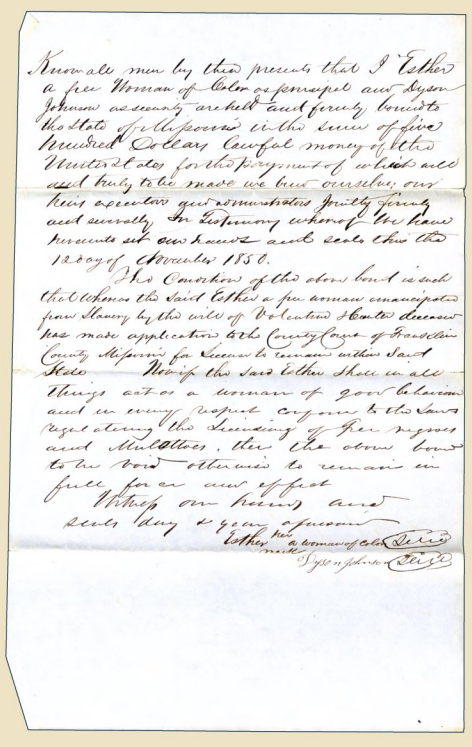
FREEDOM IN A SLAVE SOCIETY

Slaves in Missouri had few options when seeking their freedom. Some were able to escape while a lucky few were set free by their owners. The deed on the left shows that in 1855, 37 year-old Elizabeth "Lizzie" Keckelly, also known as "Garland's Lizzie," paid $1,200 to her master Anne Garland. In return, Garland set Elizabeth and her 16 year-old son George free.

Elizabeth Keckelly (also often spelled Keckley or Keckly) moved to Washington, D. C., in 1860 and worked as a seamstress for some of the city's most prominent women, including Varina Davis, wife of Jefferson Davis, Mary Anne Randolph Custis Lee, wife of Robert E. Lee, and Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of President Abraham Lincoln.

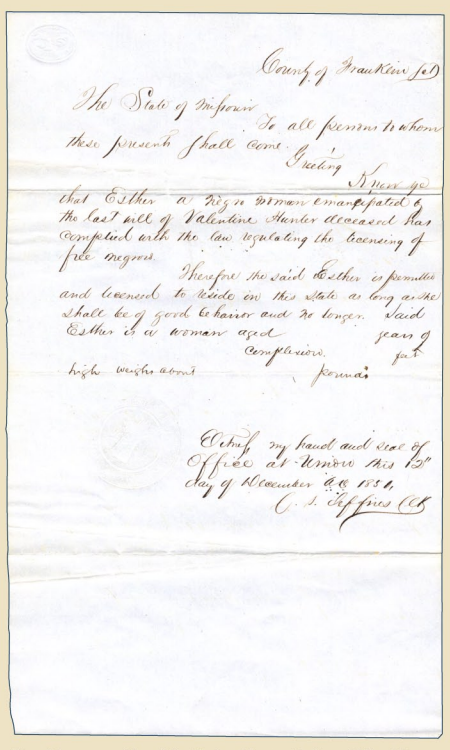
In 1850, a Franklin County resident named Valentine Hunter asked in his will (*below left*) that his slaves be set free after he died. Once freed, Esther Hunter and Nice Hunter had to carry free licenses (*below*) as proof of their emancipation

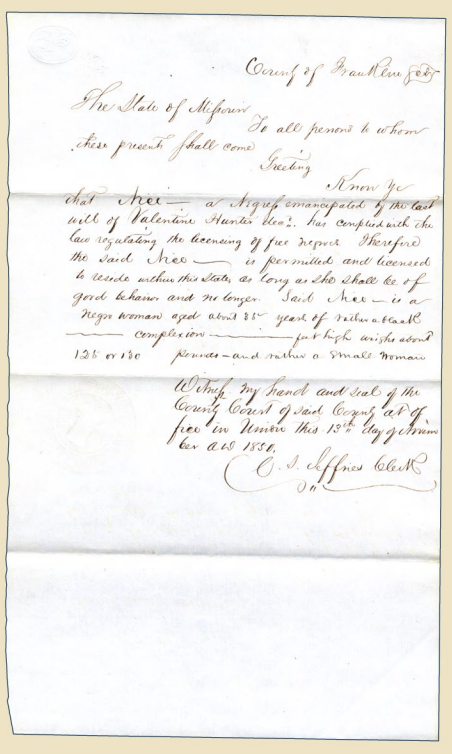




Will of Valentine Hunter, Franklin County, MO, 1850.
Missouri State Archives

"It is my will that all my slaves be set at liberty at my death and that they be entirely released from any obligation whatever to serve any person without full compensation thereof, and their consent thereto."

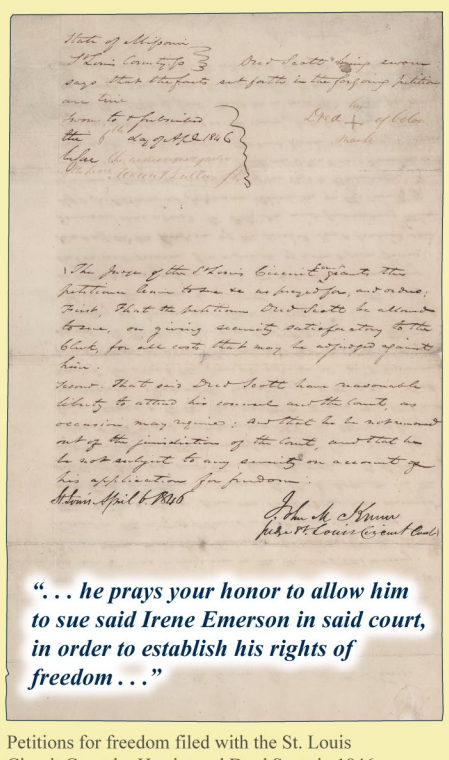


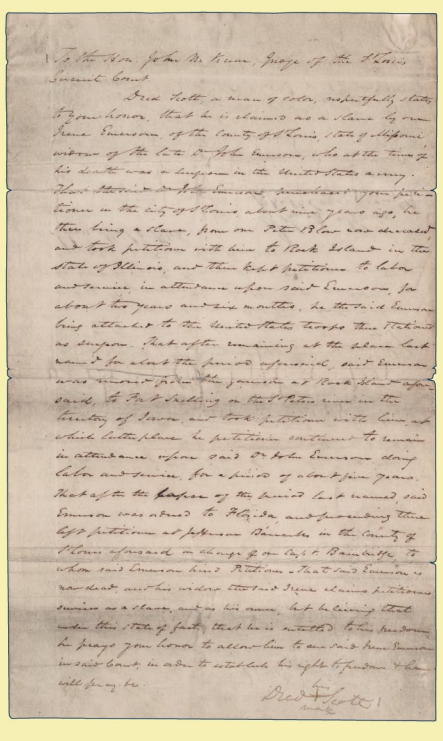


Free License and bond for Esther Hunter (*left*) and Nice Hunter (*right*) to reside in this state, November 12, 1850.
Missouri State Archives

DRED AND HARRIET SCOTT

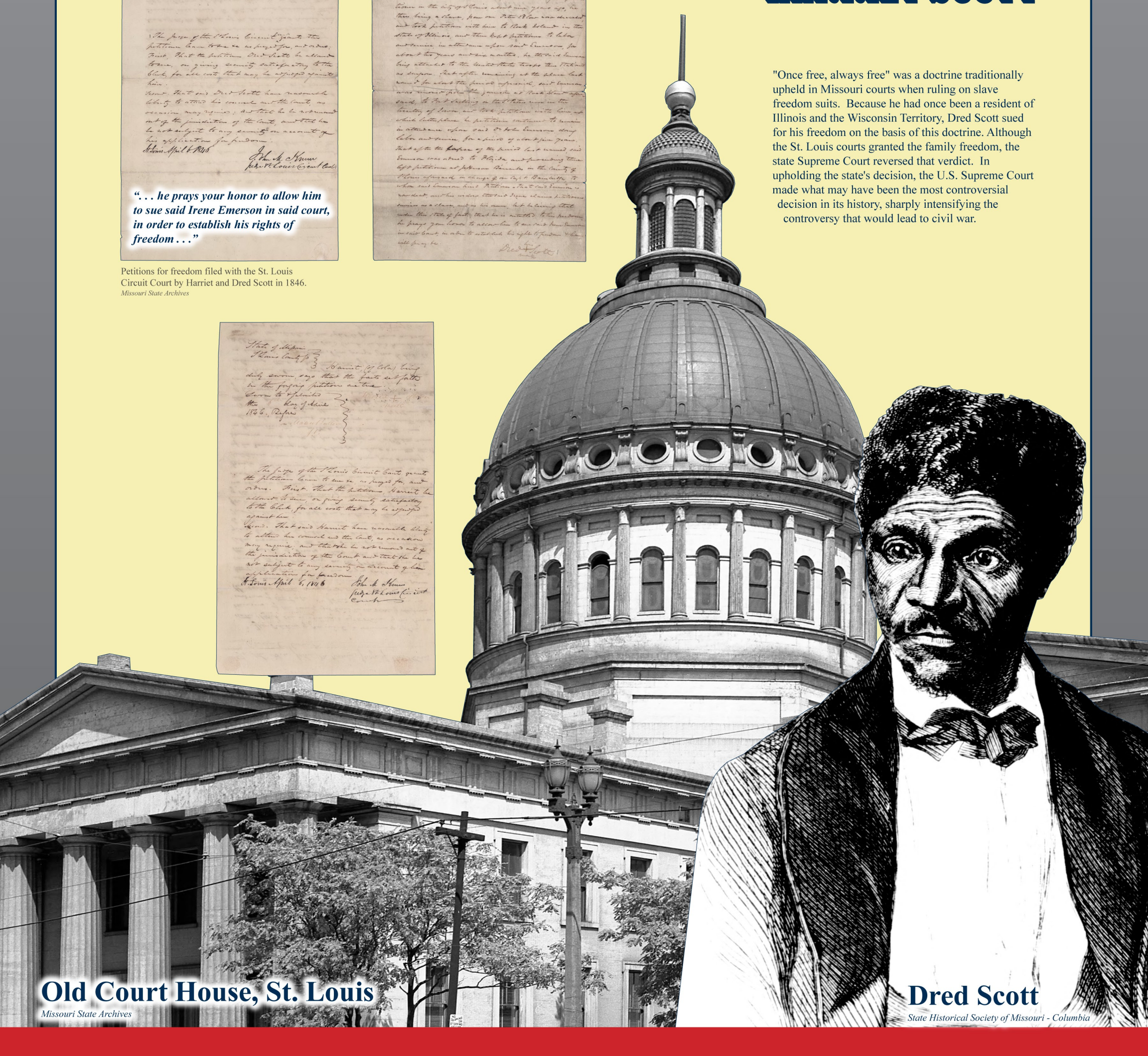
"Once free, always free" was a doctrine traditionally upheld in Missouri courts when ruling on slave freedom suits. Because he had once been a resident of Illinois and the Wisconsin Territory, Dred Scott sued for his freedom on the basis of this doctrine. Although the St. Louis courts granted the family freedom, the state Supreme Court reversed that verdict. In upholding the state's decision, the U.S. Supreme Court made what may have been the most controversial decision in its history, sharply intensifying the controversy that would lead to civil war.





". . . he prays your honor to allow him to sue said Irene Emerson in said court, in order to establish his rights of freedom . . ."

Petitions for freedom filed with the St. Louis Circuit Court by Harriet and Dred Scott in 1846.
Missouri State Archives



Old Court House, St. Louis
Missouri State Archives

Dred Scott
State Historical Society of Missouri - Columbia

1846 - 1857