

How I Got My Name

Andrew Sutton White

During the last days of slavery, my grandfather was a child on a plantation in Mississippi. He, being the son of a favorite household servant, was given the privilege of studying with the master's children under an efficient tutor. Gratefulness for this opportunity and eagerness to learn caused him to advance rapidly.

This uncommon kindness meant much to Grandfather. He often longed for an opportunity to express his appreciation to his kind benefactor. What could he do? Again and again he thought of what he might do, but nothing seemed to satisfy. He continued to ponder the matter, but the Proclamation of Emancipation was signed before he came to a conclusion.

Freedom brought with it the problem of identification. Most of the slaves' only identity was that of belonging to the master's plantation, and the problem of finding names was a great one for people

who were not accustomed to thinking for themselves. All of his life he had been Mandy the cook's son or Old Man Sutton's yard boy. After much thought my grandfather decided that to take his master's name would be a good way of perpetuating his memory. This would give him a first and middle name but a last name was needed also. Thinking for a while, he remembered the acres and acres of white cotton that grew on the plantation. That was it! He would take the name "White." To the master's name, which was Andrew Sutton, was added the name White, and he became Andrew Sutton White.

Realizing the need of companionship, Grandfather took a wife and began a family. When the first son was born, it did not take much thought to decide that he would be christened Andrew Sutton White. Since this son became my father, you can see why I bear this traditional name.

Purple Patch

Chicago is just as Carl Sandburg pictured it, "a city of big shoulders." When I was sheltered beneath those big shoulders, I was never lonely or alone. The constant movement, the unending flow of sounds, the big city life that pressed itself against my senses, always made me feel warm and happy.

MY CITY by Howard Michaelson.