

**Samuel Watson**  
**5th District Vanderburgh County**  
**Lauana Creel**  
**1415 S. Barker Avenue, Evansville, Indiana**

Samuel Watson, a citizen of Evansville, Indiana, was born in Webster County, Kentucky, February 14, 1862. His master's home was located two and one half miles from Clay, Kentucky on Craborchard Creek.

"Uncle Sammy," as the negro children living near his home on South East Fifth Street call the old man, possesses an unusually clear memory. In fact he remembers seeing the soldiers and hearing the report of cannon while he was yet an infant.

One story told by the old negro relates how; "old missus" saved "old master's horses". The story follows:

The mistress accompanied by a number of slaves was walking out one morning and all were startled by the sound of hurrying horses. Soon many mounted soldiers could be seen coming over a hill in the distance. The child Samuel was later told that the soldiers were making their way to Fort Donelson and were pressing horses into service. They were also enlisting negroes into service whenever possible.

Old master, Thomas Watson, owned many good able-bodied slaves and many splendid horses. The mistress realised the danger of loss and opening the "big gate" that separated the corral from the forest lands, Mrs. Watson ran into the midst of the horses shouting and frailing them. The frightened horses ran into the forest off the highway and toward the river.

When the soldiers stopped at the Watson plantation they found only a few old work horses standing under a tree and, not desiring these, they went on their way.

The little negro boy ran and hid himself in the corner made by a great outside chimney, where he was found later, by his frightened mother. Uncle Samuel remembers that the horses came home the following afternoon, none missing.

Uncle Samuel remembers when the war ended and the slaves were emancipated. "Some were happy and some were sad!" Many dreaded leaving their old homes and their masters' families.

Uncle Samuel's mother and three children were told that they were free people and the master asked the mother to take her little ones and go away.

She complied and took her family to the plantation of Jourdain James, hoping to work and keep her family together. Wages received for her work failed to support the mother and children so she left the employ of Mr. James and worked from place to place until her children became half starved and without clothing.

The older children, remembering better and happier days, ran away from their mother and went back to their old master.

Thomas Watson went to Dixon, Kentucky and had an article of indenture drawn up binding both Thomas and Laurah to his service for a long number of years. Little Samuel only remained with his mother who took him to the home of William Allen Price. Mr. Price's plantation was situated in Webster County, Kentucky about half-way between Providence and Clay on Craborchard Creek. Mr. Price had the little boy indentured to his service for a period of eighteen years. There the boy lived and worked on the plantation.

He said he had a good home among good people. His master gave him five real whippings within a period of fourteen years but Uncle Samuel believes he deserved every lash administered.

Uncle Samuel loved his master's family, he speaks of Miss Lena, Miss Lula, Master Jefferson and Master John and believes they are still alive. Their present home is at Cebra, Kentucky.

It was the custom for a slave indentured to a master to be given a fair education, a good horse, bridle, saddle and a suit of clothes for his years of toil, but Mr. Price did not believe the boy deserved the pay and refused to pay him. A lawyer friend sued in behalf of the Negro and received a judgement of \$115.00 (one hundred and fifteen dollars). Eighteen dollars repaid the lawyer for his service and Samuel started out with \$95.00 and his freedom.

Evansville became the home of Samuel Watson in 1882. The trip was made by train to Henderson then on a transfer boat along the Ohio to Evansville.

The young negro man was impressed by the boat and crew and said he loved the town from the first glimpse.

Dr. Bacon, a prominent citizen living at Chandler Avenue and Second Street, employed Samuel as coachman. His next service was as house-man for Levi Igleheart, 1010 Upper Second Street. Mr. Igleheart grew to trust Samuel and gave him many privileges allowing him to care for horses and to manage business for the family.

Samuel was married in 1890. His wife was born in Evansville and knew nothing of slavery by birth or indenture.

Uncle Samuel was given a job at the Trinity Church, on the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets. Mr. Igleheart recommended him for the position. He received \$30.00 per month for his services for a period of six years.

Mr. McNeely employed him for several years as janitor for lodges and secret orders. The old negro was also a paper hanger and wall cleaner and did well until the panic seized him as it did others.

Uncle Samuel was entitled to an old age pension which he received from 1934 until 1935 but January 15th, 1936 something went wrong and the money was withheld. Then uncle Samuel was sent to the poor house. Still he was not unhappy and did what he could to make others happy.

In 1936 he again applied and received the pension. \$17.00 per month is paid for his upkeep, his only labor consists of tending a little garden and doing light chores. He lives with William Crosby on S.E. Fifth Street.