Aunt Nancy Kendall, Negro Seeress, Goes to Reward

EX-SLAVE HAD THOUSANDS OF WHITE FRIENDS

Old Aunt Nancy Kendall is dead.

Death came to the aged colored seeress near the midnight hour Wednesday in the home of her equally noted daughter, Tobie Grant, at Scottdale, following an illness of about three weeks.

Known affectionately far and wide, in virtually every walk of life, as "Aunt Nancy," the remarkable ex-slave thus passed after a long life made picturesque by her amazing powers of what, in the absence of better classification, must be called supernatural vision of things to come; for Aunt Nancy numbered among those she had counselled in time of distress rich men, poor men, beggars and probably men beyond the pale of the law.

Aunt Nancy was in her 77th year at the time of her passing. She was slave-born in Upson county, and in 1888 had moved to Atlanta, where she and her daughter, Tobie, lived on Auburn avenue, moving out to Scottdale only a few years ago. Where their home was virtually a mecca to those seeking consolation in time of trouble, or peering beyond the curtain of the present into the dim, uncertain void of what lay ahead.

For whatever peculiar or particular gift of vision the old woman possessed was so astounding that it drew to her a circle of friends that ranged into the thousands, and its bulk was made up of white men and women that included those of the more decorous life—politicians of high order, bankers and businessmen; women in society that is spelled with a capital "S".

The things that Aunt Nancy foretold during her [illegible] would fill a volume. Among some of those recounted Thursday was that 'way back in 1900, it was old Aunt Nancy who foretold of a great martial cataclysm that would envelope the world—the World War. Five years before the pistol shot at Serajevo rang around the earth Aunt Nancy saw and told of seeing a colossal conflict embroiling nations and with them the United States. Nobody believed her, but Aunt Nancy told them that such a war was coming and that the cream of American manhood would go to foreign shores; that America would emerge victorious.

Native Atlantans will not scoff at the vaunted powers that were the old woman's, or those that now are readily attributed to her daughter, Tobie Grant. She has never been a "fortune-teller" to them; and, indeed, neither Aunt Nancy, her mother before her, or her daughter, has ever relished that description of powers which they believe to be of divine inception. They have always simply called themselves advisers, Tobie said Thursday.

"My mother was a devout woman," her daughter recalled. "She was extremely devoted to religion and was of the Baptist faith. She was slave-born and without education of any schools, but she had a wonderful intelligence."

Tobie said that her mother's first fame as a prophet of things to come came during the 70's when she was consulted by relatives of the family of Woolfolks, at Culloden, who were found murdered in a well on a farm. It was then that Aunt Nancy described the slayings and repudiated reports that a son of the Woolfolk family had gone out west several weeks before the slayings occurred. She told relatives and the authorities that young Woolfolk was in hiding in near-by woods and he was captured, Tobie says, confessed and was hanged for the crime.

Aunt Nancy's mother, also gifted, Tobie said, was half Indian and half white. Aunt Nancy herself was the mother of a large family, having 15 children, four of whom still are living. Of the several sons, all served in wars which the United States was engaged, and all had clear records for their military service.

Tobie Grant herself is the fifth daughter and 13th child of Aunt Nancy. She paid high tribute to her mother in recalling the highlights of the aged woman's life, and declared that it always was Aunt Nancy's impelling motive to console those who sought her out for "revelations;" that she never resorted to the use of any material objects in her prophetic work, such as coffee grounds, sand pictures or the like.

"She would always pray before she tried to see into the future for people," Tobie recalled. "And she had a blessed memory and feeling for those who once owned her."

Funeral services for Aunt Nancy will be held Sunday in the Greater Wheat Street Baptist church, and interment will be in the Washington Park cemetery. A special section of the church will be reserved for white friends of the aged seeress desirous of attending the funeral.

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Sun 5/24/31 article
2nd pg 1st col
bottom 7 pg



Love affairs furnish many of Tobie's problems.

Tobie Locates *Lost* Husbands

Love Is Still a Great Problem for the Majority of People, According to This Colored Seeress, Who Has Been Solving Atlanta Mysteries for More Than Twenty-Five Years

Tobie Solves All Atlanta Mysteries

Lost Jewelry, Missing Husbands, and Buried Treasure Are Some of the Cases With Which Aunt Tobie Deals at Her Home in Scottdale.

BY PEGGY PORTER

THE ancient art of foretelling the future has been given a modern twist by Tobie Grant, colored fortune teller of Scottdale, near Atlanta. The scientific expert of the federal weather bureau has as little patience with the visionary predictions of "goose bone" forecasts as Tobie with the tricks and incantations which have been considered a necessary part of the practice of her profesion since the days of Egypt.

By contrast with the fortune telling sessions with gypsies, who mumble mysterious words over palms, crystal gazers who fix their victims with glittering eyes, and mediums who go into terrifying trances and summon their "controls" from the spirit world, Tobie is both a surprise and a relief. Not even the coffee grounds and tea leaves favored by members of her race who practice the occult have any part in Aunt Toby's sessions. All these tricks she dismisses scornfully as "Hottentot superstitions."

"As near as I can tell you, honey," she said, "its just about like seeing a motion picture. I just close my eyes and hold their hands and then I usually see what is going to happen. I don't bother to ask them questions. I just tell them what they come to see me about. Just this morning a man came in to see me, and before he sat down I said, 'Mister you came to find out about what became of that hunting dog of yours, didn't you?' and he was the most surprised white man you ever saw. I just sit them down across the table and look at them for a minute or two and then I tell them, 'Sugar, you're wondering if your husband is dead or,' 'Honey, you'd better not put your money



She deals frequently with numbers.

The platinum and diamond bracelet lost at a New Year's party, was one of the drollest cases with which Tobie has dealt.



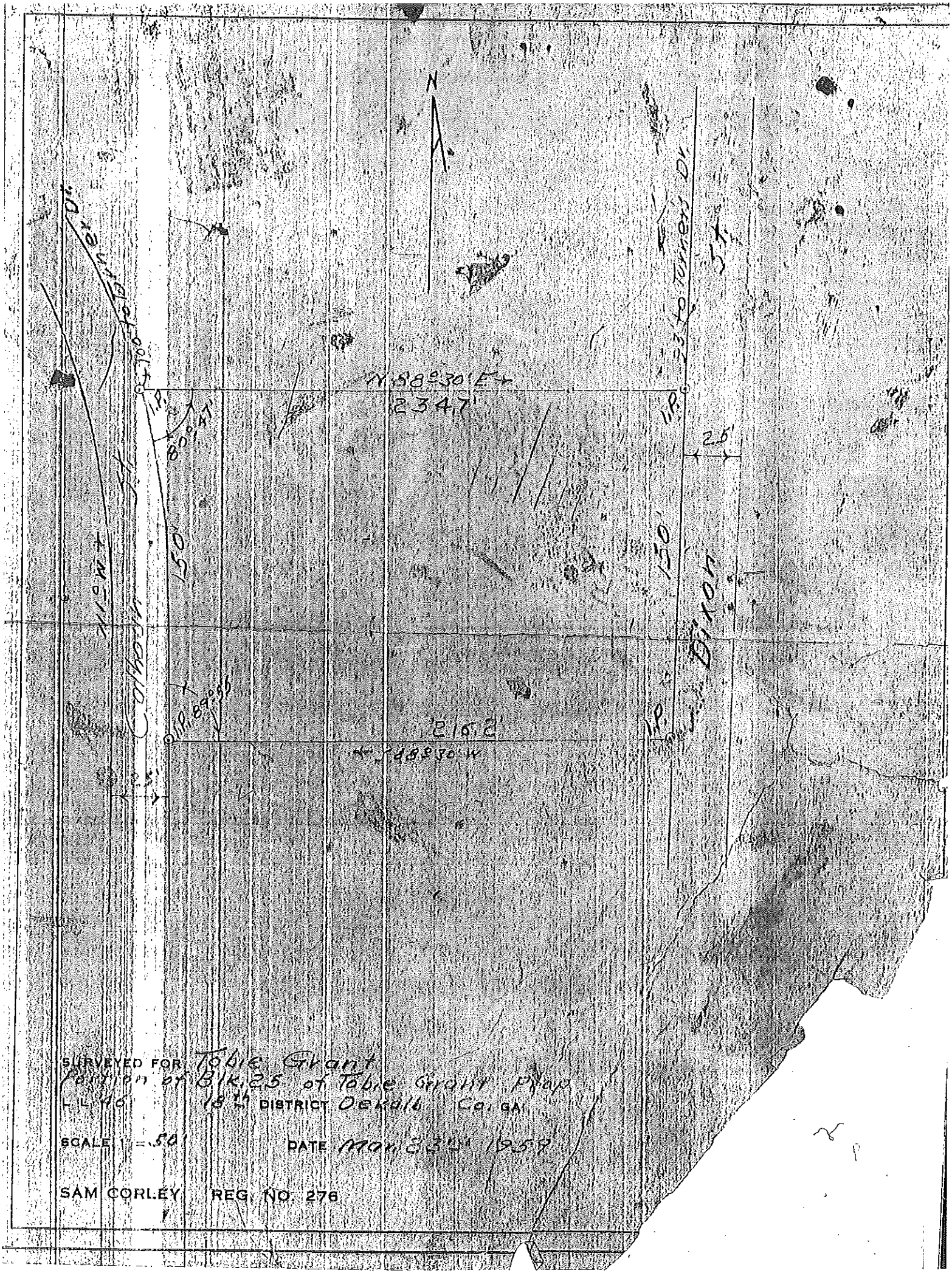
you're worried sick over losing your bracelet.'

"The lady took my advice and called up all her company to inquire after their health, and in three days the bracelet came back to her by insured mail, with a fictitious return name and address on the box."

Locates Stolen Money

Among the most exciting "fortunes" Tobie has been interested in was the locating of the stolen money said to have been buried by Old Bill Minor, railway bandit, who died at the state prison farm without revealing the treasure's hiding place. Among the most tragic was the final untangling of the mystery surrounding a young soldier of the A. E. F. who had been marked "Missing in Action."

"Right after the war a mother came to me, all worried and haggard. I knew her son was dead. She told me that he had been reported missing and that nothing else had ever been heard from him. Of course she had hoped and hoped, but there had never been a word. I knew he was dead. I could feel it, but I told her to go home and I'd pray over it and call her up the next day. And after I'd thought and prayed it all came to me and I told her to write [illegible] young lady in Massachusetts who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omb Foretold in '30s DeKalb's 'Aunt Toby'

by from fortune telling, "Aunt Toby" won't divulge.

One source of income was her various "home remedies." Among her many elixirs for everything from kidney trouble to flagging desire, is a formidable concoction of phosphorous soda and an unidentified purgative. She patented this last mixture and says that it was purchased by a drug store chain. "Cures everything," says "Aunt Toby."

MRS. GRANT has been generous with her money, as many of the people she helped in the past will testify. She donated a piece of her property to the county to be turned into a park chiefly for the children, and she has made many other gifts. Along with the park, Aunt Toby also has a branch of the DeKalb County Library System named after her.

There are many stories of her prowess as a soothsayer. Not all of them can be verified, but many of DeKalb's most prominent citizens vouch for her ability. Besides foretelling the coming of the Atomic Age, Aunt Toby is adept at mending broken homes — reconciling both partners with a combination of magic and shrewd intelligence. Behind her interest in seeing a marriage a success is her limitless love for children. "I can't stand to see a child abused or neglected," said Aunt Toby.

One of her saddest moments she said came when she foresaw the death of her own son.

"I was downtown with a friend," whispered Aunt Toby—her voice soft and worn from use. "Suddenly I felt like I was dying, and I hollered for this man to help me, but it wasn't me that was dying. It was my son." As it turned out, her son had been struck by a trolley. Later, he died of the injuries in the hospital.

MRS. GRANT has located many missing persons through her marvelous powers. She once located a man's body for his wife who wouldn't believe he was dead. "All I told her was he can't come home any more," said Aunt Toby. "Then I told her he was in a hole and couldn't get out," she said. "And that's where they found him two days later."

FOR ALL HER fortune telling, Aunt Toby is sharply critical of what she calls "spell casters."

"They make fools out of ignorant people," says Aunt Toby. "Whenever somebody comes to me under a 'spell,' and wants to know what's the matter with themselves, I tell 'em outright they ain't got good sense," says Mrs. Grant. She says that there are still many spell casters operating in this area.

Mrs. Grant's mother was a famous fortune teller. "Aunt Nancy," as she was known in those days, passed the trade down to her daughter. "It's nothing you can learn," said Aunt Toby, "you've got to be born with the spirit." The future is revealed to her when she least expects it she said. "When the spirit comes over me, I can see people's problems before they tell me about them," she said.

new era
Dec. 18, 1947 Black History

Tobie Grant gives 10 acres for park. A memorial to her two sons one killed in action as sergeant in 24 2nd Infantry division in World War I. The other son served in World War II & was killed in accident just after being discharged from army.

Tobie, resident of county, 30 years during first World War she registered for women's service and delivered over 200 babies of white & negro mothers, when most doctors were in service. "That ol' model-T Ford kept going night & day."
Refer for more history

new era
Nov. 25, 1948 Black Hist.

Tobie Grant Estates to be built.

PAUL

HEMPHILL

Aunt Tobie: '65

You take East Ponce de Leon until you get to Scottda and you look for the combination service station-grocery sto on the left, and when you find it you have reached Turn Drive. You turn right onto the bumpy street, cross the railro tracks, and then yousee the house. For as long as most peop in DeKalb County can remember, the house has sat majes cally among the trees, as unchanging as the Old South. It is two-story white frame house, but 40 years of exposure to du and cinders and weather has turned it to a dull gray. The i side, however, except for the paint on the ceiling which i cracking and peeling like an old newspaper, is perfectly spo less.

Upstairs, in the rear, is where Aunt Tobie spends most o her days now. This room, like the others, is immaculate. Aun Tobie sits there in a cushioned rocking chair, catching th breeze coming through windows on two sides of the room. Be hind her is her bed. Next to her is a rickety table where sh

Paul Hemphill's column appears daily in The Atlanta Journal.

keeps a small jar of snuff and a tin cup. And many times i the past there has been an anxious young woman sitting in chair opposite her.

"What's your trouble, honey?" Aunt Tobie would ask.

"I just don't know whether he loves me or not," the youn girl would say.

"And you think Aunt Tobie can tell you?"

"Yes'm."

"Lawd, chile, if you can't tell about that better than I can you better give him up. Aunt Tobie ain't got that personal con tact." And the old Negro woman would laugh.

Help, of Any Kind

That is the way it used to be. Everybody knew about Aunt Tobie Grant. Some of them called her a fortune-teller, others said she was a soothsayer, still others said she was clairvoyant. But everybody knew that you could take your problems to Aunt Tobie and she would more than likely solve them. No matter if you had misplaced your diamond ring or needed romantic counsel or simply had the miseries.

Tobie Kendall Grant was born nearly 100 years ago. Her mother was a well-known fortune-teller. Tobie was a good business woman, and at various times had two insurance companies and a pile of real estate. She married, gave birth to one son and adopted two others, and all along she was building a legend of her own in the fortune-telling (or whatever) game.

Once, Aunt Tobie donated part of her land to the county for a park for the Negro children of Scottdale. It sits below her house, and it is called Tobie Grant Park. Although, in the late '50s, DeKalb County began ridding itself of fortune-tellers, Aunt Tobie was left alone. Some would argue that she was not a fortune-teller. Almost all would argue that Aunt Tobie was good for her community.

Giving People 'Sense'

And now it is Friday morning. Aunt Tobie, nearing 100 years of age, is no longer able to see the 40 or 50 visitors she says used to come every day for "advice." She is laid up with bronchitis and old age in general. She is propped up in her rocking chair, dabbing her mouth with a piece of peach-colored tissue paper, and she is having difficulty being understood. But she is still Aunt Tobie.

"Oh, I know what a lot of folks say," she is saying. "They say, 'Let's go out and see Tobie Grant.' And somebody says, 'Who's she?' And they say, 'She's a fortune-teller.' Well, I ain't no fortune-teller. I'm a sense-giver."

"A sense-giver?"

"I gives people sense. They'll come in here and ask me why their husband don't love 'em, and I'll tell 'em, 'Maybe you're not showing him enough attention.' It works. Most of the folks who come are white people, too."

One time Aunt Tobie, they say, predicted the coming of the atomic bomb 15 years before it came along. Other times, she has located all sorts of missing objects, including dead bodies. She says she would charge "one dollar, or two, or sometimes three" for her services.

"I've been doing this since I was knee-high to a duck," she says.

"It hasn't hurt your business, then, being a Negro?"

Aunt Tobie laughs softly. "Lawd, mister, you don't have to be white to do good. I've known my place. God made five races, and all of 'em's got their place. Folks has looked for me when they needed help, and I've looked for them when I