

# The Negro In Kentucky

By G. W. Jackson

By the 1930 census 226,040, or 7.8 per cent of Kentucky's 2,614,589 population were Negroes. They live for the most part in the inner Bluegrass area, of which Lexington is the center, and in the better farming section of the Pennyrile around Hopkinsville. The Negroes of Kentucky form an integral part of the life of the State, are proud of their native or adopted home, and have, considering their numerical, economic, and cultural strength, contributed no little to its history and development.

In spite of scant and documentary evidence, the Negro played his part along with the other pioneers who laid the foundation of our Commonwealth. When Christopher Gist came to Kentucky in 1751 to search out lands for the Ohio Company, his only attendant was a Negro servant. Their report of a vast expanse of country richly timbered and watered brought scores of settlers to Kentucky. About fifteen years later a party of five persons exploring southern Kentucky included a mulatto slave. The first Christmas party in Kentucky would have ended in dismal failure but for the fiddling of Cato Watts, a Negro servant who had come to Louisville with one of the families in the George Rogers Clark expedition. In accounts of Indian raids slaves are reported as loyal and daring. In the battle of Little Mountain which the pioneers

fought with the Wyandotte Indians in 1782, the bravery of Colonel William Estill's slave Monk, inspired the pioneer warriors as nothing else in the battle did. He was an expert in making gunpowder and such an interesting preacher that the whites and blacks from Shelby and surrounding counties flocked to his meetings.

A few pioneers, coming mainly from Virginia and North Carolina, brought their slaves with them into Kentucky. While the number of slaves grew by natural increase and by immigration into the State of slave-owning whites, yet the lukewarm attitude of the early Kentuckians toward slavery is revealed in the first constitution of the State (1792), which prohibited commerce in slaves and authorized the legislature to compel slave-owners to treat their slaves humanly. Resentment to radical outside interference changed this sentiment so much that in the next half century Kentucky became decidedly pro-slavery and the third State constitution (1850) provided for the continuance of slavery. In 1790 there were 61,193 whites in the State, 12,430 slaves and 114 free Negroes. By 1860 there were 919,434 white people, 225,483 slaves and 10,684 free Negroes. Thus the increase from 20 to 24 per cent during the slave period was noticeably slight, while there was a positively relative decrease of