

## Charlotte Jackson

The Charlotte Jackson house at 2101 Seneca Street in Ovid is a remarkable example of the home of a freed person of color, who survived slavery to live the rest of her life in freedom in Ovid, as a literate, property-owning woman, who also took a public stand as an abolitionist.

Charlotte Jackson was born in New Jersey and came to New York State enslaved by William Godley. Her name does not appear in a Seneca County census until 1870 when she was listed as 55 years old, keeping house, and owning property worth \$300.

In January 1849, Charlotte Jackson was the only known African American woman to sign a woman's antislavery petition sent by 86 women from Seneca County. This petition was from "Women of America," and was similar to others circulated throughout the north, addressed to Congress.

Charlotte Jackson died October 14, 1885, when she was at least 72 years old and perhaps much older. In 1874 she had made out a will, directing that her property be sold to pay her debts and to buy a monument to be erected over her grave and that of her adopted son, James (or Jerome) Jackson, who had predeceased her, in the new cemetery in Ovid.

Charlotte Jackson died without heirs. Because she had worked for many years as a domestic for Belle Ayres, she directed that Belle Ayres be the executrix of her estate.

That she came to Seneca County as a slave underscores the fact that several African Americans who settled in this county came here as slaves or were descendents of those brought here as slaves. Though we do not know what year she actually received her freedom from slavery, we know that as early as 1849 she was an "activist" in the antislavery cause. Her actions may not receive as much attention as those of a Harriet Tubman or a Lucretia Mott, but she also had the courage and determination to do what she could.