

SLAVE WAS ON HER OWN MISSION  
STORY TOLD OF HER ROLE IN MORAVIAN, CHEROKEE HISTORY

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By Mary Giunca

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Pleasant, a slave woman, sprang to life from the dusty pages of 19th-century Moravian letters and diaries.

She was brought from Salem to the Moravians' Spring Place Mission in Georgia in 1805, where she was known for cussing and discouraging other slaves from attending church services, said Tiya Miles, a professor of African-American, Native American and American studies at the University of Michigan.

"She was incredibly strong-willed, incredibly outspoken. She gave the Moravians a run for their money," Miles said.

The mission was among the Cherokee.

Pleasant was brought back to the village of Salem sometime after 1828, Miles said. She died in 1838 at the age of 80. Her grave was discovered in Old Salem during an archaeological dig.

Miles will tell Pleasant's story at 10:30 a.m. today at the spring meeting of the Cherokee-Moravian Historical Association. The free talk will be at St. Philip's Moravian Church in Old Salem.

She will speak on "Slavery and the Making of the Spring Place Mission."

Her talk is sponsored by the Cherokee-Moravian Historical Association, Old Salem, Inc. and Wake Forest University's department of anthropology and archaeology laboratories. The Cherokee-Moravian Historical Association was founded in 1994, said Anna Smith, the president of the association.

The association is made up of people in the Cherokee Nation who live in Oklahoma and people in Winston-Salem who are interested in Moravian history, she said. The association was founded to raise awareness of the Moravian archives and to encourage efforts to research and publish findings there.

While doing research in the late 1990s, Miles was led to the Moravian Archives to research Shoe Boots, a Cherokee man who owned several slaves and lived with a slave woman, Doll, for 25 years. They had five children, Miles said.

Miles wrote about the couple in *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*.

Miles said that in researching Boots, she came across numerous references to Pleasant. The Moravians talked about how the slave woman's name belied her feisty temperament. Even though the relationship with Pleasant was difficult, the mission badly needed someone to perform domestic duties, and she had been bought for that purpose, Miles said. Then, too, slaves were not plentiful in northwestern Georgia at the time.

Rose Simon, the director of libraries at Salem Academy and College, said she has done research on the Moravian mission and found Pleasant's story compelling.

"She was always my favorite character in this whole setting," Simon said.

Pleasant did not have a choice about going to Georgia, and she was not a practicing Christian, Simon said. She had a skeptical view of her Moravian owners.

"She would be talking to the Cherokee and other slaves in daily conversation and saying: 'Just don't pay any attention to them. They're not so good,'" Simon said.

The missionaries and Pleasant might not have always had a smooth relationship, but in time, Simon said, both sides reached some degree of compromise.

"There was a working relationship that happens among people who share a place and a set of circumstances," Simon said. "They did have to work together. Nobody was sitting around."

Miles said that Pleasant outlived many of her contemporaries at the mission and that her story deserves a wider audience. "Those of us who do this work and care about history think that the past matters to our collective senses of identity, as Americans, as Moravians," she said. "I think we ought to know about what happened."