

# Longwood – The “Hancock Place”

## *Belles of St. Louis*

In the 1840s, Jefferson Barracks was the largest military installation in the western United States. Consequently, many young men were stationed there fresh out of West Point. Not surprisingly, many who would become famous for their roles in the American Civil War met and married young women of St. Louis.

The most famous union produced at Jefferson Barracks was that of Ulysses S. Grant and Julia Dent Grant, the daughter of a Southern family from St. Louis County. The Hancocks' relationship has become famous as well, due to an extensive subplot in the 1993 film Gettysburg, by Turner Pictures. Other notable examples are Confederate Generals John S. Bowen, who married a daughter of the prominent Kennerly family of South St. Louis County, and James Longstreet, who married the daughter of his commanding officer.



Winfield Scott Hancock

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## *Missouri's*

# CIVIL WAR

Union Major General Winfield Scott Hancock resided in a home near this site before, during and after the Civil War. The home was located near this spot, upon an extensive estate owned by the parents of his wife, Almira Russell Hancock. Her parents, Samuel and Adeline Russell, acquired the property in 1855 and named it “Longwood.” Daughter Almira married Hancock at the Russells' city home on January 24, 1850, during the time young Lieutenant Hancock served as adjutant to the Sixth U. S. Infantry Regiment at Jefferson Barracks.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Hancock was stationed in Los Angeles. He obtained a transfer to Washington, D.C., and in September, 1861, was commissioned Union Brigadier General of Volunteers. He rose steadily in the ranks over the course of the Civil War, commanding troops in the battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, among others. In July, 1863, he was a Major General commanding the Second Army Corps, Army of Potomac. Hancock's Corps received the brunt of Pickett's Charge on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Hancock received a serious wound at the climax of the charge. His actions, and the actions of his Corps in repelling the Confederate forces at Gettysburg's stone wall, earned him the sobriquet “Hancock the Superb.”

Hancock's most significant connection to the historic Longwood estate lies in the fact that

it was here that he recovered from his Gettysburg wound. He resided here with Almira during the fall and until December, 1863, when he returned to active duty in the Eastern theater.

Winfield Scott Hancock was the nominee of the Democratic Party for the Presidency in 1880. He lost the popular vote to Republican James Garfield by less than 10,000 votes. Remaining in the Army, Hancock died of natural causes in 1886 while commanding the Army's Division of the Atlantic from headquarters on Governor's Island, New York. He is buried in his home town of Norristown, Pennsylvania. His wife Almira, and their oldest child Russell, are buried in

St. Louis' Bellefontaine Cemetery.

Although Longwood was never owned by the Hancocks, it became known as “Hancock Place” due to its extensive connections to the General. This, in turn, is the origin of the name of the local school district.

The Northern hero of Gettysburg has a connection, through his wife's family, to the famous Dred and Harriet Scott freedom case. In 1846, before the Russells established their country estate at Longwood, the Scotts were hired out to the Russells by their then owner, Irene Emerson. Samuel Russell's testimony in the 1847 trial in St. Louis Circuit Court was central to the verdict against the Scotts in that trial (because his evidence was disallowed) and to the reversal of that verdict on appeal.

## The Scott Freedom Case



One of the most significant decisions ever rendered by the United States Supreme Court was 1857's Scott v. Sanford. The suit began in 1846 when Dred Scott and his wife Harriett Scott of St. Louis filed suit in a



Missouri court. At issue was the right of the Scotts to be declared free persons on account of residence in bondage in a free territory of the United States. Their cases first came to trial in the Old Courthouse in St. Louis in 1847. They lost the verdict of the jury in that case. However, the Missouri Court of Appeals reversed the decision, and in a subsequent trial in 1850 the Scotts won. This decision was reversed by the Missouri Supreme Court in 1852 by a 2-1 majority of the court. The Scotts and their St. Louis supporters then filed a suit in federal court in St. Louis. It was this case that eventually reached the U. S. Supreme Court.

“Freedom suits” by slaves who had been brought by their masters to live in free states were a relatively common occurrence in St. Louis in the 1830s and 1840s, and usually successful. As the nation became ever more polarized in the years before the Civil War, interests of slaveowners and opponents of slavery coalesced in seeking a definitive decision by the courts. The Scotts' case, which became politicized as it wound its way through the lower courts, was to be the great test case in the Supreme Court. The shocking and mean-spirited opinion of the Court in Scott v. Sanford, which denied to persons of African descent the right even to sue for their freedom, failed to settle the dispute, but it hastened the coming of the Civil War.



The Hancock Place

**Sources:** Denison, Charles and G. Herbert. Hancock the Superb: The Early Life and Public Career of Winfield S. Hancock. Philadelphia: National Pub. Co. 1880; Hancock, Almira. Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock. New York: Webster & Co. 1887; Missouri Secretary of State, “Missouri's Dred Scott Case, 1846-1857”, [www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/scott/scott.asp](http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/scott/scott.asp)



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