## He was Owner of an Auto Factory

While searching the past, one of the most unusual stories to emerge from the ante - bellum era tells about a black man who escaped from slavery and ult im ately built an automobile tactory.

Charles ('Rich') Patterson, was born a slave behind an old plantation house in West Virginia. As he matured, he developed an unwavering determination to escape from the jaws of slavery.

Perhaps Patterson believed much the same way as others before him - once he was free, he would need a saleable skill in order to survive.

Of course, how to gain that needed craft was a major obstacle because a black slave could not choose his own vocation. Most were sent to the fields unless the master recognized a talented "Negro" who could be picked for a particular job:

In September 1915, the first Patterson -Greenfield automobile rolled off the line in Greenfield, Ohio. It was claimed to be better designed and built thin the "Tin Lizzie" being produced by some upstart named Ford over in Detroit. The company was owned by Rich Patterson, a black.

## By Reginald Larrie

One morning, Patterson's master solved the problem of what trade he would learn by assigning Rich to the blacksmith. With great zeal, Patterson began his training and worked hard to learn all tricks of the trade.

After gaining competent skills. he "made free" by running through the forest, walking over the Allegheny Mountains and then swimming across the chilling waters of the Ohio river.

Patterson's run for liberty occurred just prior to the great Civil War in 1861, and as the guns

of the conflict rang out. Rich Patterson was being welcomed by the townsfolks in Greenfield,

Rich was able to gain employment at a local smithery shop and within a few years, he bought into the business. By 1865, he had purchased the balance of the partnership. This event was the founding of the C. W. Patterson Carriage Company.

Much the same as other young men, Patterson did not always confine his activities to business



Charles (Rich) Patterson

matters and one day, he met Josephin Qutz.

Soon after the meeting, he began to visit and date Miss Qutz. These actions caused quite a stir because Miss Qutz was one of the young, attractive white girls in

The feelings and attitudes of the townfolks had little effect on their courtship and after a year, Rich took Josephine's hand in marriage. Of this union, four children were born: Katherine. Dollie, Frederick Douglass and a second son named Samuel.

By the time Samuel was born. Rich had built his reputation of being a fair and honest. businessman. His craftmanship overshadowed any all feelings which anyone had about his marriage, and by now most of the people considered him as the country's finest blacksmith.

Patterson's customers claimed that he could forge almost anything from metal by using his hammer and anvil. Nevertheless. Charles Patterson' had a bigger dream than being the best blacksmith in the country; he wanted to own a factory large enough to manufacture buggies. backboards, phaetons, rockaways, and surreys - the most popular wagon of the time.

It is not clear about what happened to his daughters, but it is understood that Patterson wanted to give his boys the best education possible.

However, Sam, the youngest son became all and passed away before completing his high school education. Frederick, the older son, diligently worked in school

Standing on the running board of a Patterson

the company founder. This was one of the models put out by the company, which came only in basic

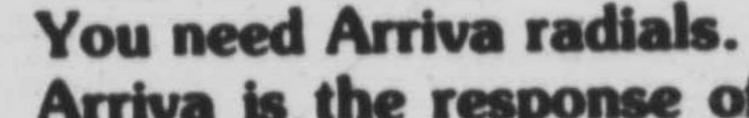
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