



From left to right shows the famous Lucas Triplets: Rebecca, Martha and Mary.

## More Details About Lucas Triplets - Family

Much interest was aroused over the story of the Lucas Triplets of Grinnell, which appeared in the Republican of May 18th. The Evans triplets of Kellogg, who were born in Grinnell bring the subject to mind.

The above picture of the Lucas triplets, born sometime in 1896 in Grinnell is shown through the courtesy of Mrs. Eva Renfrow, a sister of Mrs. John Lucas, who was the mother of the triplets.

The triplets weighed 21 pounds at birth.

Mrs. Renfrow, who now lives alone in her spick and span home in southwest Grinnell, recalls the births of the babies vividly. She remembers helping the distraught mother care for one of the girls. Another lady watched after another while, the mother took the remaining baby. In fact help was plentiful to care for the now famous little ones.

Of the three girls, only one is now living—Mrs. Martha Lucas Smith of Stockton, Calif. She has two fine sons. Her husband is employed in a store in that city.

Rebecca died when she was about 20. Her sister Mary died when nearly eight years old.

The Grinnell papers made very little of the births. Not like in these days, when the merchants combined to give presents to the Evans family.

### The Renfrow Family.

Mrs. Renfrow who has just returned from a visit back east with some of her children is a pleasing lady. Very honest in her religion. She has lived in her Grinnell home for 35 years and is a real neighbor. Six children came to the home, four girls and two boys. The girls are all high school and college graduates and each now occupies a good position in the world-teaching.

Helen graduated from the University of Iowa as did her sister, Evanel. Edith after completing high school work at Grinnell, finished her education at Grinnell college.

Alice graduated from Hampton College in Virginia. All the girls are doing well, as are the brothers.

Rudolph has a good position in New York City, with a syndicate investment company. He also is taking some college work. During the last war he served with the air forces.

Paul is in Washington, D.C., where he is with an optical firm and advancing rapidly. He was a staff sergeant in the last war.

The father of the children, now deceased was a hard working, good citizen of Grinnell who was very popular during his lifetime, honest and frugal.

### The Lucas Family.

The Triplets had other brothers and sisters—Henry, now in California, Violet, deceased, who was a good student, Bruce, the left handed ball pitcher, now working for a wealthy mill owner in Minneapolis, Aaron, deceased and Anna May.

### Henry Lucas History.

Mrs. Renfrow has a very interesting account of the life of Henry Lucas, born into slavery,

who bought his freedom and that of his children. The history, written by the son John Lucas was published in the Grinnell Herald of May 20th, 1932. At the time, I. S. Bailey, one time businessman of Grinnell and manager of the old Grinnell Fair was conducting a farm column. It was in this column the story appeared.

The farm purchased by Henry Lucas is now owned by Mrs. Lena Lucas Benning of Des Moines. Her son, Theadore is a student in that city. He is the great-grandson of Henry Lucas, first colored man to live in Poweshiek County. Mr. and Mrs. Booker Kiner farm the place and do well.

A son of the Morrison mentioned in the interesting story was here on Memorial Day several years ago, looking up some history. Not too long afterwards he passed away and was buried here. The Blakley-Stevens Post having charge of the funeral services.

The Republican plans to run this history in serial form. The first appearing in this issue.

Henry Lucas was a slave and bought the freedom of his wife and children. This history is written by his son, John B. Lucas, for the writer of the Farm Column.

To give a correct history of the life of Henry Lucas and family would be to give a history of slavery, which neither space nor time will allow at this writing, but a brief history of the principal events of his life might be of interest to those who have a desire to know something of the first colored family who ever lived in Poweshiek county.

In the year 1811, in February, Henry Lucas was born on a plantation near Abingdon, Va., belonging to a man who was an officer in the Revolutionary war by the name of Col. John M. Preston. He was named Henry Lucas or Preston, as all slaves were known by the name of their owners, though sometimes they were called by the name of their parents if their parents were known. All children born were the property of the person who owned the mother of the child. It mattered not who the father of the child was, and a great many of the fathers of the slaves were white.

Henry Lucas was the son of a very large black man who had formerly been owned by a man by the name of Lucas, hence the name Lucas. Col. Preston allowed this slave whose name was Cain Lucas to marry one of his slave women whose name was Phoebe. Now this Phoebe was one-half white, being the daughter of a white man and a slave woman. Their marriage was without license as the law of slavery prohibited license as the slaves were only chattels and could be separated at any time by their owners. The marriages were of various types; some were performed by their masters, some by an old and honored servant, and some by a minister of their own race, by a gathering of slaves and a broom-

stick in the hands of the mother. The contracting parties were required to join hands and jump over the broomstick together. Those marriages were usually on Saturday night and their honeymoon on the Sunday following.

Cain and Phoebe were allowed a log cabin in the quarters of the plantation. They had a large family of children, two girls and ten boys. Henry was the sixth child. His childhood was the same as other children on that great plantation. His mother was an industrious, God-fearing woman, and taught her children to be honest and faithful. He had very little to wear when a boy. His raiment was a linen slip, a garment in one piece without arms, and reached a little below his knees.

When he was 12 years old he was made a mill boy. He rode a horse or mule to mill with a sack of corn in front of him every day and often the corn would fall off and he would have a mighty hard time getting it on again. Sometimes it would rain and the only cover he had was a tree and often boy, mule and meal were soaking wet when he got back.

When he became 17 years old he was hired out to the saltworks which were in the north edge of Tennessee. When he was about to leave home for his new job his mother asked if he had any money. "Yes," said Henry, "I have a little." "How much?" said his mother. "Thirty-seven cents," said Henry. "Go past where your father is working (which was three miles); he may have some money he can give you." When Henry came to his father who was working in the field they visited for a little while and then he said he must go. His father asked if he had any money. "Yes," said Henry, "I have a little" and told him how much. "Well," said his fa-

ther, that is enough for any smart man to start out on."

With this encouragement he left home and friends to go to the saltworks to be in the employ of a man by the name of Bell, who bore the name of being the hardest man in all Tennessee. Henry's job was to tend furnace at night, boiling salt water, thus making salt. Letting the fire go down was considered a crime worthy of punishment so all hands must keep awake. There were several men attending furnaces, among them a slave boy by the name of Ben. Often when the fire was good and everything favorable this Ben would lie down to rest and sometimes fall asleep. Henry also would lie down and rest. One night they both fell asleep and the fires burned low. Henry awoke in time to renew his fire and called Ben, who answered. He thought Ben was awake so got busy with his own furnace. About that time Mr. Bell, the overseer, appeared and found Ben's fire very low, although Ben was working at his fire when the overseer came, yet the kettle was not boiling.

Mr. Bell had a cane in his hand and struck at Ben, who dodged the lick and caught the cane. Mr. Bell jerked at the cane two or three times, but Ben held on. The overseer dropped the cane and started away, very angry. Henry then knew there would be trouble so urged Ben to run off to the woods. The boy refused to run, saying he had done nothing to run away for. In a short time Mr. Bell returned with two other slaves. They caught Ben and tied him by the wrists to a cross-beam between two posts set in the ground. Ben's feet could only touch the ground. Then with a rawhide whip Bell lashed Ben on his naked back and legs. He would whip until he got tired, then rest awhile and talk, then whip again. This continued the rest of the day until the sun went down. Then he cut the ropes from his wrists and poor Ben fell to the ground entirely helpless.

Bell then ordered two other slaves to take Ben to the cabin, and as he lay exhausted they

rubbed salt in the wounds made by the rawhide. The blood-covered man lay there on his bed of straw and Henry was ordered to watch after him. Henry did what he could for him, such as bring him water and food. Ben could not eat much. On the third day Mr. Bell came to the cabin where Ben lay and ordered him to get up and go to work. Sore and aching Ben arose and tried to walk, but only God knows the pain Ben had to bear.

(To be continued)