

Sarah Gibson

The founder of Gibson Grove Church



Sarah Gibson was enslaved in Rappahana, VA on a plantation about 10 miles from Bull Run Creek (the exact date of birth is unknown). She worked as a seamstress, was married to Louis Gibson and had two sons. Louis Gibson was a wagon driver.

In 1861, the Gibsons escaped enslavement when the Union soldiers rode through plantations at the end of the Civil War ordering enslaved persons to leave. In the ensuing chaos, Sarah and her sons became separated from Louis. She managed to cross Bull Run by balancing her sons, one on each side, and walking across a log placed over the stream. She found her way to Washington D.C and later was reunited with Louis at the Shiloh Baptist church, a known meeting place for freed slaves. After reuniting, they went to work on a Potomac farm owned by Frank Dallan. 1872-1888 Sarah worked for 16 years saving enough money to buy 4,5 acres of land. She could not read or write but could quote the scripture word for word. Because of her faith knowing that it was God that brought her through,

she made a commitment to dedicate a portion of this land to God for his glory. Eventually, in 1877 she bought 4,5 acres of land on what is now Seven Locks Road. The Gibsons were the first African American family to purchase land in Cabin John. In 1898, the Gibsons donated part of their land to establish the Gibson Grove AME Zion Church. The original church, located just south of the current building, was built from logs harvested on the property.

Baptisms took place in a dammed portion of Cabin John Creek. The congregation was named Gibson Grove as a tribute to Mrs. Sarah Gibson. Gibson Grove School was built right by the church as there was no school in Montgomery County for African Americans. The cemetery was also established to bury the members of the church.

It Flourish until 1923 when the church was rebuilt and the school was moved to the community Center called Moses Hall. 1929—Mrs. Sarah Gibson the visionary of the church passed away. She was laid to rest in Moses Hall cemetery located adjacent to the church property.