

Ben Ford searching for his friend Ben Herbert

Ben Ford placed this ad in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* in 1882. The Methodist Episcopal Church published the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* every week from 1877 to 1929. This African American newspaper published thousands of “Lost Friends” ads between November 1879 and November 1896, as formerly enslaved people tried to reconnect with their families and friends.

Ford’s ad documents how family members often spent years tracking down information trying to find their loved ones. It also illustrates the fictive kin relationships developed within slave communities, as parents and children were separated, persisted in the post-emancipation period.

DEAR EDITOR—I wish to inquire of an old friend of mine. His name is Ben Herbert. He has a son with us. His son’s name is Joseph Herbert, and he says that in 1878 he lived in Jackson, Miss., but since that time he has removed, and that he could not learn where. In 1881 his son heard that he had went through Vicksburg, Miss, and was living somewhere on the river, but he never could find out where. In slavery he belonged to Dr. P. Wilson. His wife’s name is Nelly. She died one year before emancipation. I will describe him: He is a low small man, weighs about one hundred and twenty pounds, about fifty years of age, dark complexion, high forehead, bald on the top. He has got two sons and one daughter. The eldest Joseph Herbert, younger son’s name is Thomas Herbert and the daughter’s name Caroline Halthy. She is married to Isam Halthy. Joseph Herbert is a school teacher in our vicinity and he stays with me. Dear editor if such a man can be found please address me at Lexington; Miss. Yours truly,

BEN FORD.

DEAR EDITOR—I wish to inquire of an old friend of mine. His name is Ben Herbert. He has a son with us. His son’s name is Joseph Herbert, and he says that in 1878 he lived in Jackson, Miss., but since that time he has removed, and that he could not learn where. In 1881 his son heard that he had went through Vicksburg, Miss., and was living somewhere on the river, but he never could find out where. In slavery he belonged to Dr. P. Wilson. His wife’s name is Nelly. She died one year before emancipation. I will describe him: He is a low small man, weighs about one hundred and twenty pounds, about fifty years of age, dark complexion, high forehead, bald on the top. He has got two sons and one daughter. The eldest Joseph Herbert, younger son’s name is Thomas Herbert and the daughter’s name Caroline Halthy. She is married to Isam Halthy. Joseph Herbert is a school teacher in our vicinity and he stays with me. Dear editor if such a man can be found please address me at Lexington, Miss. Yours truly,

BEN FORD.