

## Emily Fisher

(1808 – 1898)



**Emily Fisher**, a woman of strong character and deep religious faith, was born a slave in Kentucky about 1808. She was the daughter of Adam Fisher (1782 - 1860) and a slave woman. Emily was joined in a slave marriage to Rowan (or Robin) Fisher in the 1820s. A slave marriage was not legal in the South or border states. Their first child, Shelby was born in 1827 in Kentucky. They had several more children before coming to Jackson County, Missouri in the 1840s; all were the property of Adam Fisher. They settled on the Adam Fisher farm on Jones road east of Independence, Missouri. The slaves lived in a double log house with two large rooms and a double fireplace with a single chimney. It was just northwest of the main house, which is still standing.

Sometime in the 1850s, not long before his death, Adam Fisher freed Emily. He left her well-situated, giving her charge of an Independence hotel, which served the people going west on the trails, including the Santa Fe Trail. Emily's hotel had a reputation for excellent service and exceptional cleanliness; this stood in marked contrast to other hotels of the day; where unsanitary facilities were the norm. The rest of Emily's family remained in bondage until January 11, 1865, when Missouri issued its own Emancipation Proclamation. Shortly after, Emily and Rowan had their marriage registered in the Jackson County courthouse on August 14, 1865.

The hotel business died during the Civil War. Her husband, Rowan, passed away in the 1870s. Based on a dream she had, Emily began marketing a healing salve as a source of income. Stories of the amazing healing powers on cuts, bruises and other injuries and ailments were shared by many. Unfortunately, no list of ingredients survives as Emily almost certainly could not read or write. Strict laws forbade slaves to have such education.