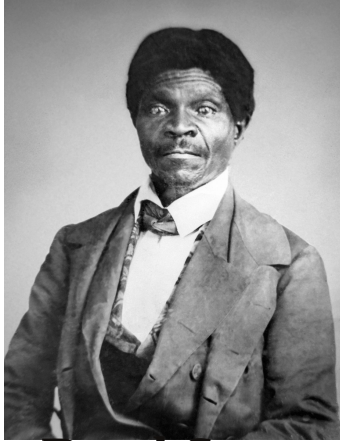




## Dred Scott

*January 1, 1799 - September 17, 1858*

St. Louis, Missouri

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Dred Scott, whose freedom suit reached the United States Supreme Court and whose name became shorthand for a decision that deepened the nation's fracture over slavery, died of tuberculosis in St. Louis, Missouri, on September 17, 1858. He was about fifty-nine. Born into slavery around 1799 in Southampton County, Virginia, he was taken west and lived for years in free Illinois and the Wisconsin Territory before the courts were asked whether those sojourns made him free.

With his wife Harriet Robinson Scott he sued for liberty. Missouri juries and appellate twists eventually gave way to *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), in which Chief Justice Roger Taney's majority held that people of African descent could not be citizens with standing in federal court and that Congress lacked power to ban slavery in the territories. The ruling outraged a growing free-soil North, comforted slaveholding power, and helped push the country toward civil war. Private arrangement later manumitted the Scotts in May 1857; Scott worked as a hotel porter in St. Louis, a free man for scarcely sixteen months.

He died in St. Louis on September 17, 1858, and was buried at Calvary Cemetery. Harriet lived nearly twenty years longer. Descendants and historians still treat the case as a hinge in American constitutional history - not because the Court's reasoning deserves honor, but because the nation had to overturn it with war, statute, and amendment.

What endures is the stubborn fact of a man who used the courts available to him and forced the highest tribunal to answer in public. Notice Nearby records the death date so September 17 still carries Dred Scott beside later American calendars of fame.

## Services

Died in St. Louis, Missouri, September 17, 1858. Plaintiff in Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857); manumitted May 1857; buried at Calvary Cemetery, St. Louis.

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