

## ARTIST AND 'BEECHER PORTRAIT'



Harry Roseland beside his picture of Henry Ward Beecher and Pinky.

# *Plymouth Church Gets Slave Auction Picture*

**Pinky Returns on Canvas 72 Years After Henry  
Ward Beecher Won Her Freedom by  
Selling Her on Block**

Pinky is coming back to Plymouth Church—this time to stay.

Seventy-two years after Henry Ward Beecher, the famous orator auctioned her from "the slavery block" in the pulpit



of historic old church on Orange St. where Lincoln twice worshipped, the nine-year-old mulatto slave girl returns on the oil-painted canvas of Harry Roseland, Brooklyn artist.

In 1927 Pinky returned to Plymouth Church as the dignified, white-haired Mrs. Rose Ward Hunt. It was the only visit she made after that morning of Feb. 6, 1860, when Beecher obtained her freedom by the \$2,000 tossed into the basket by the congregation.

#### **Paints Sweet-Faced Child**

But for her second return and final homecoming, Mr. Roseland has painted a sweet-faced, frightened child, with hair parted demurely in the middle, a far cry from the Topsy of Harriet Beecher Stowe's book, by her side he has put her benefactor, Beecher.

The scene is a re-creation of the auction. It is as historically faithful as possible, Mr. Roseland contends. The important features and details he verified through research and personal investigation with persons who were eye-witnesses to the event.

The picture is five feet four inches by six feet. The figures are life-size. It stands in Mr. Roseland's studio at 246 Fulton St.

#### **On Church Platform**

It depicts Pinky at that sensational moment standing on the church platform. Her dark eyes are wide with wonderment and her fingers twist the skirt of her red circular striped dress so that a bit of white petticoat shows. Her feet, in black shoes, are slightly turned in, "just as those of a nervous child would be," thinks Mr. Roseland.

On her head is Beecher's right hand. This gesture is typical of the slave auctioneer, according to a letter in Mr. Roseland's possession from Armand Hawkins, who once sold slaves in New Orleans.

Beecher's left hand is raised, a personal characteristic of his in the pulpit. His mouth seems ready to open and ask "What am I bid?" He is wearing the conventional garb of the period with a black frock coat that flares at the bottom. His large black tie is tucked under his collar.

#### **Painted From Old Picture**

Mr. Roseland painted the oratorical firebrand's head from an old picture. The late Frederick Boston, prominent Brooklyn artist, posed for the figure, which is short and fairly slight as Beecher was in the middle period of his life.

Pinky's head is from a painting done by Eastmond Johnson, executed at the request of the late Bishop Falkner of Christ Church, who brought Pinky to Brooklyn. A little Brooklyn girl, whose name Mr. Roseland does not remember, posed for the figure.

The Rev. Mr. Falkner was alive when the painting was started in 1927 and Mr. Roseland considered him a general consultant.

Pinky died in Washington, where she made her home, in Oct., 1928.

The chair shown in the composition is now in the gallery of Plymouth Church, but the pulpit is the property of Amherst College.

Illustrative of the detailed work Mr. Roseland has put into this painting is the little glass of flowers which stands on the pulpit. It was Beecher's invariable custom to have fresh flowers, so arranged, on the pulpit stand every Sunday, Mr. Roseland explained.

#### **Negroes Raise Fund**

It was the white hands of the members of Plymouth Church that sent Pinky into the world free, eventually to attend college, teach and marry happily. Dark hands are sending her back.

A group of Brooklyn Negroes, headed by George E. Wibecan, former grand exalted ruler of the Negro Elks, raised the funds for the purchase of the picture.

The date of presentation has not been decided, but when it arrives, it will find Plymouth Church waiting with a hearty welcome for Pinky, one of the brightest pages in its history.