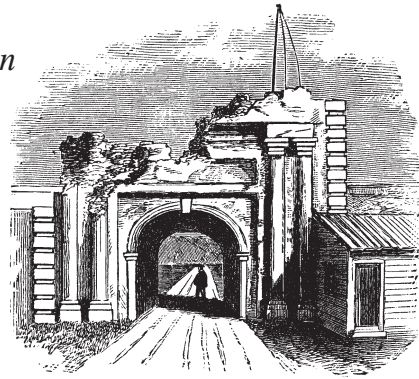


THE FREED SLAVES TELL THEIR STORIES

These selections are from interviews with former slaves conducted many years after the Civil War, and were written down phonetically to show speech patterns:



De freedom man come to our place an' read a paper what de Pres'dent had writ what said we was now free, an' he talk to us 'bout freedom and tole us not to work no more, 'less we get paid for it.

When he had finished an' gone, old Buck Adams' wife, old Mary Adams, come out an spoke to us. I rec'lec what she said jes as well as if I jes hear her say it.

She say, "Ten years from today, I'll have you all back 'gain." Yes, sir. "Ten years from today, I'll have you all back 'gain."

Dat ten years been over a mighty long time, an' she ain' got us back yet, an' she is dead an' gone.

– *William Matthews*

When freedom come, Marster [the master] tell us all to come to front of de house. He am standin on de porch. He 'splains 'bout freedom and says, "You is now free and can go whar you pleases."

Den, he tells us he have larned us not to steal and to be good, and we-uns should 'member dat, and if we-uns gets into trouble, to come to him and he will help us.

He sho' do dat, too, cause de freed slaves goes to him lots of times, and he always helps. Marster says dat he needs help on de place, and sich dat stays, he'd pay em for de work. Lots of dem stayed, but some left.

– *Betty Bormer*

I remember well how the roads was full of folks walking and walking along, when the slaves were freed.

Didn't know where they was going. Just

going to see about something else, somewhere else. Meet a body in the road and they ask, "Where you going?" "Don't know." "What you going to do?" "Don't know."

Then sometimes we would meet a white man, and he would say, "How you like to come work on my farm?" And we say, "I don't know."

And then maybe he say, "If you come work for me on my farm, when the crops is in, I give you five bushels of corn, five gallons of molasses, some ham meat, and all your clothes and vittles [food] while you works for me."

"All right! That's what I do."

And then, something begins to work up here and I begins to think and to know things. And I knowed then I could make a living for my own self, and I never had to be a slave no more.

– *Robert Falls*

Group Discussion:

1. *What attitudes toward the end of slavery did the plantation owners show, based on the first two selections?*
2. *How does the account in the third selection show that freed slaves and landowners were starting to develop a new economic relationship?*