

- The dynamics of gender and the representation of women in Seminole black culture
- How Seminole black descendants assimilate new interests and influences into their culture, while holding on to the tenuous threads of the past.
- The changes through time in the two communities, Nacimiento and Brackettville, and reasons for these changes

Today, the Seminole blacks of Mexico, Texas, and those remaining in Oklahoma continue their attempts to maintain ties between the various groups through yearly reunions at Brackettville during Juneteenth and Seminole Days. The Seminole scout cemetery just outside Brackettville, containing the remains of four scout Medal of Honor winners, survives as a dramatic symbol of historic time and place and a link with the Seminole black ancestors. As Miss Charles notes:

My grandfather, my mother, even a lot of those of us who weren't in the military, we're all buried here. The Julys, the Jeffersons, the others, we were all cousins (*Fort Worth Star Telegram*, March 1990).

Note

* Subsequent to this, the prospects of expanding this research as well as a continued commitment to the collaboration were enhanced by the present authors' new positions: Shirley Boteler-Mock at the Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and Mike Davis at The Office of the State Archeologist (OSA) of the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Thus ITC, a multicultural institution focused on the history and culture of Texas, and OSA/THC are presently conjoined in a common mission: to continue documenting the history and culture of the Seminole blacks and assist them in revitalization efforts.

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Jenny Masur and Kent Lancaster

Interpreting Slavery at Hampton NHS

Hampton National Historical Site, Towson, Maryland, contains the core of the Hampton estate, which belonged to seven generations of the Ridgely family from the 1740s-1940s. The huge and beautiful mansion is known for its careful reconstructions of earlier periods in the family history. Exciting research is now underway on the work force that made gracious living at the site possible, particularly the African Americans, who at one point numbered as many as 329 under Ridgely control.

The Ridgelys were the consummate record-keepers. Mrs. Eliza Ridgely (1803-67), for example, recorded her every expenditure down to five cents for a year of ribbon for her own use and \$1.27 for cloth for slave clothing. A working socialite, the mistress of a great plantation, she was typical of the family who produced and saved an enormous number of documents detailing their history. Most of these records are now at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, the

Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, or in the Park collection. Scores of long account books, thousands of brief receipts for purchases, letters, runaway advertisements, diaries, lists of clothing and shoes given out, and other sources are available to reconstruct slave life at this site for more than a century before the Civil War.

Two interesting examples are a list of "Christmas Gifts of the Colored Children of Hampton" kept by a daughter of the house from 1841-54 and a letter from a Washington lawyer in 1866 to Master John Ridgely demanding the return of property—including "furs and muff" and "6 prs of white lace sleeves"—claimed as her property by Lucy Jackson, a former slave. Of more importance, though, are recently discovered documents, which permit identification of large numbers of slaves by age and, it is hoped, eventually by family groupings. These documents open various avenues of understanding of the Hampton community.

By his will, Governor Charles Ridgely manumitted his slaves in 1829. Controlled to some

extent by the state laws of the time, he permitted females from 25 years and males from 28 up to a legal ceiling of 45 years to go free. Younger slaves were to be kept by his residuary heirs and released when they reached those ages; older slaves were to be taken care of honorably for life. Some 90 individuals, some of whom continued to work for the Ridgelys, were released into Baltimore and surrounding areas in 1829-30, beginning a stream of freed Ridgely slaves that was to continue for decades.

On the surface this seems an act of great altruism. Under closer scrutiny, however, it becomes obvious that this was a mixed blessing, for this act split families as effectively as sale would have done. Sally Batty, for example, was within the designated age and was freed. George, the man we believe to have been her husband, was overage and thus ineligible for manumission, and their six children were to remain under control until each reached the requisite age over the next seven to 22 years.

The governor's elder son, John Ridgely, inherited the Hampton property in 1829 with no slaves, and he began to buy slaves totalling more than 70 individuals, who were freed in their turn by the Maryland state's dissolution of slavery in 1864. The study of slavery at Hampton, then, is complicated by the fact that it is the study of two discrete groups of slaves. There was overlapping and intermingling, too, for some of his father's freed slaves stayed on to work at Hampton, and John "rented" some of the younger slaves left in the care of his sisters, the residuary heirs.

An immediate question is by what mix of punishment and incentives such large communities of slaves were controlled. There is, in fact, no easy answer because of change over time and because slave masters were unlikely to record some of the uglier aspects of the system (the

Ridgelys did not). One payment recorded by chance in a blacksmith's bill for chains and a neck iron seems important as does a passage in a memoir of a family member about the governor demanding several times that an recalcitrant and proud slave be given extra lashes until he was humbled. Over 60 runaways (1760s-1860s), too, may testify to abuses.

On the other hand, there were incentives for good behavior. Slaves working overtime at the ironworks (1760s-1830) could earn money to supplement rations of herring, corn, and bacon with pork or beef purchased at the company store. The first and third masters' slaves were included at family prayers, and Christmas gifts were given to all. While unlikely ever to plumb completely the nature of the slave control process, we do know that order was maintained. A fellow slave owner, for example, asked in 1794 if he might send some slaves to Hampton to be trained by the Ridgely overseer. In 1846, John Ridgely provided a power of attorney to his overseer to sell if necessary any "disorderly, disobedient, or unruly" slaves.

Hampton was situated close to a large urban center and in a county that bordered on a free state, so the lure of melding into Baltimore or finding freedom in Pennsylvania was necessarily a factor in slave life. Surviving powers of attorney empower representatives of the Ridgelys to pursue respectively, Isaac in 1831 believed to be "now or was lately in the Service of Some inhabitant of Abbottstown, in the State of Pennsylvania," and John Hawkins in 1852 "believed to be at large in the State of Pennsylvania." The Ridgelys were vigilant, quickly advertised and aggressive in seeking runaways.

A fugitive slave named Bateman was returned and became one of Ridgely's favorite slaves. At times of stress or upheaval there were often group runaways. One such event occurred in 1829 just after the governor's death. The escapees were brought back, one of them at least to discover that by the governor's will he was free. Running away was not a universal goal, however; one Nancy Davis, a beloved nurse of a generation of Ridgely children, chose to stay at Hampton when her freed husband moved to Baltimore. Very close to the family, she was buried and commemorated on stone in the Ridgely family burial ground.

We can make individuals come alive. Short slave biographies are already emerging from the records and, incomplete though they may be, they show something of what slavery meant to the individual. Lucy Jackson, for example, for whom the Washington lawyer wrote in 1866, was bought by John Ridgely from Baltimore auctioneer Samuel Owings Hoffman in 1838 for \$400. She was apparently pregnant at the time, so her price was

One of three slave quarters centered around the farm house. A "designed" structure in quality of construction and workmanship, it was part of a home farm on the Hampton estate. Estimated date of construction was 1845-60.



high; later she had another child. According to the records, Lucy was a house servant—the house-keeper—in fact. Ridgely clothing distribution lists and expense accounts show that house servants were better dressed and probably better fed than the field or industrial slaves.

Lucy, then, was well up in the slave hierarchy. Apparently a Catholic, she had enough influence to see that her younger son George was buried in Baltimore's Cathedral Cemetery and that the Ridgelys paid the costs. Her older son Henry can be traced through childhood; we know what he was given for Christmas. At three he was given a harmonica, for example, and the next year a soldier on a horse. He can be traced in clothing lists until 1861 when he is marked "gone," probably having fled servitude.

Bits of the biography of a founder of the East Towson community are falling into place. We know from his certificate of freedom at the Hall of Records that another slave, Daniel Harris, was 44 years old in 1829, of "yellow" or light complexion and raised in Baltimore County. He was evaluated at a low \$100 in an inventory taken to administer the governor's will, probably because he was only a year from statutory old age. He continued to work in the Hampton gardens well after his 1829 manumission, and appears in local land records as the first African American to buy property in the nearby community of Towson.

At Hampton, we have the opportunity to base interpretation on concrete Ridgely records and not on generalizations from research at other plantations. Hampton records contain a wealth of information on African-American labor, diet, costume, family relationships, living conditions, attempts to escape, etc. As suggested by the dearth

of information about control, the one great flaw, of course, is that all Ridgely records are white engendered. They tell us nothing of slaves' non-working hours or their perception of life.

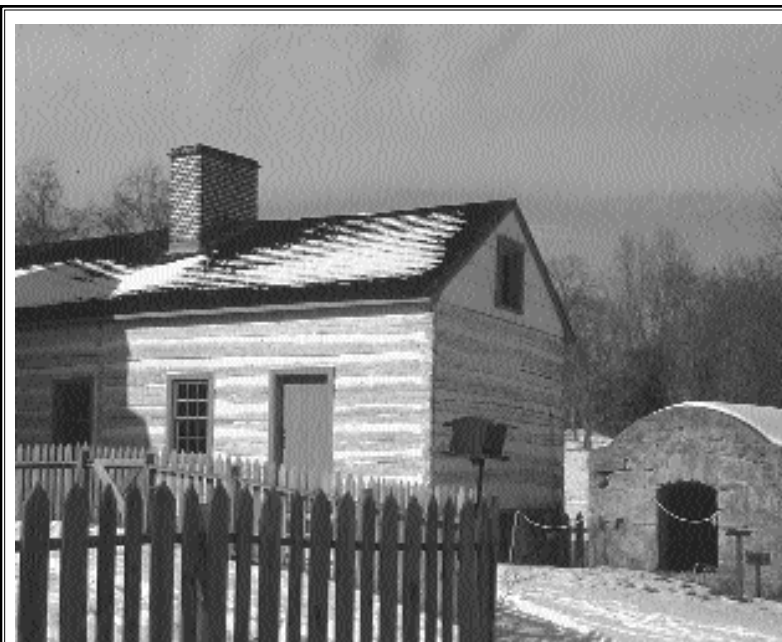
We already have established firm ties with the local African-American community which will attempt to identify descendants of Ridgely slaves. We hope to work backwards with the family traditions of descendants to fill in some of the gaps in the plantation owners' records. Eventually through oral histories and personal records, we hope to discover the African-American perspective on life at and association with Hampton and the Ridgely family. Then the site will have a fuller and more in-depth picture of life at Hampton in earlier centuries.

Each small research success opens six other paths, and there still looms many shelf feet of unexplored Ridgely documents. Most new research has depended on volunteers and interns from local colleges and universities. Hampton, nonetheless, has pushed ahead for the past three years in this exciting new research area and will continue to probe into its broader past.

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Photos courtesy Hampton National Historic Site, NPS.



This log slave quarters, c. 1835-1860, consists of five rooms, including cellar with dirt floor; the second floor is a loft with a ladder to climb up. There is a stone fireplace in the cellar with a wrought iron crane and iron brackets for cooking. There are two present windows, one of which originally was a door. Now there is a modern lumber stair to the trap door. There is a crawl space under one room. Interior log walls, daubing, underside of upper flooring, stair stringers, and plastered fireplace walls were always whitewashed; ceiling joists and remaining interior trim were painted an iron-oxide based brown or red-brown. The exterior whitewash is consistent with whitewash or white paint on exterior masonry of other farm buildings. Period of hardware varies, though some original.—Reed Engle (1986)

Artifacts recovered indicate quarters assembled and placed on foundations during the third quarter of the 19th century, perhaps as late as c. 1870. The log timbers are clearly reutilized from a late-18th or early-19th century structure, judging from wrought nails and spikes embedded in the logs and cut for earlier doors and windows. It may not be a slave quarters; if not, it is significant that the building is patterned after a slave quarters, thus suggesting limited change and opportunity available to former slaves after the Civil War.—Brooke S. Blades and David G. Orr (1985)