



Slavery's Echoes: Interviews with Former Missouri Slaves

Quotes from Exhibit Panels

Please give credit to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Missouri State Museum.

Panel 1: Introduction

“What I think ‘bout slavery? Well, we is gettin long pretty well now and I believe its best to not agitate.” *Hannah Allen, Fredericktown, Mo.*

“Come in an’ set an’... I’ll tell you everything about slave times. Everything I can remember.”
Sarah Waggoner, Nodaway County, Mo.

“People tells me not to tell nothin ‘bout myself to folks like you what asks me, cause you ain’t going to give me nothing for it nohow.” *Mrs. Lou Griffin, St. Louis, Mo.*

“I was only a boy... but I knew enough to understand the pressure of slavery and what the colored went through.” “*Charlie, Osceola, Mo.*

“O’ course maybe it don’t sound right, but in some ways I often wish we’s back in dem days. We had a fine place.” *Smokey Eulenberg, Jackson, Mo.*

Panel 2: Slavery in Missouri

“My father’s master had about 100 slaves. Our white folks had my mother, two sisters and myself and two brothers as slaves.” *Marie Simpson, Crawford County, Mo.*

“Farms was lots different from down here [in Texas]. They call ‘em plantations down here, but up at St. Louis they was just called farms. An’ that’s just what they was, ‘cause we raise wheat, barley, rye, oats, corn an’ fruit. They wasn’t no cotton growin’ up there.” *Mary Armstrong, St. Louis, Mo.*
(interviewed in Texas)

Panel 3: Treatment

“Ol’ man Thorton...was mean to his slaves. He whupped dem all de time. I’ve seen their clothes sticking to their backs from blood and scabs, being cut up with de cowhide. He just whupped dem because he could.” *Gus Smith, Rich Fountain, Mo.*

“Massa was mighty good to his colored folks. He never ’lowed none of ‘em to be sold and I don’t recollect ever seeing anyone getting whupped.” *Steve Brown, Cape Girardeau County, Mo.*

“If you lived one place and your mammy lived cross de street, you couldn’t go to see her without a pass.” *Harry Johnson, Mississippi County, Mo.*



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“I done see one whipping and dat enough. They wasn’t no fooling about it.” *Esther Easter, Westport, Mo.*

“My master called hisself a Pennsylvania Dutchman. We had much more freedom dan de most of de slaves had in those days. It was so much better dan other slaves dat our neighbors would not let their slaves associate with us.” *Gus Smith, Cole County, Mo.*

“My master had a driver, but he say his niggers was human, wid human feelin’s, so he makes dat driver reports to him for what little thrashins we gets.” *Will Daily, St. Louis, Mo.*

“There was a tough gang called patrollers. Dey would scare de Negroes and would keep dem always afraid.” *Harriet Casey, Farmington, Mo.*

“My mother, she died when I was ‘bout two months old. De Barkers was my white folks and brought me up. Miss Barker was like my own mother; I wouldn’ knowed no diffunce but she brought me up tellin’ me she wasn’t my own mother but she would have to be from now on.” *John Barker, Sedalia, Mo.*

“We had plenty to eat, but we did not have good times. We could not go off the place without asking. We better not, or we would get whupped to pieces.” *Marie Simpson, Crawford County, Mo.*

Panel 4: Housing

“In summer we slept, my brother Henry and me, in a trundle bed in the kitchen; and in de winter made a pallet beside de fireplace.” *Sarah Waggoner, Savannah, Mo.*

“Log cabins, that’s all they was. They was made of good old Missouri logs daubed with mud.” *Charlie Richardson, Warrensburg, Mo.*

“We made our beds by driving logs in de dirt floor an’ makin’ a kinda scaffold. Den ropes was stretched across instead of springs an’ we filled ticks with grass, or straw, or corn shucks.” *Ada Davis, Lawrence County, Mo.*

“Our house joined on to de house of de white folks.” *Hannah Allen, Fredericktown, Mo.*

“Dey was ‘bout 20, maybe 25, slaves on de place, an’ we all lived in a big, old... house.” *George Bollinger, Bollinger County, Mo.*

“Married folks lived in log cabins, but the single folks lived in the big house. I lived in the big house. I slept on a pallet on the floor in the kitchen.” *Peter Corn, Ste. Genevieve County, Mo.*



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“When we got to Osceola...the country wasn’t settled up, and we went out and built log cabins and stayed there.” *“Charlie,” Osceola, Mo.*

“There was a [wooden] floor an’ we had a bed, but it had no mattress.” *Annie Bridges, St. Francois County, Mo.*

Panel 5 A and B: Necessities

A

“I jes’ had two dresses. De best one was made out of plain, white muslin. I went out in de woods and got walnut bark to color it brown. Then I had another dress and a shirt. Dat was my work dress.” *Sarah Waggoner, Savannah, Mo.*

“The men folks wore homemade brown jean suits. The women had homemade linsey dresses. As a rule the women wore red bandanas tied around their heads and the men old slouch hats.” *Charles Butlington, Cooper County, Mo.*

“The medicine they gave you was nothing but blue mass and oil and some hot tea and you would be all right.” *“Charlie,” Osceola, Mo.*

“[My mother] was on a wagon [that] turned over and she fell off on a sapling and it went through her skin...she had to lay with dat snag in her side till de doctor 20 miles away come.” *Rhody Holsell, Wayne County, Mo.*

“We never had no doctor. My mother would go out in de woods and get herbs.” *Robert Bryant, Caledonia, Mo.*

“We had a doctor and good care when we was sick. I’s don’t remember much ‘bout what kinds of medicine we took, but I know it was mostly homemade.” *Will Daily, St. Louis, Mo.*

“We wore long shirts dat reached to de knees until we was 12 or 14 years old. Only in the coldest of weather we had split leather shoes without any linin’. I have had my feet freeze and crack open on the heels and bleed. Didn’t do us no good to complain neither.” *Mark Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

B

“Ham was white folks’ meat and if you got any you would have to steal it; and I was good at that.” *“Charlie,” Osceola, Mo.*

“We had good grub ‘cause we raised plenty of everything. Most times we have biscuits and bacon and syrup for breakfast, and butter too if we wants it.” *Will Daily, St. Louis, Mo.*



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“We was fed just moderate. There was fifteen hands. When dey come in at noon, dey ate from de big old kettle where de old colored woman had cooked de food.” *Dave Harper, Montgomery County, Mo.*

“When I was little, [my mother] used to come to feed me about twelve o’clock every day. She hurry in, give me a little bowl of something, and then hurry right on out because she had to go right back to her work.” *Mary Peters, Missouri*

“We ate our meals in our own cabin, but every morning at seven de colored housewoman went to de smokehouse to cut meat for de day. Us youngsters all ganged up round her, hoping to get something.” *Smokey Eulenberg, Jackson, Mo.*

“To eat we had corn meal and fried meat that had been eaten by bugs. We had some gravy and all ate ‘round de pans like pigs eating slop. And we had a tin cup of sour milk to drink.” *Harriet Casey, Farmington, Mo.*

Panel 6: A-Freedom and B-Selling

A

“They was so mad at us for being freed that they got rid of us as soon as they could, and we was only too glad to go.” *Charlie Richardson, Warrensburg, Mo.*

“They tried to make us believe that we couldn’t take care of ourselves if we were free.” *Malinda Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

“We was treated so mean that a neighbor helped us escape. We all got in a big wagon, ‘bout ten or twelve of us, an’ drove us to the Cape (Cape Girardeau).” *Betty Abernathy, Perry County, Mo.*

“They did not want the mistress to tell me when we were free cause there was only two of us slaves left there.” *Hannah Allen, Fredericktown, Mo.*

“I stayed with Miss Olivia til ’63 when Mr. Will set all his slaves free. He said we had a right to freedom an’ read a proclamation.” *Mary Armstrong, St. Louis, Mo.*

“There wasn’t none of us ever try to run away. We had a good home and we all stayed till they declare peace.” *Smoky Eulengerg, Jackson, Mo.*

“I remember some tough men driving like mad through our place many times, with big chains rattling. We called them slave hunters.” *Charlie Richardson, Warrensburg, Mo.*



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“Dey was gonna buy my pappy an take him way off. Dat night, he goes to de fireplace an’ lifts up a stone, an’ out o’ de hole he pulls a bag o’ money and he runs away. I ain’t never seed my pappy since.” *George Bollinger, Bollinger County, Mo.*

“A run away slave from the Jenkin’s plantation was brought back and there was a public whipping, so’s the slaves could see what happens when they tries to get away.” *Esther Easter, Westport, Mo.*

“[My father] was a good slave and wanted to earn some good money, so Master Rollander said if he gave him \$500 he would let him go, so he did this and went to California.” *Sarah Hill, Missouri*

“In a way [my mother] was the mistress of her master because he was the father of all my brothers and sisters. He freed her before the Civil War.” *Phannie Corneal, Savannah, Mo.*

“My [uncle] was freed at least 15 years before de war. His maser died and he was freed by a will. Dis master willed 800 acres to his slaves who divided up the farm. He put it down in a way dat his daughters could not break it.” *Peter Corn, Ste. Genevieve County, Mo.*

B

“My father was took away. My mother said he was put on a block and sold ‘cause de master wanted money to buy something for de house.” *Emma Knight, Monroe County, Mo.*

“I don’t know anything about the Old South because Master Ben moves us all up into Missouri long before they started fighting about slavery.” *Esther Easter, Westport, Mo.*

“People were sold like cattle or hogs.” *Mark Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

“When I was nine or ten years old I was put up on de block to be sold. I ‘member dat well. It was just a piece cut out of a log and stood on end.” *Marilda Pethy, Williamsburg, Mo.*

“I’ve seen slaves go through Danville in droves like cattle. Dey was chained together and dey walked ‘em to St. Louis to de nigger yard.” *Dave Harper, Montgomery County, Mo.*

“I remember that my mother use to gather us children around her and pray that we would not be separated.” *Malinda Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

Panel 7: Slave Society (Family)

“Ole Massa had a number of slaves, but we didden’ have no school, nor church, an’ mighty little merry-making.” *Betty Abernathy, Perry County, Mo.*



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“When dere was a wedding, missus always dressed em and fixed em up.” *Smokey Eulenberg, Jackson, Mo.*

“Dey wasn’t allowed to marry, but if dey seen you talkin to somebody like you was makin love, wether you love em or not, dey make you live wid dem. Dat was marryin each other.” *John Barker, Sedalia, Mo.*

“If we could say ‘Christmas gift to any of the master’s family on Christmas morning before they spoke to us, they would have to give us a gift of some kind. The gift might be some clothes or a stick of candy.” *Malinda Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

“Christmas never meant no more to us dan any other day.” *Marilda Pethy, Williamsburg, Mo.*

“[We] only had church in the summer time. It was always in the woods in the brush.” *Fil Hancock, Springfield, Mo.*

“Our mistress let us hold church at the colored quarters of her plantation and there was sure some big gathering.” *Fred Forbs, Knox County, Mo.*

“Yes, our master took his slaves to meetin’ with him. There was always something about that I couldn’t understand. They treated the colored folks like animals and would not hesitate to sell and separate them, yet they seemed to think they had souls and tried to make Christians of them.” *Malinda Discus, Dade County, Mo.*

“De first time I was married was to Phillis Reed in Missouri and we jus’ jumps de broom. And after Phillis die, and I comes to Texas, I’s gets married again to Susie. We jes’ jumps over de broom too.” *Will Daily, St. Louis, Mo. (interviewed in Texas)*

“In de evening when de work was done we would sit ‘round and play marbles and sing songs. We made our songs up as we went along.” *William Black, Ralls County, Mo.*

“We never had no kind ‘er gatherin’s. Dey wouldn’ let de colored folks congregate-no sir. Even de man over at de store wouldn’ let more dan two colored folks come in at a time.” *George Bollinger, Bollinger County, Mo.*

“I was never allowed to call [my mother] anything but Harriet. She was only fifteen when I was born. My master... was also my father. What was done in slavery days was simply done and not much thought of it.” *George Simpson, Cuba, Mo.*



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Panel 8 and 9 Work

“As a boy I tended the cows. Later, they let me plow an’ I thought I sure had a big job. I was so proud that I didn’ stop for dinner.” *Madison Ross, Scott County, Mo.*

“My mother was a house servant in Missouri and Mississippi. When they brought her here (Arkansas) they tried to make a field hand out of her. She hadn’t been used to chopping cotton. When she didn’t chop it fast as the others did they would beat her.” *Mary Peters, Missouri*

“[On] the adjoining plantation was the big old tobacco factory where the tobacco from several plantation was hung and prized.” *Isabelle Henderson, Gilliam, Mo.*

“My boss raised hogs, sheep, hemp and darkies.” *Parson Allen, Scott County, Mo.*

“I worked in de fields most generally. When I was small I rode one of dem oxen and harrowed de fields. When I was about ten or eleven I plowed with oxen.” *Lewis Mundy, Lewis County, Mo.*

“My mother plowed in de field an’ would leave her baby layin at one end of de field while she plowed clear to de other end an’ come back.” *Annie Bridges, St. Francis County, Mo.*

“I used to chop wood and make rails and do all kinds of farm work. I learned to make shoes when I was just a boy and I made the shoes for the whole family.” *Bill Simms, Osceola, Mo.*

“I worked in the fields and I worked hard too. Plantin’ and harvestin’ in those days was really work.” *Sarah Graves, Nodaway County, Mo.*

“My mother was big an’ strong. Dere weren’t nothin on de place she couldn’t do.” *James Abbott, Cape Girardeau, Mo.*

“I milked eight cows and then put the milk away.” *Sarah Waggoner, Nodaway County, Mo.*

“Mammy used to card wool and cotton and spin. Then she would weave the goods.” *Tishey Taylor, New Madrid County, Mo.*

“Our master...went to Pennsylvania and came back and went to California for about a year. Before he left he made my father boss. My father stayed on de place and took care of everything.” *Gus Smith, Rich Fountain, Mo.*

“I always believed in doing things as they should be done, on time. That’s why my services were valuable, any place I worked, whether as a slave or free.” *Delicia Patterson, Boonville, Mo.*



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“We pulled weeds in de garden and helped de mistress with de hoeing.” *Emma Knight, Monroe County, Mo.*

“Our father, Jacob Franks, was a trusted negro an’ a teamster who drove from Ste. Genevieve to the plantation.” *Eliza Overton, Ste. Genevieve, Mo.*

“Young Master Bill took Joe to Springfield and hired him out to a blacksmith. He got forty dollars a month for him.” *Fil Hancock, Rolla, Mo.*

“I nursed all the children of my mistress and one time I was hired out to the white preacher’s family to take care of his children when his wife was sick.” *Isabelle Henderson, Gilliam, Mo.*

“I played a fiddle for all de weddings and parties in de neighborhood. Dey paid me fifteen or twenty cents each time and I had money in my pocket all de time.” *Henry Dant, Ralls County, Mo.*

“My father’s master had about one hundred slaves. He hired out most of his slaves to white folks that had no slaves and needed work done.” *Marie Simpson, Crawford County, Mo.*

“I’s a doin all sorts of chores by de time I was six years old.” *Will Daily, St. Louis County, Mo.*

“I was just a little girl, but I can remember how they kept me busy waiting on them. Carrying water from the spring, hunting eggs and a lot of other little things.” *Marie Simpson, Crawford County, Mo.*

“Us children had de chores to do--any work dat we’s able.” *Smoky Eulenberg, Jackson, Mo.*