

KAS RADIO - Episode 5

Kentucky's Antebellum Plantations A *Think History* Radio Spot

Episode Transcript

The word “plantation” brings to mind the vast cotton fields of America’s Deep South; places worked by hundreds of enslaved Africans.

Plantations in central Kentucky were much smaller. Instead of producing cotton, rice, or sugar cane, the region was more suitable for growing corn, wheat, oats, barley, and hay. Kentucky plantations also produced vegetables and fruits, livestock, and cash crops like tobacco and hemp.



Backyard view of the Farnsley-Moreman House and its reconstructed detached kitchen (left). From 1828-1849, as many as 15 enslaved people lived and worked at the Riverside plantation outside Louisville.

families together was not good for business: “...*there is but little more scruple about separating families than there is with a man who keeps sheep in selling off lambs in the fall,*” he said.

In this way, central Kentucky’s plantations were exactly like their counterparts in the Deep South.

So, how was a Kentucky farm different from a Kentucky plantation?

On a farm, laborers are free people, paid for their work. On a plantation, they are property—belonging to the plantation owner.

Lewis Clarke, an enslaved man from Madison County, recalled how owners often sold enslaved individuals separately, because keeping

To Read More

A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1, From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891, by Marion B. Lucas (1992). Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

Traces the role of Blacks from the early exploration and settlement of Kentucky to 1891, when African Americans gained freedom only to be faced with a segregated society. Extensive use of primary sources: slave diaries, Freedmen's Bureau records, church minutes, personal papers.

January's Sparrow by Patricia Polacco (2009). Philomel Books/Penguin Random House, New York. Children's fiction book for ages 8-12/3-7th grade.

In the middle of the night, the Crosswhites must flee the Kentucky plantation where they work - January has been beaten and killed by the plantation master, and they fear who may be next. Sadie must leave behind the wooden sparrow carved for her by January. Through the Underground Railroad, the Crosswhites make their way to Michigan and freedom.

Kentucky Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in Kentucky from Interviews with Former Slaves (1936-1938), by the

Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration (2006). Library of Congress, Applewood Books, Bedford, MA.

First-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed Work Projects Administration (WPA).

Image Credits

Riverside Plantation photograph by Joe Schneid Louisville, KY - own work, CC BY 3.0 (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4093170>).

For information about Riverside, access its website (<https://riverside-landing.org/>).

To learn more about **Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938**, go to <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>. Find the Kentucky Slave Narratives in Volume 7 here: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.070/?st=gallery>

My Old Kentucky Home: Black History in the Bluegrass State, by Luther Adams, **The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society**, Vol. 113, No. 2/3, Building A History of Twentieth-Century Kentucky (Spring/Summer 2015), pp. 385-419.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/24641490?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

African American and Kentuckian, Adams describes growing up in Kentucky; considers the major points in Kentucky history from a black perspective; and discusses important writings that target the main themes in Kentucky's black history.

Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke, During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America, Dictated by Himself, by Lewis Garrard Clarke (1845). David H. Ela, Printer, Boston, MA. Electronic Edition (1999), Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill. (<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/clarke/clarke.html>).

Originally published in 1845, this was the first narrative to be copyrighted by a slave. Lewis Clarke, born in 1815 in Madison County, Kentucky, dictated his story to the abolitionist J. C. Lovejoy. It directly inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin.

The Strength of These Arms by Raymond Bial (2000). HMH Books for Young Readers/ HoughtonMifflinHarcourt, Boston. Children's nonfiction book for ages 10-13/5-8th grade.

The everyday life of plantation slaves is detailed in text and haunting photographs of recently excavated plantation sites, giving immediacy to the lives of enslaved Africans while paying tribute to the daily courage of a people who endured against all odds.

Uncovering the Lives of Kentucky's Enslaved People by M. Jay Stottman and Lori C. Stahlgren (2017). Heritage Spotlight 5, Kentucky Archaeological Survey, Lexington. <https://www.kentuckyarchaeologicalsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Spotlight-No.5-Uncovering-the-Lives-of-Kentuckys-Enslaved-People.pdf>

Summarizes archaeological research carried out at a typical early to late nineteenth century Kentucky plantation in central Kentucky. Focuses on the lifeways of the enslaved Blacks who lived and worked there.



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