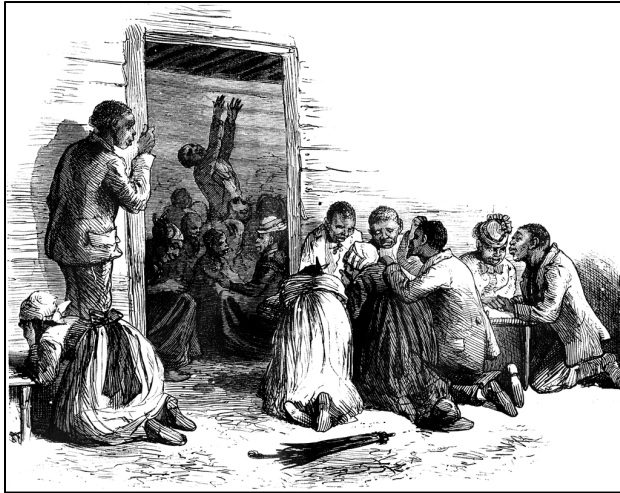


KAS RADIO - Episode 9

Religion of Kentucky's Enslaved People A *Think History* Radio Spot

Episode Transcript



Worshipping together on the plantation in one family's cabin was one way Kentucky's enslaved population created community.

Religion sustained Kentucky's enslaved people in an Antebellum world with otherwise little hope. In time, most embraced Christianity. On Sundays, the enslaved gathered to worship, sing, and pray - sometimes with whites and sometimes separately.

Reflecting their African roots, enslaved blacks also prayed to their ancestors, who functioned as important messengers between God and the living. They asked for good luck and for protection from disease, misfortune, enemies, and evil spirits.

Like many nineteenth-century people, enslaved blacks also tended to be superstitious. They believed people could be hexed and luck could be manipulated. A medicine man or woman within the enslaved community dispensed natural remedies for physical problems, but their practice also involved the art of *conjuring*: that is promoting or aiding in good luck.

Lewis Clarke, enslaved in Madison County, remembered that Sunday was "...a great day for visiting and eating..." but that "*the more avaricious slaveholders keep their slaves busy a good part of every Sabbath.*"

To Read More

"The Cross is a Magic Sign: Marks on 18th Century Bowls from South Carolina" by Leland G. Ferguson (1999). In **I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life**, edited by Theresa A. Singleton, pages 116-131. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville.

An attempt to understand the ways in which ethnicity and African heritage are reflected in the archaeological record - in this case, ceramics. It demonstrates how difficult it can be to assign "ownership" to any one ethnic group in a creole society like seventeenth-century Virginia.

Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World by Christopher Fennell (2007). University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida.

Discusses ways that the earliest enslaved Africans preserved aspects of their traditions and identities in the New World, drawing from archaeology, history, and symbolic anthropology. Also examines some of the major cultural belief systems of west and west-central Africa, symbols of the BaKongo and Yoruba cosmologies, and the development of African-American religious expressions in the Americas.

Day of Tears by Julius Lester (2007).

Hyperion Books for Children, New York.

Children's fiction book based on an actual event for ages 10-14/grades 5-9.

On March 2 and 3, 1859, the largest auction of slaves in American history took place in Savannah, Georgia. More than 400 slaves were sold. On the first day of the auction, torrential rain began falling, stopping only when the auction had ended. The simultaneity of the storm with the auction led to these two days being called "the weeping time."

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/grades 3-7.

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).

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>

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

Image Credits

"Prayer Meeting, Georgia, 1873-74"

from **The Great South; A Record of**

Journeys in... by Edward King

(illustrated from original sketches by J. Wells Champney). American Publishing Co., Hartford, CT (1875). Image accessed June 13, 2021 from

Slavery Images: A Visual Record of

the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora

in the Early African Diaspora

<http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1852>

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/ grades 5-8.

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.

Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800 by Leland G. Ferguson (1992). Smithsonian Books, Washington, D.C.

Takes a unique archaeological approach to examining early African American life. Through pre-Revolutionary period artifacts gathered from plantations and urban slave communities, Ferguson integrates folklore, history, and research to reveal how these enslaved people actually lived.

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.

“Unearthing Magic” by Julian Smith (2015). **American Archaeology** Volume 19, Number 2 (Summer), pages 19-23.

<https://www.archaeologicalconservancy.org/wpfb-file/19-2-sum-2015-singles-lr-pdf/>

Discusses archaeological evidence of private rituals of the enslaved, linked to African religious traditions and spirituality, and evidence of European immigrants' folk beliefs and medicinal remedies uncovered at sites in Maryland, Virginia, and New York.



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