

Donna Wyant Howell

The Lives of Slave Men

JOHN FINNELY: De wo'k am divided 'twix de cullud fo'ks. Allus have de certain duties to do. I's am a field hand. Befo' I's ol' 'nough fo' to do dat, deys have me he'p wid de chores an' run errands. I's 'bout 12 yeahs ol' w'en I's put to plowin' an' hoein' an' sich.

KATE CURREY: Massa had his own house servants, too, an' de ones for de outside all had dey own work to do, like de coachman, de stable boy, an' de body servant for himself.

JAMES WIGGINS: My father was a carpenter by trade. He was hired out to different farmers by Mr. Revell to repair and build barns, fences, and houses.

HENRY PROBASCO: De blacksmith do de iron wo'k, an' de wood wo'k am done by de cahpentah, an' de plows am mos'ly wood. Jus' de point an' de shear am iron. My gran'pap made many mouldboards outter wood.

ISOM NORRIS: After de war started, I was nurse for my young Massa's chillen.

THOMAS JOHNS: I usually tended to de cattle and sheep, but I could take raw cotton and card and spin it on a spinnin' wheel into thread, fine enough to be sewed with a needle.

GILL RUFFIN: When I growed up, Marster Butler took me outta de house and put me to work in de field. We had an overseer dat sho' made us step. We was used rough durin' slavery time.

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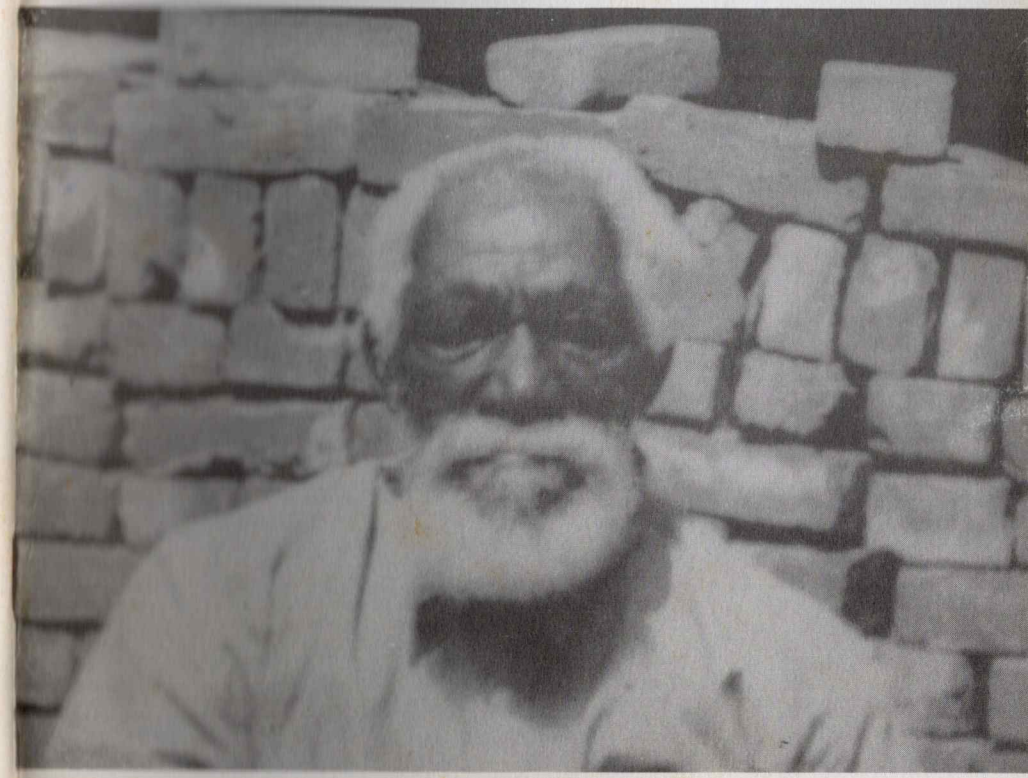
Chapter 2:
THE LIVES OF SLAVE MEN



Compiled by Donna Wyant Howell