**House Slave Narrative Excerpt**

James Curry was born into slavery around 1815 in Person County, North Carolina. In these excerpts from his memoir, he descrbies his mother's experiences as a slave and reflects on the differences between slave labor and paid labor.

My mother was cook in the house for about twenty-two years. She cooked for from twenty-five to thirty-five, taking the family and the slaves together. The slaves ate in the kitchen. After my mistress’s death, my mother was the only woman kept in the house. She took care of my master’s children, some of whom were then quite small, and brought them up. One of the most trying scenes I ever passed through, when I would have laid down my life to protect her if I had dared, was this: after she had raised my master’s children, one of his daughters, a young girl, came into the kitchen one day, and for some trifle about the dinner, she struck my mother, who pushed her away, and she fell on the floor. Her father was not at home. When he came, which was while the slaves were eating in the kitchen, she told him about it. He came down, called my mother out, and, with a hickory rod, he beat her fifteen or twenty strokes, and then called his daughter and told her to take her satisfaction of her, and she did beat her until she was satisfied.

Oh! it was dreadful, to see the girl whom my poor mother had taken care of from her childhood thus beating her, and I must stand there, and did not dare to crook my finger in her defence. My mother’s labor was very hard. She would go to the house in the morning, take her pail upon her head, and go away to the cow-pen, and milk fourteen cows. She then put on the bread for the family breakfast, and got the cream ready for churning, and set a little child to churn it, she having the care of from ten to fifteen children, whose mothers worked in the field. After clearing away the family breakfast, she got breakfast for the slaves; which consisted of warm corn bread and buttermilk, and was taken at twelve o’clock. In the meantime, she had beds to make, rooms to sweep, &c. Then she cooked the family dinner, which was simply plain meat, vegetables and bread. Then the slaves’ dinner was to be ready at from eight to nine o’clock in the evening. It consisted of corn bread, or potatoes, and the meat which remained of the master’s dinner, or one herring apiece. At night she had the cows to milk again. There was little ceremony about the master’s supper, unless there was company. This was her work day by day. Then in the course of the week, she had the washing and ironing to do for her master’s family, (who, however, were clothed very simply,) and for her husband, seven children, and herself.