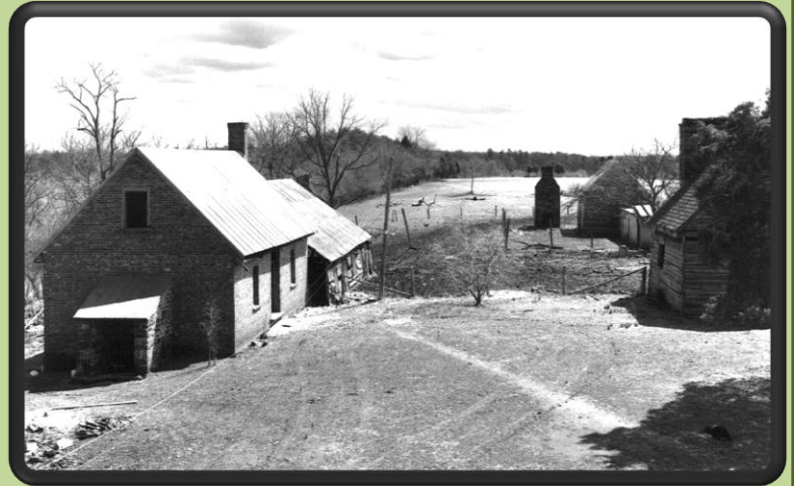


Slave Life on a Plantation

Slaves lived in various shacks depending on the plantation size and the attitude of the owner, but nearly all larger plantations used a village like this one to quarter slaves. This 1960 photo of the Green Hill Plantation Slave Village is considered one of the best modern views we have of that terrible institution.

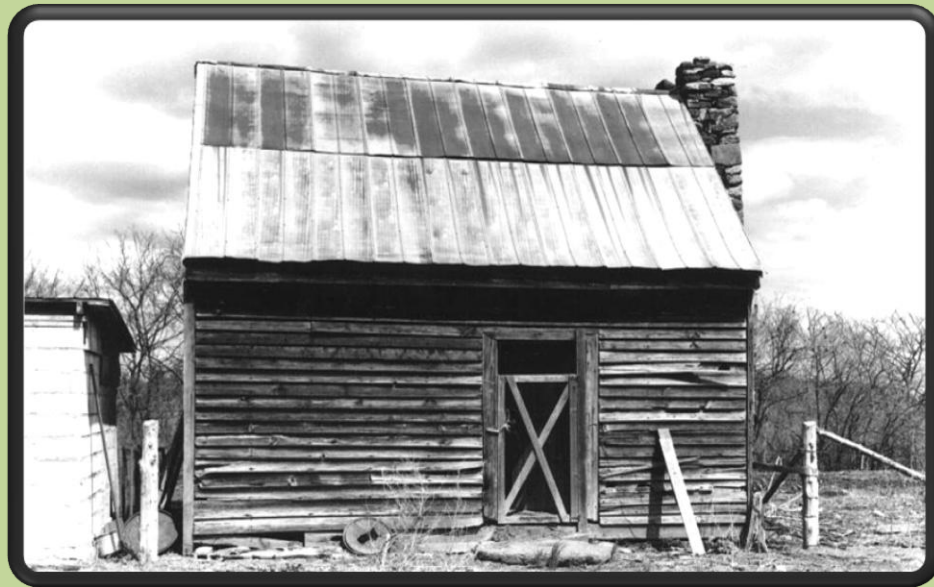
Owners demanded slaves be near the kitchens, work sheds, and other outbuildings as if they were part of the plantation livestock.



This is a online image shows the slave village at Green Hill Plantation in Virginia. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed by Jack E. Boucher, 1960. May 2010. Online image. GreenHill<http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/images/vi1.jpg>

Forced Labor Was Tricky

As slaves came in from the fields exhausted to beds in shacks like this; the owners would toil away at account ledgers. These detailed accounts were required because the labor and produce was taxed—and as a result we have fairly detailed views of the lives of slaves. The entire system was geared to keep slaves busy, and to prevent runaways.

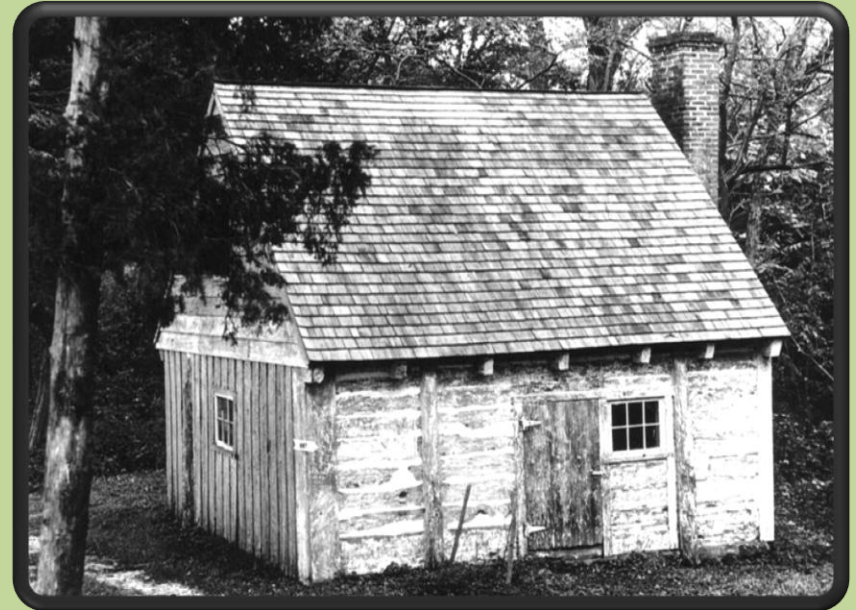


This is a online image shows a slave shack at Green Hill Plantation in Virginia. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed by Jack E. Boucher, 1960. May 2010. Online image. GreenHill<http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/images/vi4.jpg>



Control Was Everything?

The slave's labor was strictly controlled and noted. Individual slave names were recorded from the early morning to the final tally at night. Rations were some garden foods allowed to be tended on Sundays only plus rice husks, unwanted parts of the butcher's table like pigs feet, and other similar fare.



This is a online image shows a slave shack at Sotterly Plantation in Maryland. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed by H. Beville, 1953. May 2010. Online image. Green Hill <http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/images/vii1.jpg>



The Books

This is a typical Account Book where each slave is listed along with the pounds of cotton picked per day. Accounts also noted who was on the “sick list”; who was pregnant (and therefore allowed to go to the field late); even which women were nursing and had excuse to leave the fields. These were tied to narratives, called, events of the day, that described the work—branded mules, splitting logs, pressing cotton, etc.

42 C
DAILY RECORD OF COTTON PICKED on th *11* day of *Sept*-
 during the week commencing on the *10* day of *Sept*-
Plantation, 1850
Overseer.

NAME	No.	Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednesday.	Thursday.	Friday.	Saturday.	Week's Picking.
							Exp't Forward.	
<i>Sarah</i>	41	40	55	30	40	30	50	
<i>and Missin</i>	42	95	90	85	70	75	105	
<i>Maria A</i>	43							
<i>Big Amund</i>	44	245	285	245	240	265	265	
<i>Calcutt</i>	45	130	145	110	5	5	5	
<i>Big Sarah</i>	46	215	210	170	160	175	210	
<i>Big Amund</i>	47	255	280	230	205	235	260	
<i>Eliza Ann</i>	48	175	180	175	160	180	170	
<i>Mary Ann</i>	49	110	105	100	50	125	105	
<i>Brady Nell</i>	50	130	135	120	120	120	130	
<i>Caroline</i>	51	165	170	155	135	135	135	2380
<i>Frank</i>	52	175	165	145	145	150	175	2310
<i>Jessie</i>	53	55	55	85	45	5	5	2150
<i>Miss Calman</i>	54	230	265	280	190	225	220	3460
<i>Miss Fanny</i>	55	190	195	180	185	200	195	2695
<i>Miss Samt</i>	56	185	180	180	180	180	180	2630
<i>Fanny Ann</i>	57	200	200	200	175	175	175	32195
	58	2680	2695	2460	2150	2310	2380	47120
	59		5265					4365
	60		7360					1785
	61							17965
	62							109750

This is an online image shows the Overseers Account Book for Eustatia Plantation in Alabama. The African American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920. American Memory Project, Library of Congress. Online image. May 2010. Online image. <http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page.cfm?ID=13902&Current=P098&View=Text>

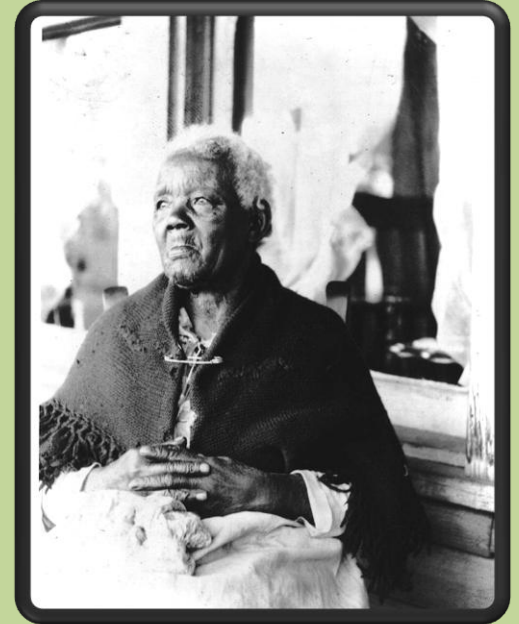


“I never knew what it was to rest....”

Sara Grudger was interviewed in 1938 as a part of the New Deal. Her narrative along with many others added to our understanding of the life of slaves.

“I had to do everything there was to do on the outside. Work in the field, chop wood, hoe corn, till sometime I feels like my back surely break.”

This is a online image shows Sara Grudger. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed by Marjorie Jones, 1938. May 2010. Online image. Green Hill <http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/panel9.html>



From “can see...to can’t see.”

Kitchen work along with doing the plantation laundry was every bit as demanding as field work. Here is the huge heath of a plantation kitchen in Georgia, photographed in 1880. Although taken after slavery this photo shows an accurate view of the work involved. As the slaves said, they worked from “can see to can’t see.”



This online image shows the kitchen of the Refuge Plantation, Georgia. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed ca. 1880. May 2010. Online image.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/panel9.html>



Every building worked, and so did children...

Small sheds like this diary had a special purpose—here milk was kept cool and the cream was churned into butter. Usually younger slave children did such work—including work to make soap, candles, clothes, and many other items.



This online image shows the diary of the Woodlands Plantation , Georgia. The Cultural Life of the Plantation. George Mason University. Online image photographed by Jack E. Boucher, 1960. May 2010. Online image. <http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/panel9.html>



Why such an extensive system of slavery?

As the Civil war begins, 4 million slaves lived throughout the South in quarters such as these—most in smaller farms.

Yet the work and oppression was the same. By examining the extent of the slave quarters and work places, we see an extensive system—a sort of factory using slave labor, not just for the production of cotton, tobacco, or rice. But also used for the everyday necessities of life like soap.

As the debate over slavery grew, the Southern planters were deeply invested in a monetary and social system they could not afford to lose.

