



[photograph of Nancy Brown Davis (1830-1908), daughter of a Ridgely slave, shown here with a Ridgely child]

OTHER VOICES

A Self Guided

Walking

Tour

This folder will help you explore Hampton and get a glimpse of the lives of the many slaves who lived and worked here. After seeing both the mansion and the slave quarters you will notice the vast differences in life styles of the slaves and the Ridgelys.

Slaves played a key role at Hampton for over 100 years. While they were here, they outnumbered the Ridgely family by a great margin. Under the guidance of a skilled workforce they built the mansion, grew crops, cut trees, cooked food, tended the gardens, cared for the children, cleaned the mansion, tended the horses, milked the cows, and did a host of other jobs on the estate. At one point, as many as 312 slaves lived at Hampton. Their lives varied greatly through the years; affected by the attitudes of their different owners and the mores of the day

It can be hard to get a good picture of slave life. Generally they could not read or write. Many white visitors to Hampton and other slave-holding estates took slavery for granted and so did not write down their observations. The written record for Hampton consists mostly of lists of slaves, the clothing and tools they were issued, where they worked, and some runaway slave advertisements. There are also some descriptions of slavery written by family members many years after the fact. Many original Ridgely artifacts have been preserved and are displayed in the mansion but unfortunately not much survived from the slaves. Consequently, it is hard to put together a good description of how slaves felt or how they lived their lives

South of the mansion is the Formal Garden. This was built in the early

1800s, soon after the completion of the mansion. In its day, this was perhaps the largest private earthmoving project in America. The first master gardener was an indentured servant named Daniel Healy. There were also paid professional gardeners directing the work of slaves. We do not know how many slaves worked for them, but the number must have been close to twenty.

East of the mansion was another place where many slaves worked, and some lived. On the brick terrace is the octagonal remains of a two story building that housed servants working in the mansion. This was the kitchen area of the estate. Here also stood a summer kitchen, fish pond, and possibly other buildings. This was one of the busiest places on the estate. Food was smoked in the Smokehouse. Animals were slaughtered and prepared to be cooked. This was probably done in the summer kitchen. Deliveries were made here, (standing along one edge of the open gravel lot are two posts--part of what was a hitching rail), a huge amount of firewood was split and stacked. Overseeing this work was one of the most respected people on the estate--the cook.

Slaves found different ways to rebel against the system. One, of course, was to run away. Most who did so ran south into Baltimore where they hid among the large free black population. Others ran north; one group of seven was chased all the way to York County, Pennsylvania where they were captured. Their capturer stopped briefly to write a letter to Charles Ridgely before flogging them. There is also reason to believe that Hampton slaves helped to hide other runaways in a forerunner of the Underground Railroad. Charles Ridgely received a letter in 1784 which read in part; "I have a negro woman Runaway & was Sent word she was harbored By your Negros & Should take it kind of you to order your Over Seers to search all through your negros." Other slaves resorted to faking illnesses or self mutilation to keep from contributing to the system. Punishments varied from the common whippings and shackles to

physically less severe ones. In the years before the Civil War, slave children were assembled in the Great Hall and given Christmas gifts. Occasionally, one was denied a gift for bad behavior. Another slave girl, a mulatto proud of "her resemblance in general, and particularly on that of her hair, to the 'white folks', and it was a great humiliation that it should be cut off, which of course was the basis for that particular punishment."

As you walk North along the gravel road just East of the mansion you will see, still standing, two square stone stables, home to some of the finest thoroughbreds of their day. Here many other slaves worked to care for and jockey the horses. Across the gravel road from them stood a wooden carriage house. In the years before the Civil War, the family hired a Presbyterian Minister named Galbraith to perform weekly services for the slaves in a large room on the second floor of this building. The family attended these services. Mr. Galbraith was "completely outlawed" by the family for marrying a mulatto.

Of the many slave quarters which must have stood about Hampton, only three survive. These mark one end of a line of quarters which extended for about 1,200 feet to the east. The last of these quarters was torn down in the 1950s. The surviving buildings were all duplexes--that is, one family lived in two rooms on one side of the building. Another family occupied the other side. Typically, the upstairs room was used for children's sleeping; the downstairs room as Master Bedroom, kitchen, Living Room, and anything else needed.

Here the African Americans did everything possible to order their own lives. They were probably allowed to have their own gardens and perhaps some chickens. Surprisingly, they were often allowed to own firearms, and to supplement their diet with wild game. Although marriages were technically not recognized, the Ridgely family encouraged such matches and reportedly never broke up such families.

