

Slavery at Monticello

Key Question: 'Bigotry is the disease of ignorance': How does Jefferson's relationship with the slave trade shape our perspectives?

Source 1



RUN away from the subscriber in *Albemarle*, a Mulatto slave called *Sandy*, about 35 years of age, his stature is rather low, inclining to corpulence, and his complexion light; he is a shoemaker by trade, in which he uses his left hand principally, can do coarse carpenters work, and is something of a horse jockey; he is greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk is insolent and disorderly, in his conversation he swears much, and in his behaviour is artful and knavish. He took with him a white horse, much scarred with traces, of which it is expected he will endeavour to dispose; he also carried his shoemakers tools, and will probably endeavour to get employment that way. Whoever conveys the said slave to me, in *Albemarle*, shall have 40 s. reward, if taken up within the county, 4 l. if elsewhere within the colony, and 10 l. if in any other colony, from
THOMAS JEFFERSON.

A newspaper advertisement published in the Virginia Gazette, September 1769

1. Examine source 1. Are you surprised by this source? Use the source and your own knowledge to explain your answer.

Source 2

“Jefferson was a man of sober habits, although his cellars were stocked with wines. No one ever saw him under the influence of liquor. His servants about the house were tasked. If you did your task well you were rewarded; if not, punished. Mrs Randolph would not let any of the young ladies go anywhere with gentlemen with the exception of their brothers, unless a coloured servant accompanied them.”

Peter Fossett, a former slave of Jefferson’s at Monticello, recalling his memories of life on the plantation. He gave his account orally to the Cincinnati Baptist Ministers’ Association in January 1898. He was 83 years old.

2. Study source 2. What impression do you get from Peter Fossett’s account about life at Monticello for both white people and African American slaves? Use the source and your own knowledge to explain your answer.

Source 3

“After Mr Jefferson had left his home to assume the duties of the office of President, all became quiet again in Monticello. But as he was esteemed by both whites and blacks as a very great man, his return home, for a brief period, was a great event. His visits were frequent, and attended with considerable ceremony. It was a time looked forward to with great interest by his servants, for when he came home many of them, especially the leading ones, were sure to receive presents from his hands.”

From the memoirs of Israel Jefferson who was a slave at Monticello. His memoirs were original published following interviews with journalist S.F. Wetmore in Pike County Republican newspaper in 1873.

Source 4

“The old and young came – women and children – and, growing impatient they sauntered down the mountain-side and down the road until they met the carriage-and f-four at Shadwell, when the welkin rang with shouts of welcome. Martha Jefferson speaks of their ‘almost’ drawing the carriage by hand up the mountainside: her memory in this instance may have failed her, for I have had it from the lips of old family servants who were present as children on the occasion, that the horses were actually ‘unhitched’ and the vehicle drawn by the strong black arms up to the foot of the lawn in front of the door at Monticello.”

From Sarah N. Randolph’s book “The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson: compiled from family letters and reminiscences”, published by Harper and Brothers, New York, 1871. Sarah Randolph was Thomas Jefferson’s granddaughter.

- 3. How useful is source 4 to a historian studying the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and his slaves at Monticello?**
- 4. How far does the evidence given in source 4 supported by source 3? Use evidence from both sources in your answer.**