***CHAPTER TWO: Slavery in the Antebellum West***

*The following chapter explores the peculiar institution in the West. The first vignettes,* ***Texas: An Empire for Slavery*** *and* ***A Texas Slave's Letter to Her Husband, 1862****, describe bondage in the western state with the vast majority of the region's slaves. Yet black slavery existed among the Five Civilized Nations as seen in the vignettes* ***Slaves and Free Blacks in Indian Territory*** *and* ***Resettlement in the West****. The curious role of government in ransoming slaves is profiled in* ***The Comanches, the Federal Government and the Slave Trade*** *and* ***Ransoming: The Johnson Family Saga****. Some Indians combined with blacks to resist slavery in Indian Territory. Their saga is depicted in* ***Gopher John and the Fate of the Seminoles****,* ***The Seminoles, the Blacks and Slavery****, and* ***Wild Cat and the Journey to Mexico****. On black servitude in the Far West see* ***Slavery in the California Mines*** *and* ***Slavery in Oregon: The Lou Southworth Narrative****. Black slavery existed elsewhere in the region as seen in* ***The Mormons and Black Slavery*** *which describes how this major religious denomination came to accept black slavery and ideas of black inferiority, and* ***The End of Slavery in Utah*** *which describes the quiet demise of the institution in the only territory west of the Rocky Mountains to legally embrace African American servitude.*

*Terms for Week Two*:

*slave cowboys*

*Seminole Wars*

*Wild Cat*

*Trail of Tears*

*John Cowaya (Gopher John or John Horse)*

*Hacienda de Nacimiento*

*1842 Cherokee Slave Revolt*

*Matamoros, Mexico*

*Elijah Abel*

*Green Flake*

*Brigham Young*

*Isaac and Jane James*

*Alvin Coffey*

*Holmes v. Ford*

*Judge George A. Williams*

*Lou Southworth*

**TEXAS: AN EMPIRE FOR SLAVERY**

*In the introduction to his 1989 book, An Empire for Slavery, historian Randolph B. Campbell reconciles the state's self-projected "western" image with its "southern" heritage of human bondage. Part of that introduction appears below*

There is a widespread popular misconception, particularly in Texas, that somehow the institution of Negro slavery was not very important in the Lone Star state. This is not really surprising in that may historians, writers, and creators of popular culture have preferred to see Texas as essentially western rather than southern. The state thus become part of the romantic West, the West of cattle ranches, cowboys, and gunfighters and seemingly less compelling moral issues such as destruction of the Indians. So long as Texas is not seen as a southern state, its people do not have to face the great moral evil of slavery and the bitter heritage of black-white relations that followed the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865. Texans are thus permitted to escape a major part of what C. Vann Woodward called the "burden of Southern History."

It is true that slavery had a relatively brief history in Texas. As an Anglo-American institution, it lasted about fifty years...from 1816 or so until 1865, whereas in an original southern state such as Virginia its history extended from the mid-seventeenth century to the close of the Civil War, a period of more than two hundred years. Texas had a small fraction of the total slave population of the United States, less than 5% of the census of 1860, while, by comparison, Virginia had 12% and Louisiana, Texas's closest neighbor to the east, had more than 8%. Also, slavery spread over only the eastern two-fifths of the Lone Star state before it was ended in 1865.

The limited nature of Texas's historical experience with slavery, however, belies the vast importance of the institution to the Lone Star state. The great majority of immigrants to antebellum Texas come from the older southern states (77%), and many brought with them their slaves and all aspects of slavery as it had matured in their native states. More than one-quarter of Texas families owned slaves during the 1850s, and bondsmen constituted approximately 30% of the state's total population. Proportions of slaveholders and slaves in the populations of Texas and Virginia during the last antebellum decade were closely comparable. In this sense, then, slavery was as strongly established in Texas, the newest slave state, as it was in the oldest slave state in the Union.

In 1850 and 1860, more than 93% of Texas's free population and 99% of its slaves live east of a line extending from the Red River at approximately the 98th meridian southward to the mouth of the Nueces River on the Gulf of Mexico. The area of slaveholding, although covering only the eastern two-fifths of Texas, as large as Alabama and Mississippi combined. Even without further expansion to the west, it constituted virtually an empire for slavery.

Antebellum Texans considered slavery vital to their future. The first settlers in Stephen F. Austin's colony brought slaves, and Austin himself, although not particularly devoted to slavery in the abstract, concluded by 1833 that "Texas *must be* a slave country. Circumstances and unavoidable necessity compels it..." As Texas moved from Mexican colony to independent republic to statehood, Austin's opinion was frequently repeated.... "We want more slaves--we *need* them," wrote Charles DeMorse, Massachusetts-born editor of the Clarksville *Northern Standard*. "We care nothing for...slavery as an abstraction--but we desire the practicality; the increase of our productions; the increase of the comforts and wealth of the population; and if slavery, or slave labor...ministers to this, why that is what we want..." John Marshall, editor of the Austin *Texas State Gazette*, argued in 1858 that Texas was destined to become the "Empire State of the South," provided that the African slave trade could be reopened. Slavery was growing, but too slowly, Marshall wrote, "an until we reach somewhere in the vicinity of two millions of slaves, it is equally evident that such a thing as too many slaves in Texas is an absurdity." Texas..slavery's frontier during the late antebellum period…held the promise of growth and vitality for years to come...

*Source: Randolph B. Campbell, An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865 Baton Rouge, 1989), pp. 1-4.*

**A TEXAS SLAVE'S LETTER TO HER HUSBAND, 1862**

*Because most slaves could not read and write only rarely do we have the opportunity to read the thoughts expressed by someone in bondage. Fanny Perry, a Harrison County, Texas slave woman has provided one such opportunity with the letter she wrote to her husband, Norfleet Perry, the personal servant of Theophilus Perry, who at the time was serving with the 28th Texas Cavalry in Arkansas. Here is Fanny's letter of December 28, 1862. We do not know if she and Norfleet were ever reunited during or after the Civil War.*

Spring Hill, Dec. 28th 1862

My Dear Husband,

I would be mighty glad to see you and I wish you would write back here and let me know how you are getting on. I am doing tolerable well and have enjoyed very good health since you left. I haven't forgot you nor I never will forget you as long as the world stands, even if you forget me. My love is just as great as it was the first night I married you, and I hope it will be so with you. My heart and love is pinned to your breast, and I hope yours is to mine. If I never see you again, I hope to meet you in Heaven. There is not time night or day but what I am studying about you. I haven't had a letter from you in some time. I am very anxious to hear from you. I heard once that you were sick but I heard afterwards that you had got well. I hope your health will be good hereafter. Master gave us three days Christmas. I wish you could have been here to enjoy it with me for I did not enjoy myself much because you were not here. I went up to Miss Ock's to a candy stew last Friday night, I wish you could have been here to have gone with me. I know I would have enjoyed myself so much better. Mother, Father, Grandmama, Brothers & Sisters say Howdy and they hope you will do well. Be sure to answer this soon for I am always glad to hear from you. I hope it will not be long before you can come home.

Your Loving Wife

Fanny

*Source: Randolph B. Campbell and Donald K. Pickens, "'My Dear Husband,' A Texas Slave's Love Letter, 1862," Journal of Negro History 65:4(Fall 1980):361-364.*

**RUNAWAY SLAVES IN MEXICO**

*Hundreds of black Texas slaves made their way to freedom in Mexico in the years before the Civil War. Here is a brief glimpse of the lives of fugitive slaves in Mexico written by Fredrick Law Olmstead following his famous journey across Texas in the mid-1850s.*

Very few persons were moving in the streets, or engaged in any kind of labor... As we turned a corner near the bank, we came suddenly upon two negroes, as they were crossing the street. One of them was startled, and looking ashamed and confounded, turned hesitantly back and walked away from us; whereas some Mexican children laughed, and the other negro, looking at us, grinned impudently--expressing plainly enough--"I am not afraid of you." He touched his hat, however, when I nodded to him, and then, putting his hands in his pockets, as if he hadn't meant to, stepped up on one of the sand-bank caverns, whistling. Thither, wishing to have some conversation with him, I followed. He very civilly informed me, in answer to inquiries, that he was born in Virginia, and had been brought South by a trader and sold to a gentleman who had brought him to Texas, from whom he had run away four or five years ago. He would like...to see old Virginia again, that he would--*if he could be free*. He was a mechanic, and could earn a dollar very easily, by his trade, every day. He could speak Spanish fluently, and had traveled extensively in Mexico, sometimes on his own business, and sometimes as a servant or muleteer. Once he had been beyond Durango, or nearly to the Pacific; and, northward, to Chihuahua, and he professed to be competent, as a guide, to any part of Northern Mexico. He had joined the Catholic Church, he said, and he was very well satisfied with the country.

Runaways were *constantly* arriving here; two had got over, as I had previously been informed, the night before. He could not guess how many came in a year, but he could count forty, that he had known of, in the last three months. At other points, further down the river, a great many more came than here. He supposed a good many got lost and starved to death, or were killed on the way, between the settlements and the river. Most of them brought with them money, which they had earned and hoarded for the purpose, or some small articles which they had stolen from their masters. They had never been used to taking care of themselves, and when they first got here they were so excited with being free, and with being made so much of by these Mexican women, that they spent all they brought very soon; generally they gave it all away to the women, and in a short time they had nothing to live upon, and, not knowing the language of the country, they wouldn't find any work to do, and often they were very poor and miserable. But, after they had learned the language, which did not generally take them long, if they chose to be industrious, they could live very comfortably. Wages were low, but they had all they earned for their own, and a man's living did not cost him much here. Colored men, who were industrious and saving, always did well... The Mexican Government was very just to them, they could always have their rights as fully protected as if they were Mexican-born. He mentioned to me several negroes whom he had seen, in different parts of the country, who had acquired wealth, and positions of honor. Some of them had connected themselves, by marriage, with rich old Spanish families, who thought as much of themselves as the best white people in Virginia. In fact, a colored man, if he could behave himself decently, had rather an advantage over a white American, he thought. The people generally liked them better. These Texas folks were too rough to suit them.

I believe these statements to have been pretty nearly true; he had no object, that I could discover, to exaggerate the facts either way, and showed no feeling except a little resentment towards the women, who probably wheedled him out of his earnings. They were confirmed, also, in all essential particulars, by every foreigner I saw, who had lived or traveled in this part of Mexico, as well as by Mexicans themselves, with whom I was able to converse on the subject. It is repeated as a standing joke--I suppose I have heard it fifty times in the Texas taverns, and always to the great amusement of the company--that a nigger in Mexico is just as good as a white man, and if you don't treat him civilly he will have you hauled up and fined by an *alcalde*. The poor yellow-faced, priest-ridden heathen, actually hold, in earnest, the ideas on this subject put forth in that good old joke of our fathers--the Declaration of American Independence.

The runaways are generally reported to be very poor and miserable, which, it is natural to suppose, they must be. Yet there is something a little strange about this. It is those that remain near the frontier that suffer most; they who have got far into the interior are said to be almost invariably doing passably well. A gang of runaways, who are not generally able to speak Spanish, have settled together within a few days' walk of Eagle Pass, and I have heard them spoken of as being in a more destitute and wretched condition than any others. Let any one of them present himself at Eagle Pass, and he would be greedily snatched up by the first American that he would meet, and restored, at once, to his old comfortable, careless life. The escape from the wretchedness of freedom is certainly much easier to the negro in Mexico than has been his previous flight from slavery, yet I did not hear of a single case of his availing himself of this advantage. If it ever occur, it must be as one to a thousand of those going the other way.

Dr. Stillman (*Letters to the Crayon*, 1856) notices having seen at Fort Inge a powerful and manly-looking mulatto, in the hands of a returning party of last year's filibustering expedition, who had been three times brought from beyond the Rio Grande. Once, when seized, his cries awoke his Mexican neighbors, and the captor had to run for it. Once, after having been captured, and when the claim to him had been sold for fifty dollars, he escaped with a horse and a six-shooter. Once, again, he escaped from the field where his temporary holder had set him at work on the Leona. In revenge for this carelessness, a suit was then pending for these temporary services.

The impulse must be a strong one, the tyranny extremely cruel, the irksomeness of slavery keenly irritating, or the longing for liberty much greater than is usually attributed to the African race, which induces a slave to attempt an escape to Mexico. The masters take care, when negroes are brought into Western Texas, that they are informed (certainly never with any reservation, and sometimes, as I have had personal evidence, with amusing extravagance) of the dangers and difficulties to be encountered by a runaway.

There is a permanent reward offered by the state for their recovery, and a considerable number of men make a business of hunting them. Most of the frontier rangers are ready at any time to make a couple of hundred dollars, by taking them up, if they come in their way. If so taken, they are severely punished, though if they return voluntarily they are commonly pardoned. If they escape immediate capture by dogs or men, there is then the great dry desert country to be crossed, with the danger of falling in with savages, or of being attacked by panthers or wolves, or of being bitten or stung by the numerous reptiles that abound in it; of drowning miserably at the last of the fords; in winter, of freezing in a norther, and, at all seasons, of famishing in the wilderness from the want of means to procure food.

Bravo negro! Say I. He faces all that is terrible to man for the chance of liberty, from hunger and thirst to every nasty form of four-footed and two-footed devil. I fear I should myself suffer the last servile indignities before setting foot in such a net of concentrated torture. I pity the man whose sympathies would not warm to a dog under these odds. How can they be held back from the slave who is driven to assert his claim to manhood?...

*Source: Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas--Or, a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, (New York, Mason Brothers, 1859), pp. 323-327.*

**SLAVE AND FREE BLACKS IN INDIAN TERRITORY**

*The Five Civilized Tribes, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokees Creeks and Seminoles all developed black slavery in their native homes stretching from North Carolina to Mississippi. Upon their removal to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) in the 1830s, they brought slaves with them. In the account below Daniel and Mary Ann Littlefield describe the status and treatment of African Americans, slave and free, among the Five Tribes.*

The greatest population, by far, was among the Seminoles. Between 1838 and 1843, nearly 500 blacks, both slave and free, removed with them. Many were freed by voluntary acts of their Seminole masters. Some....were free by virtue of their assistance to the United States as informers, guides, and scouts. The Seminoles had no laws restricting free blacks, who, like the Seminole slaves, were allowed to own property and carry weapons. Because they spoke English as well as the Indians' native tongue, several of the free blacks served as interpreters.

A number of free blacks also lived among the Creeks. Decades before their removal to the West, the Creeks had written laws which provided for the manumission of slavery by individual owners. A census of 1832 showed 21,762 Creeks and 502 slaves with only a few Creeks owning more than ten slaves. Among the Creeks were several free blacks who were heads of households. The free blacks were removed with the Creeks, and by the time the Civil War began some of them owned businesses such as boarding houses and stores....

There were fewer free blacks among the Cherokees despite large numbers of slaves among them. In 1835, on the eve of removal, there were 16,543 Cherokees and 1,592 slaves. By 1859 the number of slaves in the Cherokee Nation had reached 4,000. Slavery among the Cherokees was little different from that in the white South and the status of slaves and free blacks declined as laws became more severe.... All persons of "negro or mulatto parentage" were excluded from holding office. The Cherokee Council [governing legislature] prohibited the teaching of slaves and free blacks not of Cherokee blood to read and write....and in the aftermath of a slave revolt in 1842, [it] ordered all free blacks, not freed by Cherokee citizens, to leave the nation by January 1, 1843.

Fewer slaves lived in the Choctaw Nation. An 1831 census listed 17,963 Choctaws, 512 slaves [and] eleven free blacks. In 1838 the Choctaws forbade cohabitation with a slave, the teaching of a slave to read or write without the owner's consent and the council's emancipating slaves without the owner's consent. Other laws prohibited intermarriage and persons of African descent from holding office.

The Chickasaws did not hold large numbers of slaves before removal. But at that time many Chickasaws sold their homes in invested in slaves whom they moved to the West [and] opened large plantations [using] their blacks in agricultural labor.... The Chickasaws....regarded their slaves in the same manner as white owners. In the late 1850s the Chickasaws forbade their council from emancipating slaves without the owner's consent....County judges were authorized to order [free] blacks out of their respective counties. Those who refused to go were to be sold....as slaves....

*Source: Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., and Mary Ann Littlefield, "The Beams Family: Free Blacks in Indian Territory," Journal of Negro History, 61:1 (January 1976), pp. 17-21.*

**GOPHER JOHN AND THE FATE OF THE SEMINOLES**

*In the following account historian Susan Miller introduces "Gopher John" Cowaya, [also known as John Horse] the black interpreter for the Seminole nation during the negotiations for its removal from Florida to Indian Territory in 1841.*

"Gopher John" Cowaya, agriculturalist, businessman, military commander, and interpreter, had abandoned some ninety head of cattle in Florida, lent the United States emigration agent fifteen hundred dollars to meet the expenses of his removal party in 1842, and had another fifty head of cattle at risk on the Deep Fork (Indian Territory) in 1844.... In the course of his career he was known by a variety of names. Cowaya, the name he used in the Indian country, was a variant of the name of his Seminole owner, Charley Covalla or Charles Cohia, Cowaya, Covalla, and Cohia, along with Cowiya, Coheia, and Coil, all appear to be English spellings of Muskogee renderings of the Spanish name Caballo, "Horse." He was Juan Caballo in Mexico and some of his descendants in Texas use the name Horse. United States military men in Florida knew him as John Warrior or Gopher John...

Reportedly the son of a Negro mother with some Indian blood and of an Indian father with a trace of Spanish ancestry, he arrived September 5, 1842, with a removal party at the Creek Council Grounds on the Deep Fork. He was then about thirty-five years old. His family of three had preceded him west, while he served the United States Army in Florida...

Mention is scarce of Cowaya's relations with other blacks in the Indian country before 1845.... Evidence abounds, though, of his collaboration with Wild Cat and other Seminoles in the Cherokee Nation.... He was present when the delegation to Washington was decided at Richard Fields's place on Bayou Manard on April 9, 1844, and he signed the letter prepared by the delegation's lawyers in Washington. Although N. Sayer Harris labeled him "the interpreter," and the lawyers to the Seminole delegation labeled him a "witness," it would be vain to assume that he was so passive in those dealings, especially with his advantage of being able to talk with everyone involved. A good many reported interviews, therefore, between Americans and Seminoles, involving Cowaya as an interpreter, might rather have been three-way interactions with Cowaya representing the interest of the Seminole blacks, or of some of them. In other cases, chroniclers failed altogether to mention his presence, although he had the ear of the confidence of participants who could hardly have communicated without him.

That is not to say that all Americans and Seminoles wished him well. After his return to Fort Gibson with the delegation, reports went to Washington that a Seminole hostile to him had shot at him but only killed his horse. His mission to Washington may have drawn the fire. Cowaya felt sufficiently threatened at Deep Fork to abandon his property there and move his family to the Fort, where [they were given] asylum.

*Source: Susan A. Miller, "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988), pp. 80-83.*

**RESETTLEMENT IN THE WEST**

*Black slaves and freedpeople among the Indian nations were part of the removal to the West (Indian Territory) in the 1830s and early 1840s. In the account below we see a brief description of the new settlements among the black Seminoles in the Little River region in the southwest portion of the Creek Nation.*

In all, twenty-seven Seminole towns settled in the Little River region in 1845.... The blacks settled in towns separate from the Seminoles as they had done before [in Florida].... A few black towns were on a small tributary of the Canadian [River]. Trails connected these Seminole and black sites. Many of the these black towns must have been Seminole black settlements, but others may not have been. It would be interesting to know when and how the blacks moved to Little River and the form of their economic relations with the Seminoles, but no such record exists.

The new Seminole tract embraced a felicitous mixture of prairie land and postoak-blackjack forest. The Seminoles could live more as the pleased at Littler River, because its isolation from American population centers allowed less interference by white people. Hunting was better there than near Fort Gibson, and farming and stock-raising flourished there, although the climate could be harsh. Trade afforded the Seminoles new opportunities, open as it was to anyone who could deal with Plains tribes.

The people built their homes near the streams, planting in the bottomlands. There, "in the southwestern corner of the Creek Nation, and upon the verge of the immense prairies that extend from there to the Rocky Mountains," they began building cabins, clearing fields, and assembling herds. A typical cabin was furnished with "a stool or two, pestle and mortar, 'hominy baskets,' two or three pots and kettles, with 'sokley' [sokfy] spoons, and a beef hide in the corner, which served as a bed...." Once homes were built and crops planted [the Seminoles] turned their attention to...diplomacy and trade. Although United States agents frowned on the annual "hunt" of the Kickapoos, Delawares, Shawnees, and others, considering it uncivilized, it was a necessary element of a successful seasonal adaptation to the Little River environment.... Trade was a major object of the hunt as practiced at Little River. Stores there and at Fort Smith and Van Buren [Arkansas] advanced supplies and trade goods that the hunters took onto the Plains. Many of the pelts the Indians brought back were taken in trade from Plains peoples.

*Source: Susan A. Miller, "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988), pp. 104-106, 109-110.*

**THE COMANCHES, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SLAVE TRADE**

*In the following account Susan Miller explores the curious relationship between the Comanches and the Federal Government in the "ransoming" of captives Texas captives in Indian Territory between the 1840s and 1860s. Miller surmises that blacks were less likely to be ransomed than whites. While that is generally true, the next vignette shows that the freedom of some African Americans temporarily held in captivity by the Comanches was purchased by the U.S. Government, and when Texas seceded from the Union, by Confederate government officials.*

The Comanches had found profit in trading in kidnapped Texans, Mexicans, and black slaves stolen from Texans, as well as in stolen mules and horses. The other parties to this trade were the United States government, represented by officers at Fort Gibson and other frontier posts, and traders operating out of the permanent trading houses at the southern Plains frontier. As early as 1820, Plains Indians were stealing mules and horses from the Spanish lands and selling them to traders from the American frontier, which was then in Arkansas. United States national interests were engaged when, by 1836, a traffic developed in Angloamerican captives, largely from Texas.

By 1845 the trade worked typically like this: A member of a war party of Comanches would steal a child from a homestead in Mexico or in the Republic of Texas, and, if he did not keep it, would either take it to a frontier trading post or turn it over to a trader who had journeyed onto the Plains. The price would usually be American manufactured goods worth several hundred dollars. The trader might then either keep the captive or sell it into slavery, especially if it was a Mexican or black child. If it was a white child, he would offer to redeem it for ransom at the fort. This made a tricky diplomatic problem for the United States officials, engaged in annexing Texas and wishing to appear responsive to the desperate appeals of Texas families and their friends and relatives in the United States, for recovery of lost children. The cold truth of the United States ransoming brokering was that it stimulated trade in kidnap victims, encouraging the kidnapping. On the other hand, it likely discouraged some killing of prisoners by Plains Indians.

*Source: Susan A. Miller, "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988), pp. 111-112.*

**RANSOMING: THE JOHNSON FAMILY SAGA**

*As historian Kenneth W. Porter once remarked, the Comanches, Kiowa and other Plains Indians made no distinctions between blacks and whites on the frontier. Their raids often resulted in the death of the males and captivity for women and children which led to temporary slavery and occasionally ransomed freedom. In the account below the ransoming of captured members of the Britt Johnson family are profiled. Three members of the family were captured (along with other blacks) during a Comanche raid on their Young County, Texas ranch in October, 1864. No men were at the ranch that day in what became known as the Bragg ranch battle. Consequently Milly Susanna Carter Durkin, a 21-year old black woman, led the defense of the women and children. Durkin was killed along with Britt Johnson's five-year old son who attempted to flee the ranch. The following account describes the ransoming of some of the survivors nine months later. Despite the reuniting of his family in 1865, the Texas frontier continued to prove dangerous. In 1871 Britt Johnson and two other African American men were killed by the Kiowa while delivering freight in Parker County, Texas.*

Sometime in 1865 Negro Britt Johnson is reported to have ridden into Indian Territory to bargain for his wife and to retrieve his family... It seems plausible that he would make a journey searching north of the Red River. In accounts by those who knew him, there can be no doubt that he was fearless and brave. One writer...summed it up when he wrote, "He was a brave and fearless Indian fighter; no one stood higher in the country in which he lived..." Contrary to several memoirs (of whites) he did not "rescue" Elizabeth Ann FitzPatrick, which he has been credited with doing by outstanding historians. He did not "rescue" Lottie Durkin; and he did not "rescue" his family.

Britt's family now consisted of his wife and two children, who were taken captive, and an infant son born while Mary [his wife] was in captivity. And then there was the nearly grown daughter of Britt's who survived the Bragg ranch battle. When four of the Johnsons were located in Chief Silver Broach's Comanche camp during early June, 1865...they were retrieved or rescued from their captors by Comanche Chief Milky Way (Asa-Havey), a well-known peacemaker, and delivered to the agents in charge of Indian Affairs. At the peace overtures...(August 15), Britt's family, accompanied by Milky Way and interpreter John S. Smith...was turned over to agents at Camp Napoleon, Oklahoma, and were, in turn, delivered to Decatur, Texas. There they were met by representatives from the office of Brigadier General James W. Throckmorton. Throckmorton was commander of the Frontier Department of Texas and was at that time Confederate Commissioner to the Indians.

There is no doubt that a substantial ransom was negotiated for their release. The prevailing custom and policy precedent at this time was to pay money. It is known that Chief Milky Way was once paid fifty horses as a ransom, and as late as 1870 he delivered to Indian Quaker Agent Tatum a white captive, Martin B. Kilgore, for a sum of one hundred dollars. Negro Britt was notified and he traveled from...Parker County [Texas] where he lived at that time [serving as] a teamster, freighter, and skinner of buffalo hides.

Also delivered by Chief Milky Way to the agent was another Texas captive, Charlotte Elizabeth "Lottie" Durkin. Lottie, like the Johnsons, had been in captivity for nine months. Searches, although not extensive, were still being made by the U.S. military for her grandmother and her sister, Milly Jane. Lottie, too, had been discovered while she was among Chief Silver Broach's bands at the northern edge of Comanche country... The Indians had tattooed a blue moon about the size of a dime into her forehead, and had tattooed her arms, marking her for the remainder of her short life.

The release of Mary Johnson, her three children, and Lottie Durkin was a stroke of luck because there were difficult times ahead with the Indians of the Southwest. The Kiowa and Comanche were being harassed by Anglo emigrants, "Bluecoats," and the "Iron Horse" as they spearheaded a drive across their...ancestral lands.

*Source: Barbara A. Neal Ledbetter, Fort Belknap Frontier Saga: Indians, Negroes and Anglo-Americans on the Texas Frontier (Burnet, Texas, 1982), pp. 135-137.*

**THE SEMINOLES, THE BLACKS AND SLAVERY**

*In the following vignette Susan Miller describes the growing dilemma faced by black Seminole "slaves" who saw their autonomous place in Seminole society increasingly infringed upon by Seminole, Creeks, Cherokees and EuroAmerican slaveowners. Eventually their plight would cause some of them to join Seminole leader Wild Cat (1810-1857), in an attempt to establish a new home in Mexico.*

John Cowaya was an energetic and capable man. Had his political status been different, he might have spent his considerable personal resources towards more productive and fulfilling ends. As it was, the peculiar institution filled his life with chores at once tedious, expensive, and stressful. In 1845 or 1846, the half-Seminole owner of his sister Wannah, sold two of her children to [Creek slave trader] Siah Hardage, and a long dispute over their custody followed. In 1847, Cowaya was obliged to seek documentation of his mother's freedom and, in 1848, of his own manumission. Also in 1848 he sought to buy his wife and children. Free blacks being barred from the Creek country, Cowaya had to carry a document signed by an officer at Fort Gibson, demanding that he be allowed "to pass and repass from the Seminole country...to any other portion of the Indian country where his necessary business might take him." The Creeks were trying to enforce a law that would have denied him the use of his horses and guns. He and his family and friends were always vulnerable to kidnapping and transport to a slave market outside the territory.

Slave raids against Seminole blacks had subsided during the treaty negotiations of 1844, but resumed once the treaty was made. Neither black nor Seminole defenders could resist this progressive destruction of black families and communities. John Cowaya's efforts to negotiate a removal of Seminole blacks from the Indian country were ineffective, for he had no leverage and could only appeal to sympathetic military officers. The fate of the Seminole blacks was well beyond their own reach. The President, empowered by the treaty to determine the blacks' legal status, did nothing about it for three years while interested parties jockeyed for position to influence his decision.

The Seminole leadership was obliged to defend a cherished, embattled institution of their social system. The Seminole institution of slavery, older even than the Seminole institution of *black* slavery, was integral to the Seminole culture, bound by the roles of slaves in the Seminole subsistence, status determinations, and kinship. Black slaves, as military allies, interpreters, and consultants, played crucial roles in Seminole institutional relations with whites. The Seminoles had resolutely upheld their slavery institution in a series of stands. First, in Florida they had held out for the assurance--as a condition of their removal--that they would not be deprived of their slaves.... Then upon arriving in the West, they had resisted the plan to settle them among the Creeks, fearing loss of their slaves to Creek claimants. [But] Seminoles' leverage was whittled away in the years of conflict and bargaining. From Little River the Seminole chiefs made another stand to preserve their slavery institution. To do so was to preserve the structural integrity of their way of life.

The Army officers concerned with the case were uniformly protective of blacks' interests. The highest ranking officer involved was Major General Thomas S. Jesup, whose expedient, if sympathetic disposition of the blacks in Florida had created the present ambiguity in their legal status. Although his formal relation to the case had ended, he used his influence with officers…on behalf of the blacks.

The officers stationed in the West cooperated with Jesup's efforts to help the blacks. From Second Military District headquarters at Fort Smith, Brevet Brigadier General Mathew Arbuckle carried out Jesup's requests as though they were official directives. The series of commanders of Fort Gibson under Arbuckle's command acted accordingly, twice even issuing rations to cushion the blacks from hunger. Regardless of their personal attitude towards the blacks--and attitudes varied widely--the officers in the West never broke ranks in promoting Jesup's policy.

*Source: Susan A. Miller, "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988), pp. 124-128.*

**WILD CAT (COACOOCHEE) AND THE JOURNEY TO MEXICO**

*The following vignette describes the remarkable journey of Indians and blacks to their new home.*

About November 10, 1849, Wild Cat and John Cowaya and their bands left the Indian country to find a home in the South. Twenty to twenty-five men and their families made up the band, perhaps a hundred or a hundred twenty-five persons. The blacks comprised a party of about the same size.... Most of the people with John Cowaya were claimed as slaves by Seminoles, Creeks, or Cherokees. The Creeks feared that their escape would trigger a general migration of Creek slaves. The Creek agent went so far as to suggest that Wild Cat and Cowaya planned to murder and rob gold rush immigrants or Indian settlers friendly to the United States... [Wild Cat] always said that he left the Indian country because the United States, having promised him a homeland in the West, had forced him to live among the Creeks, who had harassed him and his people intolerably. He was more ambiguous about his destination, saying sometimes that he was going to Mexico and sometimes that he would prefer to live in Texas.

With no Indian Office appointee assigned to track their movements, the Seminoles' passage through Texas was incompletely and sometimes inaccurately reported by government officials and newspapers. In a leisurely journey lasting seven to eight months...the Seminole emigration [had] the appearance of a long winter hunt. Not so the blacks' escape which had drawn the immediate notice of the Creeks and their agent. Wild Cat later denied involvement with the black hegira, except for having permitted them to join his company that winter. He said he had no authority to obstruct their passage to Mexico.

In the late winter or spring of 1850, the Seminoles passed through San Antonio on their journey to the Rio Grande. When they reached a major river they would camp long enough to make rafts of logs tied together with rope, for the women, children and belongings. The young men would swim the river to pull the rafts across from the far bank.... The Seminoles joined with a band of Kickapoos, perhaps on the Llano River about 125 miles south of Austin where they made a semi-permanent camp and planted corn.... About a hundred Kickapoo men and their families encamped with the Seminoles on the Llano were member of the several bands not occupying the Kickapoo reservation in Kansas.... These cultural kinfolk of the Shawnees and Delawares were known for their skills as horsemen, hunters and fighters. The Comanche "hate them cordially," wrote Texas Indian Agent John Rollins, "but are afraid to make war on them."

During the spring and early summer Wild Cat traveled the Rio Grande basin, acquainting himself with the border country and its inhabitants... On a hot summer day at Fort Duncan, just above the town of Eagle Pass, the journalist Cora Montgomery....sat sipping chocolate. From her vantage, she witnessed the arrival of Wild Cat's band:

Emerging from the broken ground in a direction that we know was untraversed by any but the wild and hostile Indians, came forth a long procession of horsemen. The sun flashed back from a mixed array of arms and barbaric gear, but as this unexpected army....drew nearer it grew less formidable in apparent numbers, and opened upon us a more pacific aspect. Some reasonably well-mounted Indians circled round a dark nucleus of female riders, who seemed objects of special care. But the long straggling rear-guard...threw Falstaff's regiment altogether in the shade. Such an array of all manners and sizes of animals, mounted by all ages, sexes and sizes of negroes, piled up to a most bewildering height, on an among such a promiscuous assemblage of blankets, babies, cooking utensils, and savage traps...never were or could be held together on horseback by any beings on earth but themselves and their red brothers....

Montgomery was present when Wild Cat called on the commander in company with John Cowaya, Nocosa Emathla and some other men. Speaking through Cowaya, he presented himself as a pacific statesman who had for the past six months traveled among the diverse tribes of the frontier, urging peace with the whites.

Wild Cat's company lived for a time on the north bank of the Rio Grande, where they established ties with persons on the Mexican side of the river while Wild Cat negotiated with officials in Coahuila for a permanent homesite. Agreement was reached in late June, but the United States Commander at Eagle Pass denied him permission to cross the Rio Grande for the purpose of settling in Mexico. Characteristically, Wild Cat moved his people across the river anyway... They settled first at the Colonia Militar de Guerrero (present Guerrero, Coahuila) just across the river. By July 12 the Kickapoos were at San Fernando de Rosas (present Zaragoza), and late that month, Wild Cat, Cowaya, and the Kickapoo chief Papiqua met with Colonel Juan Manuel Maldonado, sub inspector of the Colonia, to request land, tools, livestock, arms, and the services of a gunsmith. They received tentative approval, pending confirmation by the central government, and were allowed to occupy certain sites in the region of Eagle Pass. [In February 1851] the land grant was approved and Wild Cat was appointed Judge, and commissioned colonel in the Mexican Army.... The black migration [to the colony] continued for some time. Although several groups of blacks were massacred on the Plains by the Comanches, about a hundred reached the Mexican colony.

The Seminoles first permanent land grant in Mexico encompassed some thirty-five thousand acres at the head of the Rio San Rodrigo and another thirty-five thousand acres at the head of the Rio San Antonio. In July, 1852, Wild Cat and Papiqua exchanged that land for about seventeen thousand acres at the Hacienda de Nacimiento at the head of the Rio Sabinas on the *latifundio* of the Sanchez Navarro family. From that site in the Santa Rosa Mountains the Seminole and black alliance cooperated with Mexican authorities for another five years.

In 1859 and 1861, with relations degenerating between Seminoles and Mexican officials, the Mexican Seminoles returned to the Indian country.... The blacks remained in Mexico with John Cowaya (Juan Caballo), who died there in 1882. In 1870 the black leader John Kibbits (Chitto Tastenaki) led some of them across the Rio Grande to Fort Duncan, Texas, where the men served as scouts in the United States Army until their unit was disbanded in 1914. Today there are communities of Seminole blacks at Nacimiento de los Negros near Muzquiz, Coahuila, and at Brackettville and Del Rio, Texas.

*Source: Susan A. Miller, "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988), pp. 134-176.*

**SLAVERY IN THE CALIFORNIA MINES**

*In the following account by historian Rudolph Lapp, we get a brief glimpse of slavery in Gold Rush California.*

Eastern newspapers published rumors of large numbers of slaves and many slaveholders coming to California. Available evidence suggests, however, that the great majority of those who entered California as slaves came with their masters in groups of three at the most... It is reasonable to estimate that there were at any given time in the early 1850s between 200 and 300 black men and women in the mining country held as slaves. Including those who returned to the slave states, there were probably between 500 and 600 slaves in the gold rush. This guess is ventured cautiously because...some slaveholders, worried about the possible loss of their human property, tried to stay out of sight. One Mississippi white with his slave was advised to seek remote mining areas in order not to be seen using slave labor...

Slave expectations must have varied with time and type of master in this unusual journey. Most of those who left their native states with their owners before it was known that California would become a free state must have viewed their journey for gold as of no greater importance than a long trip between cotton plantations, although a bit more interesting. Some were told that hard work at gold mining could result in their freedom. This statement was repeated with greater frequency by masters after they learned California had been declared a free state. They continued to come, although contemporary comments suggests that the larger number of slaves were brought between the first news of the gold rush and the adoption of the constitution in November 1849... The most plausible explanation for the continuing immigration of Southerners with slaves to the mining areas is that the slaveholders could easily calculate that the gamble was worth the possible profit. A few years of lucky gold mining with a slave might far exceed in profits one black man's entire working life in Southern agriculture.

Little is known about the black men who came as slaves to the mining country and returned to slave states. More is known about those who achieved freedom in California and remained to become permanent residents... It is certain that many slaves were kept in bondage by force... In one case a slave was encouraged by nearby antislavery miners to tell his master that he was a free man in California and ask for a grubstake so that he might go on his own as a miner. The master then publicly announced that he was going to whip the slave for this effrontery, and that if any of his white friends wished to take up cudgels for the black man, he was ready for them. No one stepped forward and the slave was whipped...

The only black member of the prestigious Society of California Pioneers, Alvin Coffey, came to California in 1849 as a slave. He was twenty-seven years old, the property of Dr. Bassett, a Missourian. Freedom purchase was obviously in Coffey's mind. He dug gold to the value of $5,000 for Bassett, and, in his spare time over a two year period, earned $700 washing clothes for nearby miners. However, Dr. Bassett decided to return to Missouri and Coffey had to go with him... Evidently Bassett did not have any sympathy for black men who yearned for freedom, and so he sold Alvin Coffey to another Missourian, after taking Coffey's $700 from him. The new master seems to have been a different kind of Missourian. He allowed Coffey to return to California to mine gold for his freedom. This Coffey did, paying $1,500 for himself and, in time, similar amounts to Dr. Bassett for his wife and daughters, who eventually joined him in California. He did all this by placer mining around Redding and Red Bluff...

*Source: Rudolph M. Lapp, Blacks in Gold Rush California, (New Haven, 1977), pp. 64-70.*

**THE MORMONS AND BLACK SLAVERY**

*By 1852 Utah had become the only territory to legalize both black and Indian slavery. Lester Bush, Jr., a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, described the evolution of Mormon doctrines on blacks and slavery against the background of the antebellum slavery controversy. Part of his account is reprinted below.*

There once was a time, albeit brief, when a "Negro problem" did not exist for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. During those early months in New York and Ohio....the Gospel was for "all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples...." A Negro, "Black Pete," was among the first converts in Ohio... W.W. Phelps opened a mission to Missouri in July, 1831, and preached to....Negroes among his first audience. The following year another black, Elijah Abel, was baptized in Maryland. [Abel was later named a priest in the church and lived for a time in Prophet Joseph Smith's home.]

This initial period was brought to an end by the influx of Mormons into the Missouri mission in late 1831 and early 1832....In less than a year a rumor was afoot that [the Mormons] were "tampering" with the slaves. In the summer of 1833, W.W. Phelps published an article....Missourians interpreted as an invitation "to free negroes from other states to become 'Mormon' and settle among us." The local citizenry immediately drafted a list of accusations against the Saints, prominently featuring the anti-slavery issue.... In response Phelps issued an "Extra" explaining that he had been 'misunderstood'....and declared [no blacks] "will be admitted into the Church." The Mormons, in spite of their repeated denials, continued to be charged with anti-slavery activity in Missouri. In response, the next issue of the Messenger and Advocate, [the Church newspaper] was devoted to a rebuttal of abolitionism.... However, far from professing divine insight the authors [including Joseph Smith] made it expressly clear that these were their personal views.

The Mormon exodus to the Salt Lake Valley did not free the Saints from the slavery controversy, for much of the national debate was focused on the West.... The constitution of Deseret was intentionally without reference to slavery and Brigham Young declared "as a people we are adverse to slavery but we do not wish to meddle in the subject." Though no law authorized....slavery in Utah, there were slaves in the territory. They were fully at liberty to leave their masters if they chose. Slaveowning converts were instructed to bring their slaves west if the slaves were willing to come, but were otherwise advised to "sell them" or let them go free. The first group of Mormons to enter the Salt Lake valley were accompanied by three Negro "servants." By 1850 nearly 100 blacks had arrived, approximately two-thirds of whom were slaves.

The "laissez-faire" approach to slavery came to an end in 1852. In his request for legislation on slavery Governor Brigham Young....declared "while servitude may and should exist...and [there are] those who are naturally designed to occupy the position of 'servant of servants'....we should not....make them beasts of the field, regarding not the humanity with attaches to the colored race....nor elevate them....to an equality with those whom Nature and Nature's God has indicated to be their masters."

*Source: Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, 8:(1973), pp. 11-25.*

**THE END OF SLAVERY IN UTAH**

*Slavery existed legally in only one far western Territory, Utah. Yet, given the distance from Texas, and the Indian Territory, and the close scrutiny of the local government by a divided Congress that was suspicious of the territory's political leadership, it never obtained a firm hold. The black slave population in Utah was minute, only twenty-six were counted in the 1850 Census, along with twenty-four free blacks, and the slave population declined during the remainder of the decade. Slavery's death in the far west territory is explained below by historian Ron Coleman.*

In 1860 there were twenty-nine slaves in Utah Territory. They like slaves throughout the United States gained their freedom during the course of the Civil War. When the war first began, Mormons viewed it as the fulfillment of Joseph Smith's revelation... Later Mormon leaders viewed it as the Lord's revenge for the death of Joseph Smith and the injustices placed upon the Saints by the United States government. Mormons also believed that zealots in the North and South were responsible for the loss of lives and the destruction of the Union. According to Brigham Young, "One portion of the country wish to raise their negroes or black slaves, and the other portion wish to free them, who cares? I should never fight one moment about it for the cause of human improvement is not in the least advanced by the dreadful war... Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed."

Although President Young did not care about slavery and black freedom, Sam Bankhead, a slave in Utah Territory was continually inquiring about the cause of the war. On one occasion he was heard to comment, "My God, I hope de Souf get licked."

The legal sanctions for slavery in Utah ended in the spring of 1862 [when Congress outlawed slavery in the territories]. The record is unclear as to whether all Utah slave owners immediately complied with the federal statute. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 received coverage in the Utah newspapers. Some owners may have waited until then, or 1865, when involuntary servitude was abolished throughout the United States.

By 1860 the black population in Utah had changed from being predominately slave to an almost even ratio between slave and free... It is significant that the settlement of the James family provided Utah with a free black population from its beginning in 1847. Before they met in Nauvoo, Isaac and Jane James were members of the Latter-day Saints Church. Jane had lived and worked in the home of Joseph and Emma Smith. After Smith's death she resided in Brigham Young's home, and during this time she married Isaac. Their family left Nauvoo with other Saints early in 1846. At the time of their departure, Jane was pregnant with her son Silas, who was born at Hogg Creek, Iowa.... In the spring of 1848 Isaac and Jane became the parents of a daughter, MaryAnn, who was the first black child born in Utah. Five more children were added to the family by 1860...

The manumission of some slaves and the subsequent birth of children increased the free black population. James Valentine had come to Utah in 1855 with William and Talitha Dennis, and in 1860, Valentine was freed and lived in Salt Lake County near Green Flake [the black man who accompanied Brigham Young into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847] Green and Martha Flake were freed during the 1850s and by 1860 they were the parents of two children, Lucinda and Abraham.... It appears that Brigham Young freed Green without informing Agnes Flake [his owner]...

Elijah Abel, his wife Mary Ann, and their three children arrived in Utah in 1853. Elijah was baptized [into the Church] in September 1832, and ordained an Elder in the Melchizadek Priesthood in 1836. He continued to hold the priesthood despite the evolution of a policy denying [it] to black males. After arriving in Utah, Abel worked as a carpenter in the L.D.S. public works program. By 1860, two additional children were born increasing the family to seven...

*Source: Ronald Gerald Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825-1910," (PhD. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1980), pp. 54-59.*

**SLAVERY IN OREGON: TWO NARRATIVES**

*The following vignette draws on two narratives which reflect the existence of black bondage in Oregon Territory despite the laws which prohibited slavery. The first narrative is of Lou Southworth was brought to Oregon as a slave in 1851 and finally purchased his freedom from the gold he mined in Southern Oregon in 1858. The second is the story of Amanda Gardner Johnson who was brought to Oregon in 1853 and became free with the Civil War.*

*Southworth:* The brethren wouldn't stand for my violin, which was all the company I had most of the time. They said it was full of all sorts of wicked things and that it belonged to the devil. And it hurt me a good deal when they told me that playin' a fiddle is a proceedin' unbecomin' to a Christian in the sight of the Lord. So I told them to keep me in the church with the fiddle if they could, but to turn me out if they must, for I couldn't think of parting with my old-time friend. They turned me out and I reckon my name isn't written in their books here any longer, but I somehow hope it is written in the Big Book up yonder in the land of golden harps where they aren't so particular about the old man's fiddle.

And I know, friends, you won't think hard of me and give me the cold shoulder for loving my fiddle these many years. I sometimes think that when you go up yonder and find my name to your surprise in the Big Book, you'll meet many a fellow who remembers the old fiddler who played 'Home Sweet Home,' 'Dixie Land,' 'Arkansas Traveler,' 'Swanee River,' and other tunes for the boys who were far from home for the first time. And some of the fellows will tell how the poor, homesick boys listened to the fiddle during the long winter evenings until they forgot their troubles so they could sleep as they had slept under their mothers' roofs at home. And they'll talk over the days when there was no society for men like us out West: when there wasn't any Bible, and hymn books were unknown, when playin' poker and buckin' faro were the only schoolin' a fellow ever got; when whiskey ran like water and made the whites and Indians crazy; when men didn't go by their right names and didn't care what they did, and when there [was] no law and the court was the man who carried the best sixshooter. And when they talked over those early days, the fellows will say:

"Where'd we all been and what'd we all done in the mines but for Uncle Lou's fiddle, which was the most like church of anything we had?" For the boys used to think the good Lord put a heap of old-time religious music into my fiddle; and the old time religious music is good enough for the old man who's done some mighty hard work in 85 years.

But I forgot the work I've done and the years I've lived when my bow comes down soft and gentle-like and the fiddle seems to sing the songs of slavery days till the air grows mellow with music and the old-time feelin' comes back, and I can hear familiar voices that are no more.

There are things a plain old man can't tell in words, and there are feelin's that won't fit into common everyday talk like mine. When there's plenty of rosin on the bow and the player's feeling fine, and the fiddle pours out great torrents of music that calm down till he hears the bob white's whistle and the rustlin' of corn, and the whippoorwill and mockin' bird come to sing for him, and he forgets what he ought not to remember and he wants to make everybody glad--then it is that a plain man has feelin's he can't describe. But he knows he's happier and better, and his next day's work is easier. He has a smile and a kind word for every one he meets, and every one has a smile and a kind word for him. The world is heavenly to that man, and his feelin's are nigh on to religious...

*Johnson:* I am not much accustomed to being interviewed, but I will do the best I can to answer your questions. I was born at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri, August 30, 1833. My father and mother were born at Louisville, Kentucky. No, sir. I was never sold nor bartered for. I was given as a wedding present to my owner's daughter. I belonged to Mrs. Nancy Wilhite. She was married, after her first husband's death, to Mr. Corum. Mrs. Corum was the grandmother of Miss Maud Henderson, who answered your knock at the door, and the great-great-grandmother of Mrs. E. M. Reagan, whose husband owns the Albany *Herald*. I have known seven generations of the family...

In 1853 my owners decided to come to Oregon. A merchant, hearing that my master was to go to Oregon Territory, were slaves could not be held, came to Mr. Deckard and said, "I will give you $1200 for Amanda. You can't own her where you are going, so you might as well get what you can out of her. I had been given to Miss Lydia, his wife, when I was seven, and I was 19 then. Mr. Deckard said, "Amanda isn't for sale. She is going across the plains to the Willamette Valley with us. She has had the care of our four children. My wife and the children like her. In fact, she is the same as one of our family, so I guess I won't sell her..."

It took us six months, to a day, to travel by ox team from Liberty, Missouri to Oregon City. We started from Clay County, March 13, 1853, and got to our destination September 13. When I think back nearly 70 years to our trip across the plains I can see herds of shaggy-shouldered buffaloes, slender-legged antelopes, Indians, sagebrush, graves by the roadside, dust and high water and the campfire of buffalo chips over which I cooked the means... No, I don't suppose there are many other colored people in Oregon who have been slaves but I have been free since I was 20, and that's nearly 70 years ago...

*Sources: George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography Volume 2, Arkansas, Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon and Washington Narratives (Westport, Ct: 1977), pp. 273-275; Fred Lockley Conversations with Pioneer Women (Eugene, Oregon: Rainey Day Press, 1981), pp. 208-211.*