

Freed slaves

Sociology



The Holbert family experienced the end of slavery-like so many others: they were free but had no way to earn a living, no place to go, and no education. The Holbert's stayed on with their former master and eventually bought a small farm nearby (pp. 288-289). The concept of freedom for these families only meant that they were no longer owned by someone; they continued to live their lives in familiar places doing what they had always done.

Looking back on their slavery experiences, both Holmes and Holbert remember their former lives with some nostalgia. Clayton Holbert comments, " People were more friendly than they are now. They have almost lost respect for each other" (p. 286). Joseph Holmes comments, " in dose days white folks white folks a black folk's black folks" (p. 7). Admittedly, both of them were children at the end of the Civil War, and both had lived a vast majority of their years as free men. The difficulties and hard living which happened to them and their families after the war-affected how they felt about slavery, and when white people and black people mixed together freely the black people were exposed to many more hateful whites than when they were segregated.

Reading these interviews gives us an interesting perspective on what freed slaves felt and thought, both about their freedom and about their lives afterward. Everybody remembers their lives through the filters of time. These two men did not remember being mistreated by their masters, and so they have few bad memories of their former lives. For them, the transition from slavery to freedom made little difference in how they eventually led their lives.