

Florida Slave Narratives: Mitchell, Christine

Federal Writers' Project

1936

An interesting description of the slave days just prior to the War Between the States is given by Christine Mitchell, of Saint Augustine.

Christine was born in slavery at Saint Augustine, remaining on the plantation until she was about 10 years old.

During her slave days she knew many of the slaves on plantations in the Saint Augustine vicinity. Several of these plantations, she says, were very large, and some of them had as many as 100 slaves.

The ex-slave, who is now 84 years old, recalls that at least three of the plantations in the vicinity were owned or operated by Minorcans. She says that the Minorcans were popularly referred to in the section as "Turnbull's Darkies," a name they apparently resented. This caused many of them, she claims, to drop or change their names to Spanish or American surnames.

Christine moved to Fernandina a few years after her freedom, and there lived near the southern tip of Amelia Island, where Negro ex-slaves lived in a small settlement all their own. This settlement still exists, although many of its former residents are either dead or have moved away.

Christine describes the little Amelia Island community as practically self-sustaining, its residents raising their own food, meats, and other commodities. Fishing was a favorite vocation with them, and some of them established themselves as small merchants of sea foods.

Several of the families of Amelia Island, according to the ex-slave, were large ones, and her own relatives, the Drummonds, were among the largest of these.

Christine Mitchell regards herself as one of the oldest remaining ex-slaves in the Saint Augustine section, and is very well known in the neighborhood of her home at St. Francis and Oneida Streets.

Source:

"Christine Mitchell" The Federal Writers' Project. Oneida street corner Saint Francis, Saint Augustine, Florida, 1936.

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