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TITUS I. BYNES

Titus B. [TR: Titus I. above] Bynes, affectionately known as "Daddy Bynes", is reminiscent of Harriet Beecher Stowe's immortal "Uncle Tom" and Joel Chandler Harris' inimitable 'Uncle Remus' with his white beard and hair surrounding a smiling black face. He was born in November 1846 in what is now Clarendon County, South Carolina. Both his father, Cuffy, and mother, Diana, belonged to Gabriel Flowden who owned 75 or 80 slaves and was noted for his kindness to them.

Bynes' father was a common laborer, and his mother acted in the capacity of chambermaid and spinner. They had 12 children, seven boys—Abraham, Tutus[TR:?], Reese, Lawrence, Thomas, Billie, and Hamlet—and five girls—Charity, Chrissy, Fannie, Charlotte, and Violet.

When Titus was five or six years of age he was given to Flowden's wife who groomed him for the job of houseboy. Although he never received any education, Bynes was quick to learn. He could tell the time of day and could distinguish one newspaper from another. He recalled an incident which happened when he was about eight years of age which led him to conceal his precociousness. One day while writing on the ground, he heard his mistress' little daughter tell her mother that he was writing about water. Mistress Flowden called him and told him that if he were caught writing again his right arm would be cut off. From then on his precociousness vanished. In regards to religion, Bynes can recall the Sunday services very vividly; and he tells how the Negroes who were seated in the gallery first heard a sermon by the white minister and then after these services they would gather on the main floor and hear a sermon by a Negro preacher.

Bynes served in the Civil War with his boss, and he can remember the regiment camp between Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. His mistress would not

permit Bynes to accompany his master to Virginia to join the Hampton Legion on the grounds that it was too cold for him. And thus ended his war days! When he was 20 years of age, his father turned him loose. Young Bynes rented 14 acres of land from Arthur Harven and began farming.

In 1868 he left South Carolina and came to Florida. He settled in Enterprise (now Benson Springs), Velusia County where he worked for J.C. Hayes, a farmer, for one year, after which he homesteaded. He next became a carpenter and, as he says himself, "a jack of all trades and master of none." He married shortly after coming to Florida and is the father of three sons—"as my wife told me," he adds with a twinkle in his eyes. His wife is now dead. He was prevailed upon while very ill to enter the Titusville Poor Farm where he has been for almost two years. (2)

Della Bess Hilyard ("Aunt Bess")

Della Bess Hilyard, or "Aunt Bess" as she is better known, was born in Darlington, South Carolina in 1858, the daughter of Resier and Zilphy Hart, slaves of Gus Hiwards. Both her parents were cotton pickers and as a little girl Della often went with her parents into the fields. One day she stated that the Yankees came through South Carolina with Knapsacks on their shoulders. It wasn't until later that she learned the reason.

When asked if she received any educational training, "Aunt Bess" replied in the negative, but stated that the slaves on the Hiwards plantation were permitted to pick up what education they could without fear of being molested. No one bothered, however, to teach them anything.

In regards to religion, "Aunt Bess" said that the slaves were not told about heaven; they were told to honor their masters and mistresses and of the damnation which awaited them for disobedience.

After slavery the Hart family moved to Georgia where Della grew into womanhood and at an early age married Caleb Bess by whom she had two children. After the death of Bess, about fifteen years ago, "Aunt Bess" moved to Fort Pierce, Florida. While there she married Lonny Hilyard who brought her to Titusville where she now resides, a relic of bygone days. (3)

Taylor Gilbert

Taylor Gilbert was born in Shellman, Georgia, 91 years ago, of a colored mother and a white father, "which is why I am so white", he adds. He has never been known to have passed as white, however, in spite of the fact that he could do so without detection. David Ferguson bought Jacob Gilbert from Dr. Gilbert as a husband for Emily, Taylor's mother. Emily had nine children, two by a white man, Frances and Taylor, and seven by Jacob, only three of whom Gilbert remembers—Gettie, Rena, and Annis. Two of these children were sent to school while the others were obliged to work on the plantation. Emily, the mother, was the cook and washwoman while Jacob was the Butler.

Gilbert, a good sized lad when slavery was at its height, recalls vividly the cruel lashings and other punishments meted out to those who disobeyed their master or attempted to run away. It was the custom of slaves who wished to go from one plantation to another to carry passes in case they were stopped as suspected runaways. Frequently slaves would visit without benefit of passes, and as result they suffered severe torturing. Often the sons of the slaves' owners would go "nigger hunting" and nothing—not even murder was too horrible for them to do to slaves caught without passes. They justified their fiendish acts by saying the "nigger tried to run away when told to stop."

Gilbert cannot remember when he came to Florida, but he claims that it was many years ago. Like the majority of Negroes after slavery, he became a farmer which occupation he still pursues. He married once but "my wife got to messin' around with another man so I sent her home to her mother." He can be found in Miami, Florida, where he may be seen daily hobbling around on his cane. (4)

REFERENCES

1. Personal interview of field worker with subject.
2. Personal interview with subject.
3. Personal interview with subject.
4. Personal interview of field worker with subject.
