

Some of the People Enslaved at Goodwood in 1846 and 1847

Over 200 human beings were enslaved at Goodwood between 1831 and 1865 by three different Goodwood owners/slaveholders: Hardy Croom, Bryan Croom and Arvah Hopkins. The enslaved persons cited in this presentation are obviously only a few of them.

At its largest extent, briefly in the mid-1850s, Goodwood consisted of over 8,000 non-contiguous acres.

Note: Information appearing in italics is for the purpose of explaining terms which may not be commonly known.

Hinton J. Saunders was a North Carolina-born white overseer who lived on one part of Goodwood in 1846-47 and worked for Bryan Croom.

Some ten years later, in 1857, Saunders testified in a court proceeding. He left those seeking family histories and Goodwood researchers a record in unusual detail of individual enslaved people.

In testifying , he referred to almost all male slaves as “boys” without respect to age. Females, unless children, he called “women”.

Saunders explained that the part of the plantation he managed included many minor food crops, but there were 500 acres of corn and 500 acres of cotton. Goodwood, he added, produced about 300 bales of cotton in 1846-7.

Saunders said, “I cultivated good land. I was paid \$350 the first year and \$400 the last year I stayed with Mr. Croom.”

“The negros on the place were very likely,” Saunders said in 1857, “and the force ought to have increased. From that time to this, by 20 hands.”

The word “likely” when used regarding enslaved people meant that an individual or group of individuals were apparently reasonably healthy, well-fed and clothed, and able to work, and therefore useful to the slaveholder.

Saunders’ use of the term “Increased” meant that slave “breeding” would have produced at least 20 more hands (workers) in the previous ten years.

Slaveholders purchased young females (calling them “breeders”) for the specific purpose of increasing the number of slaves owned.

Saunders spoke at length about one of Bryan Croom's bond people, a "slave driver" named Fortune. Saunders said, "Fortune was a smart old man, 50 or 60, a driver and a favorite negro and a reliable man".

The term slave driver survives in modern English, though little used today, so recall what the term meant before 1865. Frederick Law Olmstead toured the slave south in the 1850s and produced the book "The Cotton Kingdom." "A good driver", Olmstead wrote, "is very valuable and holds office for life. His authority is not limited to the direction of labor but extends to the general department of the negros. He is made to do the duties of policeman and magistrate."

Fortune, Hinton Saunders asserted "was and is [*Fortune was still alive in 1857*] a good driver and understands his business. A year or two ago he had charge of 15 or 16 hands outright. It is hard to estimate his value. I think he is of more value to Mr. Croom than any other negro on the place."

Fortune practiced a trade , Saunders opined "which very few negros have the talent or judgment to acquire. And the best mode of his valuation would be to rank him with blacksmith or carpenter."

A physical detail survives: Fortune was but five feet tall.

Saunders continued his recollection:

Sarah was Fortune's wife. One of her children was Amy. "Amy was afflicted with fits" (*likely epilepsy*) and could not work. "Sarah became disabled in 1847 from an injury to one of her feet, and she and Amy died that year. "

Holly, about 28 or 30, was Fortune's oldest child. She was "a good field hand".

Next was 25-year-old Abby, "reputedly", said Saunders, Fortune's daughter by a woman other than Sarah. Abby was a "small woman and a good hand and healthy".

Abby's eldest child, a Mulatto (*father "unknown"*) was Eliza. She was about 7 years old and badly afflicted with white swelling (*term for bone disease*). Abby had an unnamed young child of about 2 or 3.

Millie, next in age of Fortune and Sarah's children, "was a strong, likely young woman. She was a full hand and would have hired for 80 or 100 dollars per year." Millie never had children and died in 1848.

Saunders continued his recollection:

Fortune and Sarah also had sons.

“Jesse was 23 years old. A number one hand, probably the quickest on the place. Sound and healthy.”

Mingo, another of Fortune’s sons, was “more able bodied than Jesse, and although not quite as quick, he was a good hand and a young healthy man.”

Little Fortune was named for his father and was “a very likely plow boy. 16 or 17 years old, active, smart, and healthy.” *(To distinguish enslaved people who had the same or common names, slaveholders might have big or little, old or young prefaced to their name, or might be given a last name or initial.)*

Ted, Fortune’s brother, was age 40-45. Saunders considered him “a good hand and a waggoner.”

After Freedom, Fortune and his family took the surname Owen. Why the last name was selected is yet unknown by researchers.

Saunders continued his recollection:

Nanny, about 50, did the cooking and washing for him and his wife. “She had a prolapsus uteri and wore a pessary” (medical device to keep uterus from falling from out of body. This condition was common in enslaved women used as breeders) . Nanny was “incapacitated for field work but was a neat woman and useful for housework and as a cook and house servant. She was worth 50 dollars a year.”

There was also “Old Mary, aged about 50, who stayed about the quarters and took care of children”.

Tenah had a family of children and “was a good breeder and but for breeding would have been a good hand. She was about 30 years old.”

Frank was “an excellent negro and about 35 years of age. He was a good carpenter and did the blacksmith work on the place in 1847. Frank was and is worth at least 300 dollars a year.” *When Saunders says a person was “worth” a certain amount a year, he means the slaveholder could have hired out the slave for that amount.*

Frank’s “value” was seen in his treatment. Shoes were expensive for planters, usually given to slaves only in the winter, and bought in lots, with sizes small, medium and large equivalents. Bryan Croom purchased Frank’s shoes made to measure. It is unknown whether this was because Frank had unusually small or unusually large feet, or perhaps his feet were injured or mal formed.

Saunders continued his recollection:

“Will was a very good hand and sometimes worked in the blacksmith’s shop. He was about 30-35 years old. He was a smart, good boy and a full hand in the field.”

Lydia and her daughters Millie and Maria were “tolerable young women hands. Not the best and not very likely. The daughters were young women grown and Sydia was about 38-40 years old. Her other children did not work in the field.”

“Washington was the name of one of Sydia’s sons and he was a likely boy.”

“Ben was a good hand, 25 or so years old, and Amos was a good hand a few years younger than Ben”.

“Wat was a good hand. Hard to manage but sound, active and robust, about 25”. *Hard to manage in Overseer parlance could mean “stupid” or could mean “lazy”.*

“Pompey was about 30 years as well as I recollect. He was injured in one arm or shoulder by rheumatism He was a good disposed negro and for plowing was as good a hand as any.”

“Phoebe, 30, had 6 or 7 children but was handicapped by milk leg” *swelling of the legs after childbirth* and “did not work in the field”.

One of Phoebe’s children was named “William, a smart boy who worked and plowed. He was about 16 and worth 74 dollars a year.”

Godfrey was another child of Phoebe. “He did not work in the field but carried water for the hands. A smart boy about 10 years old.”

“Dennis was about 30 years old, an excellent hand.” “There was a boy by the name of Abram around the place. I do not remember him particularly.”

This concluded Hinton Saunders testimony on the subject of specific enslaved people. The reader will note Saunders kept his testimony to the monetary worth/ usefulness of the human being. Character was mentioned only insofar as it pertained to work ethic. The same to intellect, slaves being smart in his opinion was not usual, and thus worthy of mention.

Saunders was later to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. He survived the war.