

Document Reader Four-Commemorating the Past

This selection of primary sources documents is designed to provide context for K-12 educators who are participating in the Quest for Freedom workshop examining the Long Civil Rights movement with a focus on landmarks in Thomasville and the Red Hill region of southern Georgia and northern Florida. With minor exceptions we have strived to provide verbatim transcripts with only minor editorial revisions--added texts are placed in square brackets. As historical documents they reflect many of the biases and prejudices of the period in which they were written. In using them in classroom care must be used as to place them in the proper context.

Striving to capture of the Black voice is often problematic. For instance, through much of Thomasville's history there existed no African American newspaper for the period before 1954. Fortunately, Black newspapers in other parts of Georgia and nationally sometimes carried news regarding Thomasville. We also often have to rely on letters, diaries, and newspapers accounts of white residents, nonetheless the documents in this reader underscore the resilience of the African American community from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the U.S. Supreme Court issuing the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954.

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The Quest for Freedom: The African American Community and the Aftermath of Slavery, 1865-1954.

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Document One

FOURTH OF JULY

The great day of American Independence has once more rolled around; but America is no longer free. The once proud sons of Liberty grovel in the dust, under the feet of a Radical faction. How can we celebrate the day?

Southern Enterprise [Thomasville], July 4, 1866, p. 2

Document Two

SPEAKING ON THE FOURTH.

The 4th of July, yesterday, was celebrated in Thomasville, beside in the manner already alluded to by our local, by the assembling of an immense audience at the Court House, to hear an address delivered by Hon. H.S. Fitch, U.S. District Attorney for Georgia.--- This gentleman had previously been invited by citizens both white and colored, to address them on the "Situation" of the country, and the 4th appointed as the time. Mr. Fitch spoke about one hour with great force and eloquence upon the issue now presented to the Southern people of reconstruction of the Union, and advocated a full and complete, as well as immediate---not submission, (for the people have already *submitted*); but "*acceptance*" and *cordial co operation* in all the indignities a faithless Congress, and a venomous and relentless fanaticism have in their *mercy* chosen to impose on a brave but conquered minority. This he advocates and recommends, upon the ground that our *refusal* to sanction our degradation and disgrace, will incense the North against us, and illustrating it by comparing us with "Catherine the Shrew," assured us, that although we may be *harassed* and *weary*---altho' we may be ready to sink under the combined weight of disappointment, hunger, fatigue and tyranny, and may implore and beseech our tyrants to give us one or both, or either, we shall receive the "*mustard* without the beef." Indeed, we could draw but precious little comfort from the gentleman's arguments, notwithstanding his force and eloquence, and we think he felt that the alternative he offered was a desperate and *doubtful* remedy, although bound by his position to offer it. He denounced as "stupidly blind to their own interests," all those who advocate "No Convention," and referred to B. H. Hill's "Notes on the Situation," but all Mr. Fitch's *astuteness*, did not enable him to refute a single point made by Mr. Hill. We are therefore, left precisely where Mr. Fitch found us, although we are anxious for some learned gentleman to show us that it is wrong to oppose the Convention.--- We desire to be right on this question, and if Mr. Fitch or any other person will convince us that the Convention of Georgia will be composed of the intelligent true men of the South, instead of a mongrel crew of Northern fanatics, or their recently converted Southern allies, white or black, we will immediately change our position and vote for the Convention. We believe that a Convention of the State composed of such material as the last mentioned, would be the direst calamity that could befall our people---it would be the inauguration of confiscation, and beginning of a tyranny and oppression surpassing even Tennessee, perhaps in cruelty and atrocity. Convince us that this *will not be the result*, and we will immediately become the zealous advocate of the Convention.

But we have no room at present to comment further on the subject. Mr. Fitch's remarks, and advice to the colored people were calculated to do much good, and we were pleased to see that they were heard with great satisfaction by the immense colored audience. Col. Seward followed Mr. Fitch in a brief pointed speech to the same effect---Colonel McIntyre, Spencer and Fouche, were called out also by the colored portion of the audience, and each pledge his weight and influence to the harmony and prosperity of the two races. A colored orator then came forth named Jacob, a venerable old man, formerly the service of Col. McIntyre, who put the audience in an uproar of laughter by his strictures upon the inconsistency of the *white* orators. Mack Davis was then called for by both white and black and coming forward, Mack spoke feelingly

and sensibly upon the relative positions of the two races, when the large assembly adjourned in good humor and good order.

Source: *Southern Enterprise* [Thomasville], July 5, 1867, page 2

Document Three

The truth of History

Gradually, but surely, the colored people of the South are learning that the hypocritical cant of the republicans about having fought, bled and died to set them free, is all bosh. A correspondent from Thomasville, Professor W. H. Harris, writing to the Savannah Weekly *Echo* a paper published and edited by a colored man, lays bare the false, flimsy claims of the republicans in claiming that the war was waged to free the colored race. In speaking of the emancipation of the race, and the causes which led to it, he says

“In this emergency Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation---his object was not to strike asunder the manacles that held an enslaved people, for in his inaugural address he said, “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe, I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.” These are the utterances of the illustrious martyred President who fell a victim to the revengeful Wilkes *Booth*. It was the safety of the Union that Abraham Lincoln wished, most of all, to secure. It was the Union that he would have saved with slavery, if it had been possible, for he declared that, and if he was alive he would not deny it. Let the deeds of men go down to coming generations with every phase of truth and let our orators do justice to the man who, in order to preserve the Union issued The Emancipation Proclamation, that gave the precious boon of freedom to the colored race.”

Source: *Thomasville Times*, February 9, 1884, page 2

Document Four

MEMORIAL DAY

For the first time in several years it failed to rain on Memorial Day. The weather, although somewhat cloudy in the morning, the afternoon was delightfully clear and balmy, and but for the dust would have been perfect. By 3:30 numbers of people were seen wending their way out Jackson street to Laurel Hill, and when at 4 o'clock the procession, consisting of the Guards, commanded by Captain A. G. Miller, ladies of the Memorial Association in carriages, musicians and orator of the day, reached the cemetery, quite a large crowd had gathered about the stand. The exercises were begun with an eloquent prayer by Rev. T. A. White. Judge Hansell in a few beautiful and fitting remarks introduced the orator of the day, Dr. R. H. Harris. Dr. Harris began by saying that he would not attempt an oration, but would present to his hearers a few pictures of things which happened in the long ago. The first picture was one of the home life

in the South before the rude alarms of war had disturbed its peace and harmony. His description of the old fashioned Southern home with the family gathering under its shelter at the close of the day, the happy songs of the negroes as they came in from the fields and went to their quarters was very beautiful. He told how this peace and happiness was broken into by the work of scheming politicians, who, in working out their own ambitious plans, set in motion forces which they were afterwards unable to control and brought ruin and misery to our beautiful southland. The next picture was the departure of Southern soldiers for the war, surrounded by weeping mothers, wife and sisters. Then the return to saddened homes of these brave women who sent to war loves ones to fight for their country. Then another, "There are marching legions, the rattle of the drums and the sound of trumpets, and the boys in gray are streaming out from the camps and spreading themselves through the woods and over the fields; every man with his heart in his hands, a free offering to be laid on the altar of country and principle." He reminded the young people in the audience that these brave men and women were their parents and grandparents, and exhorted them to prove themselves worthy of such ancestors. His picture of the home coming at the close of the war was especially touching. He paid a deserved and beautiful tribute to the women of the South who have kept up during all these years the custom of decorating the graves of our fallen soldiers, thus keeping alive in our hearts the memory of those brave men. Just here I would like to say that this custom was originated by Mrs. Williams of Columbus, Ga., whose husband was killed in the war. The first "Memorial Day" was observed on the 26th of April, 1866. The people of the North afterwards established the 30th of May as their "Decoration Day."

At the close of the address a collection was taken up for the use of the Memorial Association for keeping the soldiers graves, etc. During this collection Messrs. Watt, Ball and Hungerford sang "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," and "America," accompanied by the guitar and cornet. After this the immense crowd turned homewards. L.

Source: *The Coreopsis* (South Georgia College), May 1897

Document Five

Emancipation Day.

Although it is not quite clear why the colored people should celebrate emancipation day on the 20th day of May in Georgia, yet the celebration, at any time, has a wonderful significance. With one stroke of his pen, Abraham Lincoln, on the 1st day of January, 1865 in so far as federal authority went, knocked the shackles from seven millions of human beings. And its stroke was heard to the uttermost parts of the earth. It was an heroic act, justified, perhaps, by the exigencies of the hour.

Later all the southern states ratified the amendments to the constitution abolishing slavery. Georgia ratified the amendments on the 7th day of November 1865, thus giving the finishing touches to the freedom of every slave within her borders. The convention which ratified the amendments to the federal constitution met in Milledgeville, the then capital of the state. Thomas county was represented in the convention by Col. A. T. McIntyre, Judge J. R.

Alexander and the late Col. James L. Seward. These gentlemen voted, and cheerfully too, to abolish slavery in Georgia. And few, if any citizens of the state, have since regretted the act.

Emancipation Day! How sweet it must sound to the race, who served as slaves through so many years. We do not wonder that they celebrate it. It was a great epoch, one pregnant with mighty results, in the history of their race.

It was a pleasure to see, as the writer did yesterday morning, hundreds and hundreds of well dressed, well behaved colored people, crowding the station, all intent upon celebrating emancipation day. Happy, joyous, and enthused, they gave themselves up to a day of pleasure.

For the good of the country, and for their own good, let us hope that they will prove themselves worthy of the great boon of freedom, by making law abiding, peaceable, moral and up-right citizens of the greatest republic on earth.

And in this work of elevating their race on a higher plane, they will have the earnest and hearty co-operation of the whites. This they have had in the past, and they will continue to have in the future.

The relations, always kindly in the south between the two races, even during slavery, will grow more kindly and friction will grow less as the years go by. This is natural. Legislation will not and cannot bring this about, but the mutual interests of the two races living together, and governed by the same code of laws, will do that which statues cannot do.

Source: *Daily Times-Enterprise* (Thomasville) May 21, 1898, p. 2.

Document Six

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Source; *Daily Times-Enterprise* (Thomasville) May 22, 1897, p. 1

Document Seven

Emancipation Exercise at the Court House.

Judge S.A. Roddenbery inconvenienced his court yesterday and met elsewhere in order to allow the colored people to have their emancipation exercises in the court house; a courtesy highly appreciated by the committee on programme.

The judge's stand was nicely set off by a large painting of Abraham Lincoln, which was surrounded by the folds of a large American flag.

THE PROGRAMME

1. Song---"America.....
2. Prayer.....Rev. J. B. Davis
3. Proclamation.....Mr. J. C. Few, Jr.
4. "Our Women".....Miss. Cora Finnagin
5. Professional Men (paper).....
.....Rev. J. C. Walton

6. Song---“Nearer My God to Thee”.....
7. Emancipation poem.....Miss Robinson
8. “The Negro Soldier.” .Rev. H. Bunts
9. Orator of the day.....Rev. T. M. Nixon
10. Benediction

H. H. Thweatt,
Master of Ceremonies

Every part of the programme was executed in a masterly way, and fully deserved every cheer that an appreciative audience gave it.

The new year’s entertainment at Bower’s hall was a reasonable success, being attended by the elite of colored society. The second of January has passed into history as a day long to be remembered among the colored people.

The Thomasville Weekly-Enterprise, January 7, 1899, page 3

Document Nine

Emancipation Day

It Was Fittingly Observed—The Parade—Speaking at the Court House—Resolution Adopted.

When Rev. W. H. Holloway suggested broadening the observance of emancipation day by a parade which would show what the negro is doing, he builded better than he know, for the parade was a striking feature of the day and was a most creditable one. Many of the floats and traps are worthy of special mention, and we regret that our space will not permit us to name several. Among the decorated traps were the following: Meadames: A. W. Lester, Lula Upton, Robert Randall, W. H. Hadley, J. M. Randall, H. H. Thweatt, R Jones, S S. Broadnax, Tony Jones, Lula Frederick. Many of these were artistically gotten up.

The following business house and trades had appropriate floats: A. W. Lester, H. Daniel, D. Foreman, Walter Wade, Willie Williams, J. M. Sykes, Wm Lundy, Geo. Robison, W, M. Frazier, Dorsey Baman, Randall Mitchell, Robt. Mitchell, W. M. Massey, Charlie Hamilton, Jacob Vaughn, Dorsey McLeod, E. J. Edwards, Mose Dunlap, E. Lowry, Edward Hamilton, Payton Duhart, H. Rawls. The orator of the day, J. C Few, jr. and Revs. Branch and Davis occupied a carriage. The public schools were represented, as was also the farmer.

The Masons, K. of Pa. and House of Ruth, were represented, the members wearing the regalia of their respective orders.

The business men and the mechanics made a good showing. The blacksmith, the painter, the tailor the laundryman, and the barber, plied their avocations on floats, and attracted much attention.

The Rough Riders, or Cow Boys, caught the crowd. They did some fine riding and expert lassoing. Th chase after one of the number was quite realistic of Western horsemen. They fairly rivalled some of the feasts of Buffalo Bill's bold equestrians.

The Thomasville Cornett Band was in the procession and furnished some stirring music.

Rev. W. H. Holloway was Chief Marshall and handled the long line admirably.

After parading Broad and other streets, all gathered at the court house, where the speaking took place.

The meeting was presided over by Rev. W H. Holloway.

The following was the program:

Song: My Country, 'Tis of Thee. ---Audience

Remarks---W. H. Holloway

Recitation---"Negro In It."

Emancipation---H. W. Thweatt

Poem—Lillian Thweatt

Music---Band.

The Farmer—Dunlap.

The Merchant—Lowry

The Mechanic—Sykes

The Secret Societies---Lowry

Song---"Negro In It," by audience.

Address---Mayor Culpepper.

Song—"Lincoln," by audience.

Orator of the Day---J. C. Few, jr.

The address of Mayor Culpepper caught the audience, as he recounted his experience on the farm. His timely suggestions were well received and generously applauded.

J.C. Few, Jr., made an admirable address. He is well posted and a fluent speaker.

The other speeches were short but pointed and well delivered.

The music was especially fine and was very much enjoyed by all present.

The following resolutions offered by Rev. S. S. Broadnax were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, along all lines, much has been accomplished by the energy, thrift, economy and industry of the negro in the last 37 years.

Therefore, be it resolved, That it is the sense of this meeting, that the shiftless and idle of are race our hereby urged to use every opportunity to get homes and lay up something for old age, misfortune, etc.

Resolved further, That we condemn in the most emphatic terms the one room cabins as relics of the days of slavery, and we urge our people to build homes that are in keeping with the 20th century.

It is further resolved, That we believe it is for the best interest for all concerned that the friendliest relations exist between the races, and we do labor to that end.

Resolved further, That we go on record in favor of law and order and opposed to crime and lawlessness, and we do hereby solemnly pledge ourselves to aid in bringing criminals to justice and to do all in our power to uphold the majesty and dignity of the law of our land.

We wish to thank Capt. Triplett for his interest in the success of our meeting. We wish also to express our thanks to the Major of our city, Dr. J. T. Culpepper, for his timely and kind address to us.”

Everyone connected with the occasion should be proud of it. It was a success from start to finish. We are sure that every white person was pleased to see the evidences of thrift, progress and prosperity shown by our colored citizens.

Daily Times-Enterprise (Thomasville), January 2, 1903. Page 1

Document 10

MEMORIAL DAY

Preparations for Proper Observances Are Being Made by Various Organizations.

The preparation for Memorial Day are rapidly being completed by those interested and it promises to be a notable occasion. The Daughter of the Confederacy have the affair in charge and are working busily to make it a success.

W. D. Mitchell camp will hold a meeting on that day and will transact considerable business. They are especially anxious to have every veteran in the county join with them in the observance of the day. They cordially invite every old soldier in the county to attend their meeting on that day whether he is a member or not.

It is to be hoped that next Monday will see a great gathering of the men who wore the gray, in Thomasville.

Source: *Thomasville Times-Enterprise*, April 25, 1903, page 1.

Document 10

Pastor Holloway of Thomasville, Ga.

At our Lincoln Memorial Service the mayor of the city was to deliver the morning address as one would wish to hear, and which, voicing prevailing Southern sentiment, showed that Lincoln is honored by as greatly by the South any other section of our country. Several white citizens were present and their surprise and approval of the character of our church service was very marked. From the somewhat extravagant expressions of our visitors that day we have new evidence that our Southern white people little realize what has been accomplished for and by the elevation of the colored people.

Our initiative, also, in interesting the colored people in the hospital to contribute toward it, has brought forth the kindest approval of the our work from the white board of managers and the city council.

Source: *American Missionary Magazine* 59:4 (April 190)p. 126-27.

Document 11

EMANCIPATION SPECIAL

Florida Central Runs Excursion to Mayfield Monday For the Colored People's Emancipation Celebration.

The Florida Central Railroad will make a special rate of \$1.00 for the round trip from Thomasville for the colored people who want to attend the annual celebration of Emancipation Day Monday May 20th, at Mayfield, Florida, Mayfield has been the gathering place for the

colored people for a number of years, and quite a large crowd is expected to take advantage of the low rate and good schedule offered by the Florida Central Railroad.

The train leaves the Coast Line depot at eight o'clock, returning about six P. M.

Source: *Daily Times Enterprise* (Thomasville), May 18, 1912

Document Twelve

U. D. C. Sponsors Essay Contest

An essay contest on the subject of "Stonewall Jackson" is being sponsored by the Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, according to a recent announcement. The purpose of this contest is to stimulate interest and to encourage among the young people of Georgia the study of Southern history and Southern heroes.

Two medals will be presented, one to the high school boy or girl writing the best essay, and one to the grammar school boy or girl writing the best essay. All essays must be submitted to the local committee on or before March 15. Further rules and regulations governing the context are as follows:

"1. Subject:

Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson

2. Contest open to all white children in Georgia including fifth grade through high school. Eighteenth birthday is the age limit.
3. Length of the essay shall be from eleven hundred to sixteen hundred words for high school and from eight hundred to one thousands words for fifth, sixth, and seventh grades.
4. Preparation may be made at home or elsewhere. Any material bearing on the subject may be used. Essay must be written in the presence of a teacher or some member of the local U. D. C. without any previously written manuscript.
5. Each essay shall be signed with a fictitious name (girls using feminine name, boys using masculine name) and shall be accompanied by a sealed envelope addressed with the same fictitious name.
6. Within the envelope must be the real name, address, age, together with the grade and name of the school he or she attends.
7. Manuscripts are to be graded upon historic value, style, and neatness. The term, "War between the States" must be used.
8. Pupils writing essays should be given access to pamphlets."

Source: *Campus Commentator*, March 1939