

May 1937

Interview, Theodore Lesley III and B.F. Borchardt, Stephen Harvell Slave Interview, May 17, 1937

Stephen Harville

B. F. Borchardt

Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/formerly_enslaved_narratives

Recommended Citation

Harville, Stephen; Borchardt, B. F.; and Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Theodore Lesley III and B.F. Borchardt, Stephen Harvell Slave Interview, May 17, 1937" (1937). *Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians*. 36.
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/formerly_enslaved_narratives/36

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Floridiana - General at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Frank P. Ingram
Administrator

W. A. McMullen, Jr.
Asst. Administrator

FLORIDA WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

(State Office)
Exchange Building

Jacksonville, Florida

Tampa, Florida
May 17, 1937.

please address reply:
Attention:

Dr. Carita Doggett Corse,
State Director,
Federal Writers' Project,
Roberts Building,
Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Dr. Corse:

I am enclosing, herewith, slave story as copied from some of the papers of Theodore Lesley III, who has delved into the history of his family. I copied this verbatim shortly after the Tampa Project was set up, and am submitting it without change.

While this is an interview I thought it might be the basis of a slave story.

I have one other interview that I made with Stephen Harvell, which I believe was the first piece of work done for the Project. This also does not follow exactly the routine nor is it in dialect, but it does give considerable information and is the result of a great deal of questioning covering all points that then occurred to me. I do not know whether Harvell is still living, but will find out and probably obtain a supplementary interview with him.

Yours very truly,

B. F. Borchardt,
Local Supervisor.

BFB-RD
enc.

SLAVE INTERVIEW - TAMPA

STEPHEN HARVELL

Stephen Harvell was born Feb. 2, 1840 in Alachua County, between Micanopy and the plantation that is now Gainesville on the north side of the prairie once called Payne's Ferry. Deer and other animals grazed there. My mother came from South Carolina. They used to buy colored folks over there and bring them here. People in Florida bought the slaves in North and South Carolinas, and brought them to Florida. They brought my mother to Florida at 13 years old. She married in Florida. My father was brought from Issis, Mississippi, both young folks. They married when old enough and I was the only one from them two. We came to Tampa in 1856 and stayed here two years. There was no Gainesville when I lived there. It was a farm. Gainesville was started by a man 's farm. It was the community of Payne's Prairie. There was not much of Tampa when I came here. There was not but four grocery stores as I remember. They were located down near where the Court House is. Soldiers were in the Garrison then. I belonged to a man by the name of James Lanier. I think they were from Georgia. Lanier went out in the time of the big war that set the colored people free. He was called in that war. He was in a battle around not so far from Fort Myers, down in there somewhere in the Civil War. The Indian wars is how came me to be here in 1856. His farm was not far northeast of Plant City, very thinly settled then. Plant City was a farm then, the farm of Mr. Thomas. The Indians broke out in the first of 1856 and they had to get together and fort up, and after that there was nothing for me and my mother to do. They fetched

the colored people off to some of his kin folk, hired us out two years and when the Indian War was over, everybody went back to their homes from the Fort. Fort Brooke was in the neighborhood of the Court House and Garrison near the foot of Franklin St. I never saw the fort they had here. All done away with but they had soldiers in the Garrison. I don't remember the Indians coming here. There were three men killed not so far away from here. None nearer than sixteen miles east of here. It was two men and a boy and they tried to catch two more. They had a horse a piece out of their team. When the Indians shot them they took the horses out of the team and ran and the Indians ran them half a mile--one white man and no colored man. The people south of here didn't go through the same ordeal as in the other counties and part of the country. Some lived in the north and South Carolina. They didn't have as hard a time to live as in Florida. Not as hard as they did in Georgia and farther back. They lived in a different way. There were not so many colored folk and they lived like white lived. They didn't raise the same things here. They raised some cotton and corn, peas and potatoes, but not as much as in the other places. They planted for home use, not to ship off. There was nothing here to carry it but water. They had their own spinning wheels. There were not many oranges then--just a few. Yard trees, but no groves. They did not start until after the War. Not many ships came to Tampa. Sometimes a month to go to New York and back. I used to be in the woods horse-back two or three weeks at a time for the man raised stock. I kept

his stock mostly. All over the country there was cattle. Lanier had 500 or 600 in the woods. He kept about four horses. Didn't raise horses. They called the cattle Pineywoods Cattle. Had longhorn cattle and some but-headed cattle. Lanier ranged his cattle in woodland country, on prairies and land that was not fit for farms. It was not drained like now. Heavy pine forests. They were turpentineing a great deal. They shipped from Tampa. It was about the only shipping point. Shipped it to still it and after some time distilled it here and shipped nothing but the spirits. Had a still in the City of Tampa. They shipped it at first by steamers until the railroad came in. The ships were not owned by Tampa men. That was 1856. Then they got phosphate and shipped that with the turpentine. I remember when they had the Civil War. I was about twenty-one years old, when there was a company camped on my Master's place, Confederate Soldiers. They camped there all night and were going to the Army. There were many of them acquainted with Lanier and came to the house to tell him goodbye and said they would soon run the Yankees back. The Yankees would come through. The Confederates told the old man when they were out of coffee and told him they would send him a sack of coffee when they got to where they were going. Two of them never got back. That Company was gotten together from the whole country. Their names: One named Tack Kendrick had been Sheriff and one named Rig Brown. He was one came to the house.

He was a farmer. There was a family of Spencers here, the present Sheriff's grandfather was Jailer, because I was put in jail once for fighting. The Jail House was not like it is now. It was a little old log house and it was not very far from where the Court House is now.

We had amusements same as these days. Had log rollings. Most everybody raised sugar cane then and had sugar mills. Turned them with horses and had vats to boil it and some had kettles, round kettles. They raised a heap of cane and boiled it in vats and kettles at different places. I saw some of the Generals in the Garrison. I remember one man died; he was a Captain Casey and there was a General. Most of the Indian Wars were over then. I didn't see many Indians around here. There was one old Indian they called Billie Bowlegs. They carried him away before the War. They carried him away about 1852 or 1853, carried him up north to where Tallahassee is or might have been Washington. I don't know. They got Billie Bowlegs on the St. Johns River about where Sanford is--captured him there. I saw one woman living out there--a young woman they shot, but the old woman, a white man had her to send to Arkansas. They stopped and had dinner. I passed where they were and saw the woman sitting in the wagon. She was crippled. They shot her thigh. Had to ship the Indians to Arkansas.

They had a lot of mosquitoes then. They had nets, but a few had screens. There had been a lot of cattle shipped from here. They used

to drive them from here to Savannah. I helped to get them out of the woods until the men bought them and shipped them to Savannah. I remember the stage line that came in to Tampa, station not very far from the Court House, between the Court House and the river. They had several kinds of hard roads before paving. Had plank sidewalks and some had little blocks and set them up on the ends in the Cities. They ground some corn by steam.

They did not have smoke houses. They cured the meat with salt. They dug holes near the sea in the sand and would let the salt water seep through to purify it. They would take the sand and put it in a hopper and pour water on it, pour water on the sand. The hopper held the sand together and the water would drip out and they had something to catch it and then they would boil that for salt.

At the time of the War they would get out of coffee. They used so many different things for a substitute for coffee. I used to haul salt after the War got pretty hot, and Yankees were scattered. We used to fetch salt. Go to the Bay and I hauled salt with two yoke of oxen and got salt. The people still'd the salt. They managed to make what they didn't dip out of the Bay. They dug a hole not far from the Bay, not far off, get the water and they would boil that into salt.