

Caroline Hammond (A Fugitive)

Interview at her home, 4710 Falls Road, Baltimore, Md. January 11, 1938

"I was born in Anne Arundel County near Davidsonville about 3 miles from South River in the year 1844. The daughter of a free man and a slave woman, who was owned by Thomas Davidson, a slave owner and farmer of Anne Arundel. He had a large farm and about 25 slaves on his farm all of whom lived in small huts with the exception of several of the household help who ate and slept in the manor house. My mother being one of the household slaves, enjoyed certain privileges that the farm slaves did not. She was the head cook of Mr. Davidson's household.

"Mr. Davidson and his family were considered people of high social standing in Annapolis and the people in the county. Mr. Davidson entertained on a large scale, especially many of the officers of the Navel Academy at Annapolis and his friends from Baltimore. Mrs. Davidson's dishes were considered the finest, and to receive an invitation from the Davidsons meant that you would enjoy Maryland's finest terrapin and chicken besides the best wine and champagne on the market.

"All of the cooking was supervised by mother, and the table was waited on by Uncle Billie, dressed in a uniform, decorated with brass buttons, braid and a fancy vest, his hands incased in white gloves. I can see him now, standing at the door, after he had rung the bell. When the family and guests came in he took his position behind Mr. Davidson ready to serve or to pass the plates, after they had been decorated with meats, fowl or whatever was to be eaten by the family or guest.

"Mr. Davidson was very good to his slaves, treating them with every consideration that he could, with the exception of freeing them; by Mrs. Davidson was hard on all the slaves, whenever she had the opportunity, driving them at full speed when working, giving different food of a courser grade and not much of it. She was the daughter of one of the Revells of the county, a family whose reputation was known all over Maryland for their brutality with their slaves.

"Mother with the consent of Mr. Davidson, married George Berry, a free colored man of Anapolis with the proviso that he was to purchase mother within three years after marriage for \$750 dollars and if any children were born they were to go with her. My father was a carpenter by trade, his services were much in demand. This gave him an opportunity to save money. Father often told me that he could save more than half of his income. He had plenty of work, doing repair and building, both for the white people and free colored people. Father paid Mr. Davidson for mother

on the partial payment plan. He had paid up all but \$40 on mother's account, when by accident Mr. Davidson was shot while ducking on the South River by one of the duck hunters, dying instantly. "Mrs. Davidson assumed full control of the farm and the slaves. When father wanted to pay off the balance due, \$40.00, Mrs. Davidson refused to accept it, thus mother and I were to remain in slavery. Being a free man father had the privilege to go where he wanted to, provided he was endorsed by a white man who was known to the people and sheriffs, constables and officials of public conveyances. By bribery of the sheriff of Anne Arundel County father was given a passage to Baltimore for mother and me. On arriving in Baltimore, mother, father and I went to a white family on Ross Street – now Druid Hill Ave., where we were sheltered by the occupants, who were ardent supporters of the Underground Railroad.

"A reward of \$50.00 each was offered for my father, mother and me, one by Mrs. Davidson and the other by the Sheriff of Anne Arundel County. At this time the Hookstown Road was one of the main turnpikes into Baltimore. A Mr. Coleman whose brother-in-law lived in Pennsylvania, used a large covered wagon to transport merchandise from Baltimore to different villages along the turnpike to Hanover, Pa., where he lived. Mother and father and I were concealed in a large wagon drawn by six horses. On our way to Pennsylvania, we never alighted on the ground in any community or close to any settlement, fearful of being apprehended by people who were always looking for rewards.

"After arriving at Hanover, Pennsylvania, it was easy for us to get transportation farther north. They made their way to Scranton, Pennsylvania, in which place they both secured positions in the same family. Father and mother's salary combined was \$27.50 per month. They stayed there until 1869. In the meantime I was being taught at a Quaker mission in Scranton. When we came to Baltimore I entered the 7th grade grammar school in South Baltimore. After finishing the grammar school, I followed cooking all my life before and after marriage. My husband James Berry, who waited at the Howard House, died in 1927 - aged 84. On my next birthday, which will occur on the 22nd of November, I will be 95. I can see well, have an excellent appetite, but my grandchildren will let me eat only certain things that they say the doctor ordered I should eat. On Christmas Day 49 children and grandchildren and some great-grandchildren gave me a Xmas dinner and one hundred dollars for Xmas. I am happy with all the comforts of a poor person not dependent on any one else for tomorrow".