

## Slave Quarters at Oakland

Another quarters area was on the right bank. Ante-bellum references suggest that many of the slaves were quartered across the river, as well as "in the yard." In the flush latter fifties and 1860 many cabins were torn down, moved, or re-built.



It appears that house servants lived "in the yard," behind the house. A February, 1862, entry refers to the fact that the slaves covered "Cabin in Yard," yet in the same sentence, it is noted that 'ploughing' took place "in the quarter" and that the trash gang cleaned drains "in quarter." There is clear differentiation

between the quarter and the cabin in the yard. Later the same month, the overseer makes a note that hands "work on Chimney of Cabin in yard," not in the quarters.

It appears that the servant's cabins were of better construction. A March, 1862, entry in the Plantation Journal states that "Severin & Joseph putting up brick wall in the Servant house." This is the only reference to brick walls.

An example of the construction taking place on in the early 1860s appears in April, 1862, when it is noted that "Solomon [Wilson] carpenter took possession of his cabin." This structure, I believe, would have been one of those located near the house and carpenter's shop.

The quarters' main function was to provide housing for enslaved workers and their families. The quarters also served as the seat of internal governance. Here slave community leaders met to discuss common problems and to devise appropriate strategies. Courtship and marriage generally took place here. Here workers used their free time for domestic production of foodstuffs, furniture, clothing, tools, and toys for their own use. Archaeology will no doubt provide us with fascinating information on the lives of workers from materials uncovered at cabin sites or discarded in nearby wells and cisterns.

In the quarters slaves forged their own institutions -- their families, kinship networks, recreation, and religious values and practices. The quarters were in every sense the heart of the plantation slaves' private world.<sup>1</sup>

1. Oakland Plantation, Its People Testimony by Anne Malone pp. 58-59

