

Slavery at Bermuda/Oakland (1835-1861)

Bermuda/Oakland was highly successful partly due to the hard work and business acumen of its founders, owners, and managers. However, that success and resultant affluence could not have been possible if it had not been for the enslaved people who formed the labor force.

In the 1840s and 1850s Bermuda/Oakland had a slave force which ranged between 98 and 146. In 1861 it was 146. The ancestors of many of these slaves had, in the eighteenth century produced tobacco, Indian corn, and perhaps small amounts of sugar cane and indigo. But by 1840 cotton was the premier crop on the region's large plantations such as Oakland. Oakland's slaves engaged in a great variety of tasks, but like most slaves of the American South, most were normally engaged in agricultural production. On the Prudhomme plantation owners and workers concentrated on the cash crop of cotton. Most of the foodstuffs, clothing, equipment, and some of the livestock for the plantation were bought.

Phanor Prudhomme occasionally hired out slaves, such as Nathan, who was "rented" to a Mr. Frederike on the 9th of June, 1838. (1838 Journal, page 6).¹

1. Oakland Plantation, Its People Testimony by Anne Malone pp. 73-74