
Primary Resource Comprehension: Rachel's Life at Ben Lomond



Reporting Category: United States History to 1865

Topic: Skills, Civil War: 1861 to 1865

Primary SOLs: USI.1, USI.9

Materials: Interactive Video; Information from Primary Source Document; Comprehension Worksheet (see attached).

Directions:

- Students will watch an educational video that includes:
 - o A brief description of the slave quarters at Ben Lomond Historic Site and how enslaved people lived there.
 - o The story of Rachel, who was rented to the Pringle family at Ben Lomond.
- Read the text below of Rachel's slave contract.
- Complete the corresponding worksheet.

Context:

Andrew Pringle operated a farm at Ben Lomond. It was several hundred acres in size. The Pringles that lived at Ben Lomond were not American citizens. Instead, they were immigrants from Scotland and thus British subjects. Their status as British subjects made it illegal for them to own slaves. However, as Rachel's slave contract shows, the Pringles still used enslaved labor at Ben Lomond.

Primary Source Document: Rachel's Slave Contract, 1857

ON THE 25th OF DECEMBER NEXT, we promise and oblige ourselves, our heirs, executors, and administrators, to pay, or cause to be paid to, *L. C. Muschett & heirs*, heirs, or assigns, the just and full sum of *Twenty five dollars* current money of Virginia, it being the hire of Servant *Rachel & two others* for the year. *1857*

We, moreover, bind ourselves, our heirs, &c., to furnish the said Servant during the year, with good and sufficient summer and winter clothing, viz: *Three chemises two summer dresses & one winter dress, two pr shoes, yarn stockings Bonnet & Blanket*

Witness our hands and seals, this

day of

1857.

Benj Thornton
Andw Pringle
SEAL
SEAL

On the 25th of December next, we promise and oblige ourselves, our heirs, executors, and administrators, to pay, or cause to be paid to, L. C. Muschett & heirs, or assigns, the just and full sum of Twenty five dollars current money of Virginia, it being the hire of Servant Rachel & two for the year 1857

We, moreover, bind ourselves, our heirs, &c., to furnish said Servant during the year, with good and sufficient summer and winter clothing, viz: three chemices two summer dresses & one winter dress, two pr shoes, yarn stockings bonnet & blanket

Witness our hands and seals, this day of 1857.

Benj. Thornton
Andw. Pringle

Worksheet

1. What items did Andrew Pringle provide for the slaves he rented, including Rachel?
2. An enslaved person's home served many purposes, as described in the video. Write a paragraph describing the different purposes of a slave quarters and why each was important.
3. Andrew Pringle never owned Rachel but instead rented her services for one year at Ben Lomond. Why do you think British citizens like Andrew Pringle rented slaves instead of buying his own?
4. In Virginia, it was illegal for slaves to read or write. Why did slaveowners view literate enslaved persons as dangerous?
5. How does Rachel's contract show us what slavery was like for African Americans in the period before the Civil War?
6. How did the Civil War affect Virginia's enslaved population? What might Rachel's experience have been during the Civil War?
7. Why is it important for us to learn about Rachel and ask questions about her life?