

Teacher Page: Resource Sheet #15

Source: *Jefferson's Farm Book*, page 15

The heart of the records of Monticello are recorded in the *Farm Book*, a journal of plantation management that Jefferson maintained from 1774 until just before his death in 1826. The *Farm Book*, is a wide-ranging depiction of the agricultural and industrial activities on Jefferson's plantations, primarily Monticello and Poplar Forest. In an edition of Thomas Jefferson's *Farm Book*, the late Edwin Morris Betts, professor of biology at the University of Virginia, embellished the agricultural journal with illuminating commentary and relevant extracts selected from Jefferson's correspondence and other memorandum books. Organized topically, the annotations and extracts paint a uniquely complete portrait of plantation life and activity.

Jefferson's records depict an experimental farm that implemented such innovations as horizontal plowing, a crop-rotation plan, and Jefferson's own revolutionary moldboard plow. In addition, the *Farm Book* is a window into slave life, containing Jefferson's notes regarding the rations his overseer distributed, the daily tasks required by particular slaves, and the number of yards he purchased for slaves' clothing. The book also portrays the industries pursued by enslaved and free workmen, including the Mulberry Row nailery, joinery, blacksmith's shop, and spinning and weaving house.

Note: Symbols used in the ledger

- * denotes a laborer in the ground.
- + denotes a titheable person following some other occupation.
- denotes a person discharged from labor on account of old age or infirmity.

Document Analysis:

1. Jefferson uses symbols beside the names of his slaves at Monticello. What might the symbols represent?

They may indicate the location of the worker, type of work, employed or extended family attachment.

2. Can you explain why Jefferson, and other slave owners, may use the names that they do for slaves?

African slaves were named by their owners to create a system of order on the plantation and to Anglicize their names away from their African or native origins. They were often named for Biblical, fictitious and historic people of fame.

3. Do you notice any trends in the data with regard to age or gender?

Many names do not have dates associated with them. The date may indicate a purchase or acquisition date. They could possibly be births of slaves or slaves that were acquired through trade or barter.

4. Explain how this data or document helps to answer the question, "Where Did Thomas Jefferson Stand on the Issue of Slavery?"

Jefferson was the owner of an extensive slave population. This document supports his commitment to slave labor on his properties.