

2008 NOTABLE AFRICAN AMERICANS IN VIRGINIA HISTORY

EXCERPT FROM

“Fields’s Narrative”

Began 23 January 1847

I shall leave this subject here and next notice the way I obtained my little education with which I am porsested at this time and I must say that the obsticles which I have had to surmont has made my corse of study as eventfull as my life has been and to show you how I have been trumpst I shall have to go back to the early part of my life and take with me again my friend the white boy who was the first one that gave me a leson to learn how to Spell I have shown you that when we become to be good large boys that we were seperated in a small degree that is that he was sent to school and I to work but after he had been going to school for some time he proposed to learn me if I would study which I promised I would do so he commenced to give me lessons every day and I laid my head to work and there was no lesson that he would give me that I would not have it Ready for him by the time he came home from school at night Indeed I was said to be one of the aptes Children that ever took a book in hand but at that time I did not know the use of an education if I had I would have continued at that time untill I had obtained it although at that time I was a trying to pray as I have told you yet I did not think it of such importance as I have seince found it to be but at that time I would most always have my book in my hat and many and many a time have knelt down and beged god to teach me my book and I beleave that he heard my prayers for it looked to me as if I could get any lesson that was given me without any troble what ever and all my crave was just to know how to Read the bible for I thought if I could do that I should be perfectly sattisfied and as soon as I got in a good way to learn I thought I knewd enough and stop learning untill after I was a man grown and after I was converted I then just saw what I stood in kneed of when I was almost too old as I thought to attempt to learn any more that what I knew but again I thought it was never too late to do good so I went to work again to try what I could do for myself in the way of learning but I had many things to contend with at this undertaken for when I was a boy about the time of nat Turners insurrection who had better never been born than to have left such a curse upon his nation I say that he had better never been born: for at that time I was living in the country and we poor colored people could not sleep at nights for the guns and swords being stuck in at our windows and doors to know who was here and what their business was and if they had a pass port and so forth and at that time a colored person was not to be seen with a book in his hand but all the Books I had been given to me by my owners and therefore I kept them though many a poor fellow borned his books for fear.

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Black History Collection, Container #3, Writings on Slavery 1847-48, 1913. n.d., Accession #342.