

Some of the enslaved people on Bayou Black Plantation, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana

Lindor Hooks

James Dinsmore and **John Minor** jointly purchased Lindor from an estate sale in Natchez, Mississippi in 1825. His age was never mentioned. Lindor would have been placed on one of the Minor family's several plantations in the area. In 1829, one year after Dinsmore and Minor bought their Bayou Black plantation, James, on his own, purchased Dilsey, about 24 years old, and Lindor, her 16-month old son, from a nephew of John Minor. This allowed the family to be taken to Louisiana together. By 1849, there were four Hooks children: Lindor, Patsy (who was described as being crippled), Mark, and Dinah. Lindor must have earned a good deal of trust from Dinsmore, who elevated him to overseer in 1934. He was paid \$100. Although it was only a temporary position and Lindor was not paid the same as a white overseer, his wages allowed him to purchase whiskey, tobacco, cotton, hats, and stockings. When Dinsmore moved to Kentucky, he gave Lindor the freedom to sell the labor of himself and his family to whomever he wished. The white men in the neighborhood would have had to agree to this arrangement for it to work. Unfortunately, it was feared by one neighbor that Lindor was not being paid—a result of his being without a white sponsor. Another correspondent wrote to Dinsmore that it was dangerous to allow Lindor so much freedom—other enslaved people might get ideas. Lindor's "freedom" was no longer an issue when he died of measles in 1846. His wife, Dilsey, had died in 1845. By 1849, then, their four children were working for **William J. Minor** who owned the whole of the Bayou Black plantation. Six years later, Minor wrote Dinsmore with some troubling news about the Hooks children. He makes no mention of Patsy, but wrote that Dinah, who was about sixteen years old, had given birth several times but the infants had died and he suspected she may have been killing them—perhaps due to her age or a sign of resistance to the enslavement of her children. The boys, Mark and Lindor, Jr., he believed were not working very hard and he was convinced one of them was eating dirt. This was a sign of an insufficient diet. Lindor, Jr. died in the mid-1850s. In the 1850s, Dinsmore became a partner in the Gaines Farm in Saline County, Missouri, and by 1858 Dilsey and Mark Hooks were working there. They may have stayed in Missouri after the Civil War, but the Dinsmore family makes no further mention of them.

Allec

James Dinsmore and **John Minor** jointly purchased Allec at the same time as they bought Lindor, in 1825. He is mentioned with Judy occasionally, but she disappears in the 1830s. Allec, like Lindor, worked hard and earned more money than most of the other enslaved people. In 1840 he earned \$95, and Dinsmore wrote that by 1841 Allec had paid him \$422 towards his freedom, a sum that required years of hard work and very little spending. Dinsmore paid the enslaved people one cent per pound of cotton picked on Sundays—their only day off. Allec picked cotton, raised fowl, collected moss for mattresses, and did other odd jobs on Sundays to earn enough to buy his freedom—\$508.00. By 1842 Dinsmore referred to Allec as a free man, but it was a freedom that was outside the legal system. As was the case with Lindor, the neighbors on Bayou Black had to acknowledge this freedom for it to mean anything. The fact that they did so indicates that Allec's case was not unique. A letter from a friend of Dinsmore's in 1845 describes "Old Allec" as "hold[ing] forth with Mrs. McMasters, alias old Hanna. The

old man seems to be free from trouble himself, & is of none certainly to any one else. ” (Van P. Winder to James Dinsmore, December 29, 1845) As with Lindor, though, Allec was not to enjoy his freedom for very long. In 1849 he was reported dead, with no cause given.

George

George had, at one time, been enslaved by **James Dinsmore’s** uncle, **Silas Dinsmoor**. When Silas was in Mobile, Alabama, he was forced to sell his slaves to pay a debt for which he had signed as security. James and his younger brother, Silas, Jr., purchased nine men and three women. George was among these. He is later listed as being thirty years old, so he was probably born close to 1800. As was the case with most of the men in this group of enslaved people, George was hired to the United States government to help build **Fort Morgan**, which was finally completed in 1834. The government paid Dinsmore almost \$200 per year for George’s labor. One year before the fort’s completion, Dinsmore took George to Louisiana to work at Bayou Black. For two years he and his uncle discussed whether or not George should be sent to Kentucky to work on Silas’s farm. James thought it wasteful as Silas could hire two white men for what George’s labor was worth in the Deep South (James Dinsmore to Silas Dinsmoor, 13 April 1832). While working on the Bayou Black plantation, George, whose nervous disposition caused him to stutter) formed a relationship with a women named Peggy. Unfortunately, Peggy was owned by a neighbor, Shaffer, and was only hired by Dinsmore, so although they were able to live together for a time, the threat of separation was constant. When Dinsmore moved to Kentucky, George wanted to be purchased by Shaffer: “Your man George seems to be anxious to belong to Shaffer who he has applied to purchase him wishing to live with his wife. Mr. Shaffer requested me, when I wrote to you, to ask you whether you wished to sell him and what your price.” (Van P. Winder to James Dinsmore, 16 January 1844) Apparently the sale did not go through, because one year later, George is described as distraught over the death of his wife: “The death of his wife appeared to have had a serious effect on his mind... I understand that he sometimes cries out for his wife at night, there is either something the matter with his mind or it is well affected.” (Van P. Winder to James Dinsmore, 29 December 1845) George was reported dead in 1846.

William Dinsmore

William (Bill) Dinsmore is the only enslaved person who took the name Dinsmore. Since there is not purchase of a William it is believed he was the child of an enslaved woman who was either owned by **John Minor** or **James Dinsmore**, but his parentage is a mystery, though his age puts his birth at about 1830. When James left Louisiana, he made a list of the enslaved people he was going to hire out in 1842 and William was not on the list, so it is very possible that his father had been enslaved by Dinsmore and his mother was owned by Minor. It is also possible that he took the Dinsmore last name because he thought (correctly or incorrectly) that Dinsmore was his father. Either way, once James moved to Louisiana, his contact with William would not have been close because William spent most of his time working on the Minor’s Waterloo plantation, closer to Natchez. In 1848 and again in 1852, William J. Minor made a list of his slaves on Waterloo plantation and Bill Dinsmore was on that list. Interestingly,

in both cases he is in the “household” of single males, so there is no clue as to who his mother was. In 1850 William wrote a letter to Dinsmore from New River, Louisiana. He had just been to the Bayou Black plantation (by then renamed Southdown by [William J. Minor](#)). He wrote that he was too heavy to be a jockey anymore. (William Dinsmore to James Dinsmore, 7 July 1850) Minor was an avid horse racer on the courses near Natchez and outside New Orleans. This was a typical interest for southerners, but even for a southerner, Minor spent a good deal of money on horses and betting. The fact that William Dinsmore was a jockey and was literate were signs of the favor of the slaveowner. Unfortunately the position of jockeys was not one that lasted very long and his switch from jockey to plantation labor must have been a difficult transition. William died before his thirtieth birthday.

Rosetta

Rosetta was purchased in 1825 by [James Dinsmore](#) from [John Minor](#). She may have already had a child, Mary, at that time. In 1829 she was moved to Terrebonne Parish with the other enslaved people owned by Dinsmore. According to documents kept by Dinsmore, and later by William J. Minor, she was in a household with a man named Bacchus Holmes. When James was getting ready to move north, he always referred to Rosetta and her family without mentioning Bacchus, so he probably did not own that man. Dinsmore was “satisfied they could not be happy but in this country.” (James Dinsmore to Martha M. Dinsmore, 8 February 1842) That would make sense if her husband was going to remain in the South, although James was overstating the case that she would be “happy” working on a plantation in Louisiana. His wife, [Martha](#), in a very businesslike manner, thought about the financial side of slavery: “Negros are selling very high & you might wipe off some of your obligations with him (Minor) by promoting & securing the future well being (sic) & happiness of [Rosetta](#) & her family.” (Martha M. Dinsmore to James Dinsmore, 14 December 1841) Dinsmore chose, instead, to hire Rosetta to Minor until finally selling her in the 1850s. In 1852, Lewis, Amanda, and Mary Frances Holmes are living in the same household with Bacchus, Rosetta, and a twenty-year old, Edmond Clark. After the sale, there is no word of her or others from her family.