

# Florida Slave Narratives: Bynes, Titus I.

Federal Writers' Project

**1936**

Titus B. [TR: Titus I. above] Bynes, affectionately known as "Daddy Bynes", is reminiscent of Harriet Beecher Stowe's immortal "Uncle Tom" and Joel Chandler Harris' inimitable 'Uncle Remus' with his white beard and hair surrounding a smiling black face. He was born in November 1846 in what is now Clarendon County, South Carolina. Both his father, Cuffy, and mother, Diana, belonged to Gabriel Flowden who owned 75 or 80 slaves and was noted for his kindness to them.

Bynes' father was a common laborer, and his mother acted in the capacity of chambermaid and spinner. They had 12 children, seven boys—Abraham, Tutus[TR: ?], Reese, Lawrence, Thomas, Billie, and Hamlet—and five girls—Charity, Chrissy, Fannie, Charlotte, and Violet.

When Titus was five or six years of age he was given to Flowden's wife who groomed him for the job of houseboy. Although he never received any education, Bynes was quick to learn. He could tell the time of day and could distinguish one newspaper from another. He recalled an incident which happened when he was about eight years of age which led him to conceal his precociousness. One day while writing on the ground, he heard his mistress' little daughter tell her mother that he was writing about water. Mistress Flowden called him and told him that if he were caught writing again his right arm would be cut off. From then on his precociousness vanished. In regards to religion, Bynes can recall the Sunday services very vividly; and he tells how the Negroes who were seated in the gallery first heard a sermon by the white minister and then after these services they would gather on the main floor and hear a sermon by a Negro preacher.

Bynes served in the Civil War with his boss, and he can remember the regiment camp between Savannah, Georgia and Charleston,

South Carolina. His mistress would not permit Bynes to accompany his master to Virginia to join the Hampton Legion on the grounds that it was too cold for him. And thus ended his war days! When he was 20 years of age, his father turned him loose. Young Bynes rented 14 acres of land from Arthur Harven and began farming.

In 1868 he left South Carolina and came to Florida. He settled in Enterprise (now Benson Springs), Velusia County where he worked for J.C. Hayes, a farmer, for one year, after which he homesteaded. He next became a carpenter and, as he says himself, "a jack of all trades and master of none." He married shortly after coming to Florida and is the father of three sons—"as my wife told me," he adds with a twinkle in his eyes. His wife is now dead. He was prevailed upon while very ill to enter the Titusville Poor Farm where he has been for almost two years.

**Source:**

Excerpt from "Bynes I. Titus" The Federal Writers' Project, Titusville, Florida, 1936.

Keywords: african americans, slavery, slavery in florida, slaves, titus i. bynes, titus bynes

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