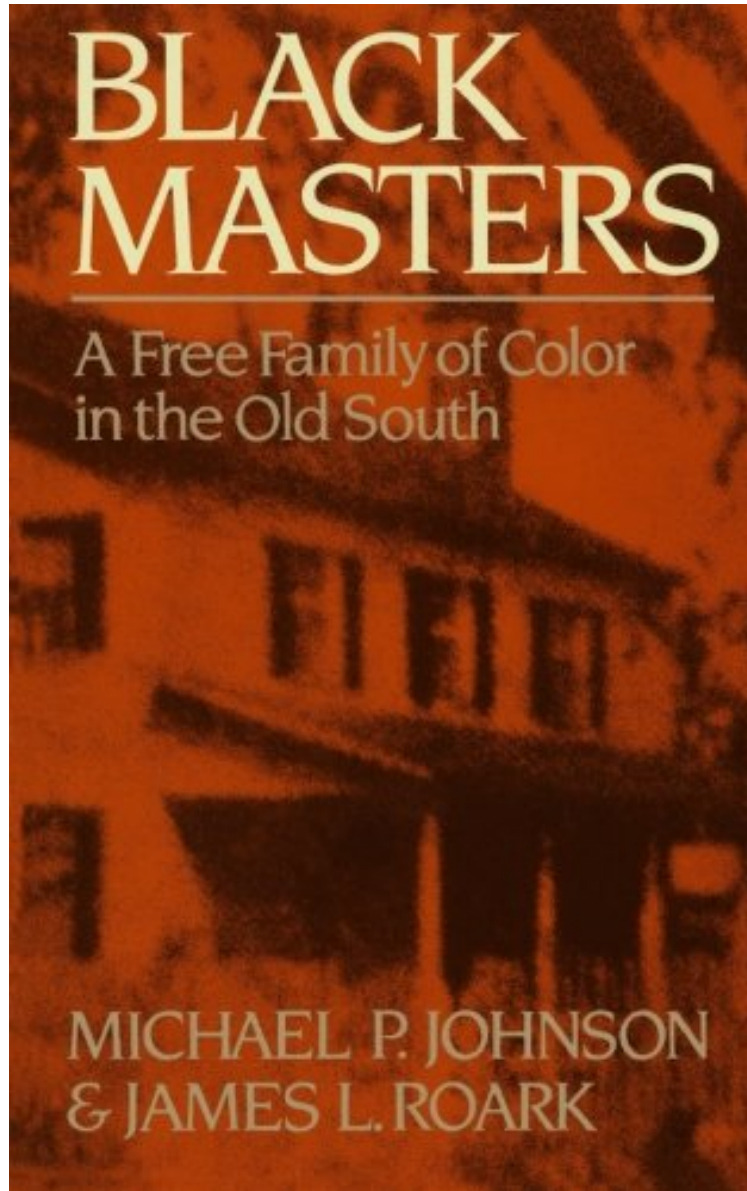


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Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South

Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark
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#128229 in Books Michael P Johnson 1986-04-17 1986-04-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.30 x 1.20 x 5.50l, 1.02 #File Name: 0393303144440 pagesBlack Masters A Free Family of Color in the Old South | File size: 19.Mb

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"A remarkably fine work of creative scholarship." C. Vann Woodward, *New York Review of Books* In 1860, when four million African Americans were enslaved, a quarter-million others, including William Ellison, were "free people of color." But Ellison was remarkable. Born a slave, his experience spans the history of the South from George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. In a day when most Americans, black and white, worked the soil, barely scraping together a living, Ellison was a cotton-gin makera master craftsman. When nearly all free blacks were destitute, Ellison was wealthy and well-established. He owned a large plantation and more slaves than all but the richest white planters. While Ellison was exceptional in many respects, the story of his life sheds light on the collective experience of African Americans in the antebellum South to whom he remained bound by race. His family history emphasizes the fine line separating freedom from slavery.

Never before have I found the experience of the free slaveholding caste of antebellum Negroes brought to live in such vibrant detail. To be able to detect what Henry James called the 'density of felt experience' behind the enigmatic details of the letters is indeed a scholarly achievement of a high order and, I think, a contribution to all who would grasp the complexity of our American past.--Ralph EllisonFrom the Back CoverIn 1860, when four million Afro-Americans were enslaved, a quarter-million others, including William Ellison, were 'free people of color.' But Ellison was remarkable. Born a slave, his experience spans the history of the South from George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. In a day when most Americans, black and white, worked the soil, barely scraping by, Ellison was a cotton-gin maker -- a master craftsman. When nearly all free blacks were destitute, Ellison was wealthy and well-established. He owned a large plantation and more slaves than all but the richest white planters.While Ellison was exceptional in many respects, the story of his life sheds light on the collective experience of Afro-Americans in the antebellum South to whom he remained bound by race. His family history emphasizes the fine line separating freedom from slavery.About the AuthorMichael P. Johnson is professor of history at the University of California in Irvine.