

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 1998

**Review of *Till Freedom Cried Out: Memories of Texas Slave Life*
Edited by T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker**

Barry A. Crouch
Gallaudet University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Crouch, Barry A., "Review of *Till Freedom Cried Out: Memories of Texas Slave Life* Edited by T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker" (1998). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1986.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1986>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Till Freedom Cried Out: Memories of Texas Slave Life. Edited by T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker. Illustrated by Kermit Oliver. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997. Bibliography, index. xxx + 162 pp. \$29.95.

As the Civil War's last shot was fired, Texas held one-tenth of the slave population of all the Confederate States: four hundred thousand—an increase of almost a quarter of a million souls from the beginning of hostilities. That this forced migration did not lead to continuous and prolonged upheaval is rather remarkable. Also remarkable is the number of narratives collected from former slaves residing in Texas in the 1930s regardless of where they had been born. These recollections comprise six of the forty-one volumes in the collection of slave narratives edited by George P. Rawick. Now, in a beautiful edition, T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker have provided us with an additional thirty-two accounts.

Of the 130 former slaves interviewed in Oklahoma during the heyday of the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s, about one-quarter had been slaves in Texas. Long overlooked, they provide renewed perspectives on the slave experience. Although there may not seem to be any more startling recollections of how the slaves themselves perceived bondage, what makes this monograph so fascinating is the commentary the editors have provided on the genesis of the interviews, who conducted them along with their color, and the editing process

from which they emerged. This additional information aids and abets historians in determining the veracity and value of the material.

The Bakers are experienced in this line of work. In 1996 the University of Oklahoma Press published their edition of Oklahoma narratives. The skills they began to display in that volume are here fully realized. Although the book does not change interpretations about the social, economic, political, or cultural aspects of American slavery (not even western outlaws garner the attention of American slaves), reading its interviews places one in the unique perspective of those who experienced slavery. To be sure, the direct experience was limited: these individuals were young children while in bondage, their childhood memories recorded long after the fact. Reconstruction, however, is another story.

Till Freedom Cried Out has several virtues. For the novice unfamiliar with the field of oral history, there is learning and guidance. Even for those who consider themselves highly skilled in this area, there are tidbits in the introduction and a veritable feast in the commentaries at the end of the volume. Moreover, the introduction—nicely and succinctly conceived—conveys the essential background information to the narratives and supplies numerous insights about the interviews. All in all this is a solidly wrought production.

BARRY A. CROUCH
Department of History and Government
Gallaudet University