

The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation

STORIES OF MY FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

BY JOHN F. BAKER JR.



A descendant of Wessyngton slaves John F. Baker Jr. has written the most accessible and exciting work of African American history since *Roots*.

When Baker was in the seventh grade, he saw a photograph of four former slaves in his social studies textbook. When he learned that two of them were his grandmother's grandparents, Emanuel and Henny Washington, he began the lifelong research project that would become *The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation*.

This fruit of more than thirty years of archival and field research and DNA testing spans 250 years. Baker has not only written his own family's story but also includes the history of hundreds of slaves and their descendants, now numbering in the thousands.

More than 100 rare photographs and portraits of African Americans who were enslaved on the plantation bring this compelling American history to life.

The Washington family, cousins of the president, owned the plantation until 1983; their family papers include birth registers from 1795-1860, letters, diaries, and more. Baker also conducted dozens of interviews - three of his subjects were more than one hundred years old - and discovered caches of historic photographs and paintings.

A groundbreaking work of history and deeply personal journey of discovery, *The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation* is an uplifting story of survival and family that gives fresh insight into the institution of slavery and its ongoing legacy today.

Wessyngton Plantation covered 15,000 acres and held 274 slaves whose labor made it the largest tobacco plantation in America. Unusually, the Washingtons only sold two slaves, so the slave families remained intact for generations.



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