



No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People on the Eve of the Civil War

Michael P Johnson, James L. Roark

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These thirty-four letters, written by members of the William Ellison family, comprise the only sustained correspondence by a free Afro-American family in the late antebellum South. Born a slave, Ellison was freed in 1816, set up a cotton gin business, and by his death in 1861, he owned sixty-three slaves and was the wealthiest free black in South Carolina. Although the early letters are indistinguishable from those of white contemporaries, the later correspondence is preoccupied with proof of their free status.



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