



Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War

Melvin Patrick Ely

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WINNER OF THE BANCROFT PRIZE *New York Times Book Review* and *Atlantic Monthly* Editors' Choice

Thomas Jefferson denied that whites and freed blacks could live together in harmony. His cousin, Richard Randolph, not only disagreed, but made it possible for ninety African Americans to prove Jefferson wrong. **Israel on the Appomattox** tells the story of these liberated blacks and the community they formed, called Israel Hill, in Prince Edward County, Virginia. There, ex-slaves established farms, navigated the Appomattox River, and became entrepreneurs. Free blacks and whites did business with one another, sued each other, worked side by side for equal wages, joined forces to found a Baptist congregation, moved west together, and occasionally settled down as man and wife. Slavery cast its grim shadow, even over the lives of the free, yet on Israel Hill we discover a moving story of hardship and hope that defies our expectations of the Old South.

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