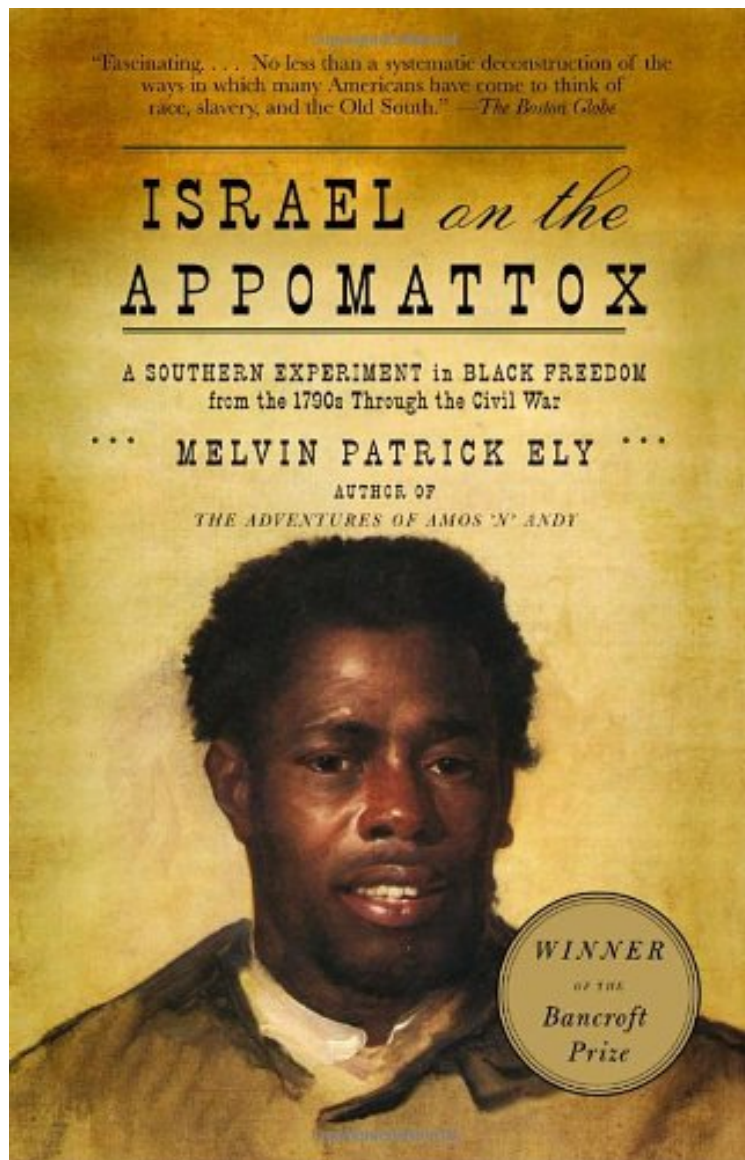


(Read now) Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War

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

Melvin Patrick Ely

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**Melvin Patrick Ely : Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not Easy but Worthwhile  
By P. Schmeelk  
Not the easiest reading but very thorough. Presents an extremely deep and subtle description of society in middle Virginia in the 1800s right up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Many facts are examined and what we thought we knew have all been altered by the information presented. It seems that history is always more textured and varied than an understanding that is probably OK in grade school. The work really rings true when one reflects on life today and its many incongruities. Many and complex notes in the book, some even add vital information, most just verify the text giving original sources.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By Customer  
very good read....It help me to trace my family tree  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars  
By michele  
Excellent reading

WINNER OF THE BANCROFT PRIZE  
A 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.

From Publishers Weekly  
In 1796, a few months after writing his will manumitting his 90 slaves and granting them 400 acres, Richard Randolph died; this meticulously researched book is an account of the aftermath of that gesture. Ely, professor of history and black studies at William and Mary and author of *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy*, accumulates extraordinary detail about everyday life, encompassing the family histories of the former owners and the former slaves of Prince Edward County, Virginia, and the community the African-Americans built: Israel Hill. Ely scrutinizes how work was performed, marriages made, houses built, children reared, English spoken, medicine practiced, crime punished, names acquired and the extent to which "free blacks and whites interacted, even cooperated, in almost every manner we can conceive of. Except in the political realm and the jury box." Evidence of interracial marriage and of blacks bringing and often winning lawsuits against whites are just two significant finds. But while historians will be grateful for Ely's attention to uncommon sources ("the unusually dry annals of highway maintenance") and useful minutiae (midwives charged "either \$2 or \$3 per delivery"), plowing through his cullings will be daunting for all but the most dedicated readers. 43 illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Booklist  
While Thomas Jefferson lived with the contradiction of slave ownership and the ideals of liberty, his cousin Richard Randolph could not reconcile the two. When Randolph died in 1796, he freed 90 slaves, granting them land to build a settlement among whites. Near the Appomattox River, they built a community called Israel Hill, defying the skepticism about whether blacks and whites could live in harmony as equals. Princeton-trained historian Ely presents a portrait of life during the 1790s in this little-known Virginia settlement, where whites and black former slaves lived together, working as farmers and tradesmen, even founding a Baptist congregation together. Revealed through the personal and public stories of the residents of Israel Hill, Ely reveals this extraordinary settlement where racial cooperation reigned but was not untarnished by the raging conflicts of slavery and impending war. This is a well-researched and absorbing look at the history of freedmen and race relations from an angle that defies the conventional wisdom of blacks and whites at the time. Vernon Ford  
Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Fascinating . . . No less than a systematic deconstruction of the ways in which many Americans have come to think of race, slavery, and the Old South." –The Boston Globe  
"Fascinating . . . Ely's story is so rich and compelling—and so persuasively documented—that it is sure to leave its mark on Southern history for years to come." –The Washington Post Book World  
"Israel on the Appomattox [is one of] the first works that attempt to describe with precision the texture of day-to-day interaction across the color line. . . . A remarkably rich story." –Atlantic Monthly  
"[An] absorbing story . . . The value of this book lies in the many stereotypes the author has debunked." –St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
"Previous historians have described the limits of free blacks' freedom. But none has examined the quality of their lives in the detail or with the sophistication of Melvin Patrick Ely in *Israel on the Appomattox* . . . A striking portrait . . . Ely hopes to shift the emphasis in the study of free blacks from disempowerment to accomplishment, and he goes a long way toward reaching this goal." –Los Angeles Times  
"A remarkable civics lesson in hope, strength, endurance and quiet courage that most will find important and uplifting." –Rocky Mountain News  
"Compelling, well-written, and thoroughly researched. The author knows Israel Hill and Prince Edward County inside and out, and his study is clearly a labor of love. . . . [Ely] challenges many of our assumptions concerning white and black Southern life in the antebellum period." –Civil War Book  
"Ely brings to life the black personages who demonstrated that self-determination was possible in the South prior to the Civil War . . . . A rare slice of history recounted by an uncommonly fastidious historian who is as passionate about the Hill as he is about the Israelites who dwelled there." –Black Issues Book  
"[Ely] explores as few

others have done the meaning of independence, of the metaphor of a river in America, and the role of faith and brotherly love.” –Decatur Daily “An astonishing act of historical research and imagination. Ely has given us the fullest and most humane account we have ever had of free black people.” –Edward L. Ayers, author of *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* “Israel on the Appomattox recovers a fascinating biracial world—right in the middle of the slave-based Old South. . . . The book shows whites, enslaved blacks, and, most especially, freed blacks working, living, trading, competing, cooperating, fighting, and (at least occasionally) loving together, in and around a special little place called by the freedpeople Israel Hill. The story stretches from the Virginia of Thomas Jefferson to the Virginia of Appomattox Court House. And it is extraordinary—inspiring and heartbreaking by turns.” –John Demos, author of *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* “This remarkable account . . . is rich with new insights on the dimensions of bondage and freedom in the slave South. The author's meticulous research and elegant writing make the experience of reading it both a reward and a pleasure.” –James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom* “Israel on the Appomattox is a surprising and often heartening story of human struggle, personal dignity and complex interracial cooperation in the deep shadow of slavery. It upends traditional assumptions about race in the Old South and, in so doing, poses striking possibilities for America's future.” –James Oliver Horton, co-author of *Slavery and the Making of America* “The book unfolds as a revelation, and it contributes profoundly to the revision of our understanding of African American life in the nineteenth century.” –Michael Kammen, author of *American Culture, American Tastes* “Melvin Patrick Ely previously wrote a wonderfully original and significant book on the popular radio and television series *Amos 'n' Andy* that upset a number of facile assumptions. He has now done exactly the same for Israel Hill . . . . Once again we are indebted to him for enabling us to take a deeper look at aspects of our past and our culture we thought we fully understood.” –Lawrence W. Levine, author of *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* “A path-breaking analysis of antebellum Virginia, Ely's superbly documented discussion of race relations is seminal and destined for controversy.” –Gerald Jaynes, author of *Branches Without Roots: The Genesis of the Black Working Class*