

Israel Gillette, an enslaved house servant

Reading Level: Elementary School

Israel Gillette was born in 1800. He was the son of Edward and Jane Gillette, who were enslaved farm laborers. He had twelve brothers and sisters.

When Israel was a child, he worked in the main house at Monticello. He made fires, dusted and polished, and ran errands. He often traveled with Jefferson in a new carriage pulled by a team of four horses. Israel rode one of the horses and helped guide the team.

When Thomas Jefferson died, Israels family was sold “in at least ten different directions.” Israel was bought by Thomas Walker Gilmer. Gilmer agreed to sell Israel his freedom for \$500.

In 1844, Israel Gillette received his free papers. He took the last name of Jefferson. Israel and his wife, Elizabeth, left for Ohio, a free state. In Ohio, Israel learned to read and write. He worked as a waiter in a private home and on a steamboat. He died sometime after 1873.