

Coleman, Henry

"I was born in Fairfield, dat is over yonder across Broad River, you knos what dat is, don't you? Yes sir, it was on Marse Johnson D. Coleman's plantation. And he had a plantation! Dese niggers here in Carlislens -- and niggers is all dey is too-- dey don't know what no plantation is. When I got big enough fer to step around, from de very fus, my maw took me in de big house. It still dat, cep it done bout fell down now, to what it was then. But some of Marse's folks, dey libs down dar still. Den you see, dey is like dese white folks up 'round here now. Dey ain't got no big money like dey had when I was a runnin' up. Time I got big enough fer to run aroun' in my shirt tail, my maw, she lowed one night to my paw, when he was settin by de fire, dat black little nigger over dar, he got to git hissef some pants kaise I'se gwine to put him up over de white fokes table. In dem times de doos and winders, dey nebber had no screen wire up to dem like dey is now. Fokes didn't know nothin bout no such as dat den. My Marster and all de other big white fokes, dey raised pea gouls. Is yu ebber seed any? Well, ev'y spring us little niggers, we coch dem wild things at night. Dey could fly like a buzzard. Dey roosted up in de pine trees, right up in de tip top. So de Missus, she hab us young uns clam up dar and git 'em when dey first took roost. Us would clam down and my maw, she would pull de long feathers out'n de tails. Fer weeks de cocks, dey wouldn't let nobody see 'em if dey could help it. Dem birds is sho proud. When dey is got de feathers, dey jus struts on de fences, and de fences wus rail in dem days. If'n dey could see dereself in a puddle o' water after a rain, dey would stay dar all day a struttin' and carring on like nobody's business. Yes sir, dem was purty birds. After us got de feathers, de Missus, she'ud low dat all de nigger gals gwine to come down in de wash house and make fly brushes. Sometime de Missus'ud gib some of de gals some short feathers to put in dere Sunday hats. When dem gals got dem hats on I used to git so disgusted wid 'em I'd leave 'em at church and walk home by my sef. Anyway, by dat time all de new fly brushes was made and de Missus, she hab fans make from de short feathers for de white fokes to fan de air wid on hot days. Lawdy, I'se strayed fur from what I had started out fer to tell you. But I knowed dat you young fokes didn't know nothin' bout all dat. In dem days de dining room was big and had de windows open all de summer long, and all de doos stayed streched too. Quick as de mess of victuals began to come on de table, a little nigger boy was put up in de swing, I calls it, over de table to fan de flies and gnats off'en de Missus' victuals. Dis swing was just off'n de end of de long table. Some of de white fokes had steps a leadin' up to it. Some of 'em jus had de little boys maws to fech de young'uns up dar till dey got fru; den dey was fetched down again.

"Well, when I got my pants, my maw fetched me in and I clumb up de steps dat Marse Johnson had, to git up in his swing wid. At fus, dey had to show me jus how to hole de brush, kaise dem peacock feathers was so long, iffen you didn't mind your bizness, de ends of dem feathers would splash in de gravy er sumpin nother, and den de Missus table be all spattered up. Some o' de Marsters would whorp de nigger chilluns fer dat carelessness, but Marse Johnson, he always good to his niggers. Mos de white fokes good to de niggers round bout whar I comes from.

"It twad'nt long for I got used to it and I nebber did splash de feathers in no rations. But offen I got used to it, I took to agoin to sleep up thar. Marse Johnson, he would jus git up and wake me up. All de white fokes at de table joke me so bout bein' so lazy. I soon stop dat foolishness. My maw, she roll her eyes at me when I come down atter de marster had

to wake me up. Dat change like ever thing else. When I got bigger, I got to be house boy. Dey took down de swing and got a little gal to stand jus 'hind de Missus' chair and fan dem flies. De Missus low to Marse Johnson dat de style done change when he want to know how come she took de swing down. So dat is de way it is now wid de wimmen, dey changes de whole house wid de style; but I tells my chilluns, ain't no days like de ole days when I was a shaver.

"Atter de war, I come up to Shelton and got to de "P" Hamilton place. I was grown den. I seed a young girl dar what dey called 'Evvie'. Her paw, he had b'longed to de Chicks, so dats who she was, Evvie Chick. Dar she sets in dat room by de fire. Now us got 'leven chilluns. Dey is scattered all about. Dey is good to us in our ole age. Us riz 'em to obey de Lawd and mine us. Dats all dey knows, and iffen fokes would do dat now, dey wouldn't have no sassy chilluns like I sees here in Carlisle.

"Evvie, what year was it we got married? Yes, dat's right. It was de year of de 'shake'. Is you heerd bout de 'shake'? Come out here, Evvie, and les tell him dat, kaise dese young fokes doan know nothin'. It was dark, and we was eatin' supper, when sumpin started to makin' de dishes fall out'n de cupboard. At fus we thought it was somebody a jumpin' up and down on de flo.

Den we knowed dat it was sumpin else er makin' dem dishes fall out o' de cupboard. At fus we thought it was Judgement day, kaise ev'ry thing started fallin' worser and worser. De dishes fell so fast you couldn't pick'em up. Some of us went down to de spring. De white fokes, dey come along wid us and dey made us fetch things from de big house, like fine china dat de Missus didn't want to git broke up. She tole us dat it was er earthquake and it wasn't no day o' Judgement. Anyway, we lowed de white fokes might be wrong, so us niggers started to a prayin', and den all de niggers on de plantation dat heerd us, well de come along and jined wid us in de prayin' and singin'. Us was all a shakin' mos as bad as de earth was, kaise dat was a awful time dat we libbed through fer bout twenty minutes-- de white fokes lowed it lasted only ten, but I ain't sho about dat. then we got back to de big house, de cupboard in de kitchen had done fell plum' down. In de nigger houses, de chimneys mos all fell in, and de chicken houses ev'rywhar was shuck down. While we was a lookin' aroun, and de wimmen fokes, dey was a takin' on mightily another shake come up. Us all took her de spring agin; dis one lasted bout long as de first one. Us prayed and sung and shouted dis time. It sho stopped de earth a shakin' and a quiverin' some, kaise dat thing went on fer a whole week; ceptin de furs too was de heaviest. All de other ones was lighter. Iffen it hadn't been fur us all a beggin' de Lawd fer to show us his mercy, it ain't no tellin' how bad dem shakes would er been. Miss Becky Levister, you know her, she live up yander in your uncle John's house now, she was wid us. She was jus a little girl den. Mer paw was Mr. Kelly He died for ever you was born. Not long ago I seed her.

She lowed to me, 'uncle Henry, do you recollect in de time o' de shake? Lacken she think I'd fergit such as dat. It was in de time o' de worstest things dis ole nigger is ebber seed hisself, and I is gwine on 82 now. Miss Becky, she was a settin' in her dar wid some one drivin' her, but she ain't fergot dis ole nigger. If I is up town and Miss Becky, she ride by, she look out and lows' 'Howdy uncle Henry', and I allus looks up and raises my hat. I likes mannerable white fokes, mysef, and den. I likes mannerable niggers fer as dat goes. Some of dese fokes, now both white -- I hates to say it -- and niggers, dey trys to act like

dey ain't got no sense er sumpin'. But you know one thing I knos real fokes when I sees dem and dey can't fool me."

Aunt Evvie tells the following story about her father, Rufus Chick. The story is known by all of the reliable white folks of the surrounding neighborhood also: "My paw, Rufus Chick, lived on the Union side of Broad River, the latter days of his life. Maj. Sames B. Steadman had goats over on Henderson Island that my paw used to care for. He went over to the Island in a batteau. One afternoon, he and four other darkies were going over there when the batteau turned over. The four other men caught to a willow bush and were rescued. My paw could not swim, and he got drowned. For three weeks they searched for his body, but they never did find it. Some years after, a body of a darky was found at the mouth of the canal, down near Columbia. The body was perfectly petrified. This was my paw's body. The canal authorities sent the body to a museum in Detroit. It was January 11, 1877 when my father got drowned.

"When I was a young fellow I used to race wid de horses. I Was de swifes runner on de plantation. A nigger, Peter Feaster, had a white horse of his own, and de white fokes used to bet amongst de selves as much as \$20.00 dat I could outrun dat horse. De way us did, was to run a hundred yards one way, turn around and den run back de hundred yards. Somebody would hold de horse, and another man would pop de whip fer us to start. Quick as de whip popped, I was off. I would git sometimes ten feet ahead of de horse 'fore dey could git him started. Den when I had got de hundred yards. I could turn around quicker dan de horse would, and I would git a little mo' ahead. Corse wid dat, you had to be a swift man on yer feets to stay head of a fas horse. Peter used to git so mad when I would beat his ole horse, and den all de niggers would laf at him kaise de white fokes give me some of de bettin money. Sometimes dey would bet only \$10.00, sometimes, \$15 or \$20. Den I would race wid de white fokes horses too. Dey nebber got mad when I come out ahead. After I got through, my legs used to jus shake like a leaf. So now, I is gib plum out in dem and I tributes it to dat. Evvie, she lowed when I used to do dat after we was married, dat I was gwine to give out in my legs, and sho nuf I is."

"Uncle" Henry says that his legs have given out in the bone.

Collins, John

EX-SLAVE 85 YEARS OLD.

John Collins lives in a two-room frame cottage by the side of US 21, just one mile north of the town of Winnsboro, S. C., on the right side of the highway and a few hundred yards from the intersection of US 21 and US 22. The house is owned by Mr. John Ameen. His son, John, who lives with him, is a farm hand in the employ of Mr. John Ameen, and is his father's only support.

"They tells me dat I was born in Chester County, just above de line dat separates Chester and Fairfield Counties. You know where de 'dark corner' is, don't you? Well, part is in Fairfield County and part is in Chester County. In dat corner I first see de light of day; 'twes on de 29th of February, 1852. Though I is eighty-five years old, I's had only twenty-one birthdays. I ketches a heap of folks wid dat riddle. They ask me: 'How old is you Uncle John?' I say: 'I is had twenty-one birthdays and won't have another till 1940. Now figure it out yourself, sir, if you is so curious to know my age!' One time a smart aleck, jack-leg, Methodist preacher, of my race, come to my house and figured all day on dat

riddle and never did git de correct answer. He scribbled on all de paper in de house and on de back of de calendar leaves. I sure laughed at dat preacher. I fears he lacked some of dat good old time 'ligion, de way he sweated and scribbled and fussed.

"My daddy was name Steve Chandler. My mammy was called Nancy. I don't know whether they was married or not. My daddy was sent to Virginia, while de war was gwine on, to build forts and breastworks around Petersburg, so they say, and him never come back. I 'members him well. He was a tall black man, over six feet high, wid broad shoulders. My son, John, look just lak him. Daddy used to play wid mammy just lak she was a child. He'd ketch her under de armpits and jump her up mighty nigh to de rafters in de little house us lived in.

"My mammy and me was slaves of old Marse Nick Collins. His wife, my mistress, was name Miss Nannie. Miss Nannie was just an angel; all de slaves loved her. But marster was hard to please, and he used de lash often. De slaves whisper his name in fear and terror to de chillun, when they want to hush them up. They just say to a crying child: 'Shet up or old Nick will ketch you!' Dat child sniffle but shet up pretty quick.

"Marster didn't have many slaves. Best I 'member, dere was about twenty men, women, and chillun to work in de field and five house slaves. Dere was no good feelin's 'twixt field hands and house servants. De house servants put on more airs than de white folks. They got better things to eat, too, than de field hands and wore better and cleaner clothes. "My marster had one son, Wyatt, and two daughters, Nannie and Elizabeth. They was all right, so far as I 'member, but being a field hand's child, off from de big house, I never got to play wid them any.

"My white folks never cared much about de slaves having 'ligion. They went to de Universalist Church down at Feasterville. They said everybody was going to be saved, dat dere was no hell. So they thought, it was just a waste of time telling niggers about de hereafter.

"In them days, way up dere in de 'dark corner', de white folks didn't had no schools and couldn't read or write. How could they teach deir slaves if they had wanted to?

"De Yankees never come into de 'dark corner'. It was in 1867, dat us found out us was free; then we all left. I come down to Feasterville and stayed wid Mr. Jonathan Coleman. From dere. I went to Chester. While I was living dere, I married Maggie Nesbit. Us had five chillun; they all dead, 'cept John. My wife died two months ago.

"I is tired now, and I is sad. I's thinking about Maggie and de days dat are gone. Them memories flood over me, and I just want to lay down. Maybe I'll see you sometime again. I feel sure I'll see Maggie befo' many months and us'll see de sunrise, down here, from de far hebbin above. Good day. Glad you come to see me, sir!"

(Project 1885-1, Folklore, Spartanburg, Dist.4, 29 November 1937, Edited by: Elmer Turnage)

Davis, Charlie

"I couldn' tell how old I is only as I ask my old Massa son en he tell me dat I was born shead of him cause he had de day put down in he family book. I had one of dem slavery bible, but I have a burnin out so many times dat it done been burn up. I belong to Mr. George Crawford people. Mr. Goorge de one what die up here one of dem other year not far back. Dey who been my white folks."

"I can tell you a good deal bout what de people do in slavery time on how dey live den, but I can't tell you nothin bout no jump about things. My Massa didn' 'low us to study bout none of dem kind of frolickings in dat day en time."

"I gwine tell you it just like I experience it in dem days. We chillun lived well en had plenty good ration to eat all de time cause my mammy cook for she Missus dere to de big house. All she chillun lived in a one room house right dere in de white folks yard en eat in de Missus big kitchen every day. Dey give my mammy en she chillun just such things as de white folks had to eat like bisouit en cake en ham en coffee en hominy en butter en all dat kind of eatin. Didn' have no need to worry bout nothin tall. My Massa had a heap of other colored peoples dere besides we, but dey never live dat way. Dere been bout 80 of dem dat live up in de quarter just like you see dese people live to de sawmill dese days. Dey live mighty near like us, but didn' have no flour bread to eat en didn' get no milk en ham neither cause dey eat to dey own house. Didn' get nothin from de dairy but old clabber en dey been mighty thankful to get dat. Oh, dey had a pretty good house to live in dat was furnish wid dey own things dat dey make right dere. Den dey had a garden of dey own. My Massa give every one of he plantation family so much of land to plant for dey garden en den he give em every Saturday for dey time to tond dat garden. You see dey had to work for de white folks all de other week day en dey know when dey hear dat cow horn blow, dey had to do what de overseer say do. Never couldn' go off de place widout dey get a mit (permit) from de overseer neither else dey tore up when dey come back. No'mam, didn' dare to have nothin no time, Didn' 'low you to go to school cause if you was to pick up a book, you get bout 100 lashes for dat. No'mam, didn' have no church for de colored peoples in dem days. Just had some of dese big caks pile up one on de other somewhe' in de woods en dat whe' we go to church. One of de plantation mens what had more learnin den de others was de one what do de preachin dere.

"My Massa wasn' never noways soraggeble to he colored peoples. Didn' cut em for every kind of thing, but I is see him beat my stepfather one time cause he run away en stay in de woods long time. Oh, he beat him wid a switch or a stick or anything like dat he could get hold of."

"Didn' never know nothin bout doing no hard work in us chillun days. When I was a boy, I mind de crows out de field. Oh, crows was terrible bout pickin up peoples corn in times back dere. You see if dey let de crows eat de corn up, dey had to go to de trouble of planting it all over again en dat how-come dey send we chillun in de field to mind de crows off it. We just holler after em en scare em dat way. Crows was mighty worsen in dem days den dey is die day en time."

"I sho remembers when freedom was declare cause I was bout 16 year old den. When dem Yankees talk bout comin round, my Massa take all we colored boys en all he fast horses en put em back in de woods to de canebrake to hide em from de Yankees. It been many a year since den, but I recollects dat we was settin dere lookin for de Yankees to get us any minute. Wasn' obliged to make no noise neither. Oh, we had big chunk of lightwood en cock meat en hoecake en collards right dere in de woods. Den my Massa take one of dem oldest plantation boys to de war wid him en ain' nobody never hear tell of him no more. He name Willie.

O my Lord, when dey hear talk bout de Yankees comin, dey take all de pots en de kettles en hide em in holes in de fields on dey put dey silver bout some tree so dey know whe' dey bury it. Den dey hide de meat en de corn to de colored peoples house on when dey

hear talk of de Yankees gwine away, dey go en get em again. Dem Yankees never destroy nothin bout dere, but dey is make my Massa give em a cart of corn en a middlin of meat. Yes'um, I look at dem Yankees wid ms own eyes. Doy was all dressed up in a blue uniform on dey was just as white as you is. Oh, dey said a lot of things. Say dey was gwine free de niggers en if it hadn' been for dem, we would been slaves till yet. Coase I rather be free den a slave, but we never have so much worryations den as people have dose days. When we get out of clothes on get sick in dat day en time, we never had to do nothin but go to us Massa. Now, we have to look bout overy which a way."

"My Massa ask my mother was she gwine live with him any longer after freedom was declare en she say she never have no mind to leave dere. We live on dere for one year en den we studied to get another place. I believes heap of dem white folks died just on account of us get freed. Dey never didn' want us to be free."

"I heard a 'oman say somebody had conjured her, but I don' believe in none of dat. I knows I got to die some of dese days en dat might come before me. I don' bother wid none of dat kind of thing, but I'll tell you bout what I has experience. I had two dogs dere en somebody poison em cause dey tell me somebody do dat. Oh, I know dey was poison. De police say de dog was poison. A 'oman do it dat had chillun what was afraid of my dog en dat how-come she poison it. I sho think she done it cause it just like die, anything peoples toll me, I believes it."

"I have seen dem things peoples say is a ghost when I was stayin here to Lake View. I plant a garden side de road en one night I hear somethin en I look out en dere was a great big black thing in me garden dat was makin right for de house. I call me wife en tell her to look yonder. De thing was comin right to de house en my wife hurry en light up de lamp. I hear de peoples say if you didn' light up de lamp when you see a spirit, dat it would sho come in en run you out. I had done paid some money on de place but after I see dat thing, I didn' have no mind to want it. Had de best garden en chickens dere I ever had, but I never bother no worry bout dat. Just pick right up en leave dere to come here en I been here ever since. I knows dat been somethin come dere to scare me out dat house. Dat ain' been nothin else but a spirit. Ain' been nothin else."

Source: Charlie Davis, age 88, colored, Marion, S.C. Porsonal interview, July 1937.
(Project #1655, Henry Grant, Columbia, S. C.)

Davis, Charlie -- Additional Interview

CHARLIE DAVIS'S MUSINGS.

Charlie Davis, now seventy-nine years old, was a small boy when the slaves were freed. He lives alone in one room on Miller's Alley, Columbia, S. C., and is healthy and physically capable of self-support.

"I has been wonderin' what you wanted to talk to dis old nigger 'bout since I fust heard you wanted to see me. I takes it to be a honor for a white gentleman to desire to have a conversation wid me. Well, here I is, and I bet I's one of de blackest niggers you's seen for a season. Somehow, I ain't 'shame of my color a-tall. If I forgits I is dark complected, all I has to do is to look in a glass and in dere I sho' don't see no white man.

"Boss, I is kinda glad I is a black man, 'cause you knows dere ain't much expected of them nowhow and dat, by itself, takes a big and heavy burden off deir shoulders. De white folks worries too much over dis and over dat. They worries 'cause they ain't got no money and, when they gits it, they worries agin 'cause they is 'fraid somebody is gwine to steal it from them. Yes, sir, they frets and fumes 'cause they can't 'sociate wid big folks

and, when they does go wid them, they is bothered 'cause they ain't got what de big folks has got.

"It ain't dat way wid most niggers. Nothin' disturbs them much, 'cept a empty stomach and a cold place to sleep in. Give them bread to eat and fire to warm by, then, hush your mouth; they is sho' safe then! De 'possum in his hollow, de squirrel in his nest, and de rabbit in his bed, is at home. So, de nigger, in a tight house wid a big hot fire, in winter, is at home, too.

"Some sort of ease and comfort is 'bout what all people, both white and black, is strivin' for in dis world. All of us laks dat somethin' called 'tentment, in one way or de other. Many white folks and some darkies thinks dat a pile of money, a fine house to live in, a 'spensive 'motorbile, fine clothes, and high 'ciety, is gwine to give them dat. But, when they has all dis, they is still huntin' de end of de rainbow a little ahead of them.

"Is de black man nervous or is he natchally scary? Well, sir, I is gwine to say yes and no to dat. A nigger gits nervous when he hears somethin' he don't understand and scared when he sees somethin' he can't make out. When he gits sho' 'nough scared, he moves right then, not tomorrow. Lak de wild animals of de woods, he ain't 'fraid of de dark, much, if he is movin' 'bout, but when he stops, no house is too tight for him, in summer or winter. If he sees a strange and curious sight at night, he don't have to ask nobody what to do, 'cause he knows dat he has foots. It is goodbye wid old clothes, bushes, and fences, when thom foots gits to 'tendin' to deir business. When you hears a funny and strange noise and sees a curious and bad sight, I b'lieves you fust git nervous and then dat feelin' grows stronger fas', 'til you git scared. I knows de faster I moves, de slower I gits scared.

"From my age now, you can tell dat I was mighty little in slavery time. All I knows 'bout them terrible times is what I has heard. I come pretty close to them ticklish times, but I can't help from thinkin', even now, dat I missed a 'sperience in slavery time dat would be doin' me good to dis very day. Dere ain't no doubt dat many a slave learnt good lessons dat showed them how to work and stay out of de jail or poorhouse, dat's worth a little.

"I has heard my mammy say dat she b'long to de Nyricks dat has a big plantation in de northwestern part of Fairfield County and dat my daddy b'long to de Graddicks in de northern part of Richland County. Dese two plantations was just across de road from each other. Mammy said dat de patrollers was ad thick as flies 'round dese plantations all de time, and my daddy sho' had to slip 'round to see mammy. Sometime they would ketch him and whip him good, pass or no pass.

"De patrollers was nothin' but poor white trash, mammy say, and if they didn't whip some slaves, every now and then, they would lose deir jobs. My mammy and daddy got married after freedom, 'cause they didn't git de time for a weddin' befo'. They called deirselves man end wife a long time befo' they was really married, and dat is do reason dat I's as old as I is now. I reckon they was right, in de fust place, 'cause they never did want nobody else 'copt each other, nohow. Here I is, I has been married one time and at no time has I ever seen another woman I wanted. My wife has been dead a long time and I is still livin' alone. All our chillun is scattered 'bout over de world somewhere, and dat somewhere is where I don't know. They ain't no help to me now, in my old age. But, I reckon they ain't to be blamed much, 'cause they is young, full of warm blood and thinks in a different way from de older ones. Then, too, I 'spects they thinks deir old daddy would kinda be in deir way, and de best thing for them to do is to stay away from me. I don't know, it just seems lak de way of de world.

"I come from de Guinea family of niggers, and dat is de reason I is so small and black. De Guinea nigger don't know nothin', 'cept hard work, and for him to be so he can keep up wid bigger folks, he has to turn 'round fas'. You knows dat if you puts a little hog in a pen wid big hogs, de little one has got to move 'bout in a hurry amongst de big ones, to git 'nough to eat, and de same way wid a little person, they sho' has to hustle for what they gits. I has no head for learnin' what's in books, and if I hed, dere wasn't no schools for to learn dat Head, when I come 'long. I has made some money, 'long through de years, but never knowed how to save it. How I is so old dat I can't make much, and so, I just live somehow, dat's all.

"President Roosevelt has done his best to help de old, poor, and forgotten ones of us all, every color and race, while dis 'pression has been gwine on in dis country. Is us gwine to git dis new pension what is gwine 'bout, or is dat other somebody gwine to think he needs it worsen than us does! Dat's de question what 'sorbs my mind most, dose days. I don't need much, and maybe I don't deserve nothin', but I sho' would lak to git hold of dat little dat's 'tended for me by dat man up yonder in Washington.(Roosevelt)

"Does I b'lieve in spirits and hants? My answer to dat question is dis: 'Must my tremblin' spirit fly into a world unknown?' When a porson goes 'way from dis world, dere they is, and dere they is gwine to stay, 'til judgment."

Davis, Jesse

EX-SLAVE 85 YEARS OLD.

Jesse Davis, one of the fast disappearing land-marks of slavery times, lives with his wife and son, in one of the ordinary two-room frame houses that dot, with painful monotony, the country farms of white landowners. The three attempt to carry on a one-horse farm of forty acres, about thirty acres in cotton and the remainder in corn. The standard of living is low. Jesse is cheerful, his wife optimistic with the expression that the Lord will provide, and their son dutiful and hopeful of the harvest. Their home is about ten miles southwest of Winnsboro, in the Horeb section of Fairfield County.

"Dere is some difficulty 'bout my age. Nigh as I can place it, I was born befo' de Civil War. I 'members 'tendin' to and milkin' de cows, and keepin' de calf off, drawin' water out de well, and bringin' in wood to make fires. I 'spects I's eighty-five, mountin' up in years. I lives on Mr. Eber Mason's place wid one of my chillun, a son name Mingo. Us all work on de place; run a farm on shares. I can't do much work and can't support myself. It's mighty hard to be 'pendent on others for your daily rations, even if them others is your own bone and flesh. I'd 'preciate sumpin' to help my son and wife carry on. Dats why I wants a pension. Do you 'spect God in His mercy will hear de prayer of dis feeble old believer? I don't beg people but de Bible give me a right to beg God for my daily bread. De Good Book say: 'Take no consarnment 'bout your raiment'. You can see from what I's got on, dat me nor nobody else, is much consarned 'bout dis raiment.

"My mammy b'long to de Smiths. My master was Dr. Ira Smith. My mistress was him wife, Miss Sarah. Deir chillun was: Marse Gad, Marse Jim, and Marse Dillie. Marse Jim was de baker of dis town all his life, after de way of old-time oven-cookin', 'til Boy bread and Claussen bread wagons run him out of business. Him is now on de 'lief roll and livin' in de old McCreight house, de oldest house in Winnsboro.

"Dere was my young misses, Miss Lizzie and Miss Lennie. My mammy name Sarah, just lak old mistress name Sarah. Nor b'long to marster and mistress but my paply no b'long to

them. Him b'long to de big bugs, de Davis family. Him was name Mango, and after slavery him and all us take de name, de secon' name, Davis, and I's here today, Jesse Davis. See how dat work cut to de name? Good Look again say: 'Good name better than riches; sweeter to de ear than honey-come to de tongue.'

"You is well 'quainted wid Merse Ames Davis, ain't you? Well, his people was pappy's people. I had a brudder name Gabriel, tho' they called him Cabe. Another one name Chap; he got kilt while clearin' up a new ground. Sister Fannie marry a Ashford nigger. Marse Ira, de doctor, have a plantation near Jenkinsville, S. C.

"When de Yankees come thru, they come befo' de main army. They gallop right up, jump down and say: 'Hold dese hosses! Open dat smoke-house door!' They took what they could carry 'way. 'Bout dat time marster rode up from a sick call him been 'tendin' to. Course you know him was a doctor. They surround him, take his watch, money, and hoss, and ride 'way.

"De main army come nex' day, Saturday mornin' 'bout 8 o'clock. They spread deir tents and stay and camp 'til Monday mornin'. When they leave they carry off all de cows, hogs, mules, and hosses. Then they have us ketch de chickens, got them all, 'cept one old hen dat run under de house, and they didn't wait to git her. Marster have to go 'way up to Union County, where him have kin folks, to git sumpin' to eat.

"My marster was not big rich lak de Davises, de Hoans, and de Harpors, but him have all them people come to see him. Him know a heap of things dat they 'preciate. De way to dye cloth was one of dese secrets. Marster have a madder bed. Him take de roots of dat madder put them in de sun just lak you put out pieces of apples and peaches to make dried Pruit. When them roots git right Iry, him have them ground up fine as water-ground meal. He put de fine dust in a pot and vbil it. Then he want rod cloth, he just drop de cloth in dat pot and it come out all red to suit you. Want it blue, him have a indigo atch for dat.

"I never hear anything 'bout alum doce days. Well, de alaves could take poach tree leaves and alum and make yellow cloth and oli celdar tops and copperas and make tan cloth. walnut stain and copp ras and make any cloth brown. sweet-gum bark and copperas and make any cloth a purple color. I 'member goin' wid one into de woods to git barks. One day old marster come 'cross a slippery elm tree. Him turn and commend me to say right fast: 'Long, slim, slick saplin' and when I say long, slim, sick slaplin', him 'most kill hisself laughin'. You try dat now! You find it more harder to say than you think it is. Him give me a piece of dat dark to chew and I run at do mouth lak you see a hose dat been on de range of wild clover all night and slobberin' at de bits.

"Yes sah, I b'longs to de church! My wife and son, Mingo, just us three in de house and de whole household jined de Morris Creek Saptist Church. What's my favorite song? None better than de one dat I'll h'ist right now. Go ahead? I thanks you. Listen:

'Am I born to die

To lay dis body down

A charge to keep I have

A God to glorify.' You lak dat? Yes? You is praisin' me too highly I 'spect, but since you lak dat one just listen at dis one; maybe you change your mind, 'cause I's gwine to h'ist it a wee bit higher and put more of de spiritual in it. Ready? Yes? I stand up dis time.

'All de medicine you may buy

All de doctors you may try

Ain't gonna save you from de tomb
Some day you got to lay down and die.
De blood of de Son can only
Save you from de doom!
Some day you get to lay down and die.'
You lak dat one? You just ought to hear my wife, Zingo, and Me, singin' dat 'round de
fire befo' us go to bed.
"Well, I'll toddle 'long now. Goodbye."

Davis, Louisa

"Well, well, well! You knows my white folks on Jackson Creek, up in Fairfield! I's
mighty glad of dat, and glad to see you. My white folks comes to see me pretty often,
though they lives way up dere. You wants to write me up? Well, I'll tell you all I
recollect, and what I don't tell you, my daughter and de white folks can put in do other
'gradients. Take dis armchair and git dat smokin' ash tray; lay it on de window sill by you
and make yourself comfortable and go ahead."

"I was born in de Catawba River section. My grandpappy was a full blood Indian; my
pappy a half Indian; my mother, coal black woman. Just who I b'long to whom a baby?
I'll leave dat for de white folks to tell, but old Marster Jim Lemon buy us all; pappy,
mammy, and three chillun: Jake, Sophie, and me. De white folks I fust b'long to refuse to
sell 'less Marse Jim buy de whole family; dat was clever, wasn't it? Dis old Louisa must
of come from good stock, all de way 'long from de beginnin', and I is sho' proud of dat."

"When he buy us, Marse Jim take us to his place on Little River nigh clean cross de
county. In de course of time us fell to Marse Jim's son, John, and his wife, Miss Mary. I
was a grown woman then and nursed their fast baby, Marse Robert. I see dat baby grow
to be a man and 'lected to legislature, and stand up in dat Capitol over yonder cross de
river and tell then de Law and how they should act, I did. They say I was a pretty gal,
then, face shiny lab a ginger cake, and hair straight and black as a crow, and I ain't so bad
to look at now, Marse Willie says."

"My pappy rise to be foreman on de place and was much trusted, but he plowed and
worked just de same, mammy say maybe harder."

"Then one springtime de flowers git be blooming, de hens to cackling, and de guineas to
patarocking. Sam come along when I was out in de yard wid de baby. He fust talk to de
baby, and I asked him if de baby wasn't pretty. He say, 'Yes, but not as pretty as you is,
Louisa.' I looks at Sam, and dat kind of foolishness wind up in a weddin'. De white folks
allowed us to be married on de back piazza, and Reverend Boggs performed de
ceremony."

"My husband was a slave of de Sloans and didn't got to see me often as he wanted to; and
of course, as do housemaid then, dere was times I couldn't meet him, clandestine like he
want me. Us had some grief over dat, but he got a pass twice a week from his marster,
Marse Tommie Sloan, to come to see me. Bold as Sam git to be, in after years ridin' wid a
red shirt long side of General Bratton in '76, dat nigger was timid as a rabbit wid me
when us fust git married. Shacks, let's talk 'bout somthing else. Sam was a field hand and
drive de wagon way to Charleston once a year wid cotton, and always bring back
something pretty for me."

"When de war come on, Sam went wid young Marster Tom Sloan as bodyguard, and attended to him, and learned to steal chickens, geese, and turkeys for his young marster, just to toll 'bout it. He dead now; and what I blames de white folks for, they never would give him a pension, though he spend so much of his time and labor in their service. I ain't bearin' down on my kind of white folks, for I'd jump wid joy if I could just git back into slavery and have de same white folks to serve and be wid them, day in and day out."

"Once a week I see de farm hands git rations at de smoke house, but dat didn't concern me. I was a housemaid and my mammy run de kitchen, and us got de same meals as my marster's folks did."

"Yes sir; I got 'possum. Know how to cook him now. Put him in a pot and parboil him, then put him in a oven wid lots of lard or fatback, and then bake him wid yaller yam potatoes, flanked round and round, and then wash him down wid locust and peraimnon boor followed by a piece of pumpkin pie. Dat make de bestest meal I 'members in slavery days."

"Us got fish out of Little River nigh every Saturday, and they went good Sunday morning. Us had Saturday evenin's, dat is, de farm hands did, and then I got to go to see Sam some Sundays. His folks, de Sloans, give us a weddin' dinnor on Sunday after us was married, and they sho' did tease Sam dat day."

"Like all rich buckra, de Lemons had hogs a plenty, big flock of shoop, cotton gin, slaves to card, slaves to spin, and slaves to weave. Us was well clothed and fed and 'tended to when sick. They was concerned 'bout our soul's salvation. Us went to church, learn de catechism; they was Presbyterians, and read de Bible to us. But I went wid Sam after freedom. He took de name of Davis, and I jinod de Methodist Church and was baptized Louisa Davis."

"Patroller, you ask me? 'Spect I do member them. Wasn't I a goodlookin' woman? Didn't Sam want to see me more than twice a week! Wouldn't he risk it widout de pass some time? Sure he did. De patrollers got after and run Sam many a time."

"After de war my pappy went to Florida. He look just like a Indian, hair and all, bushy head, straight and young lookin' wid no beard. We never heard from him since."

"De slaves wash de family clothes on Saturday and then rested after doin' dat. Us had a good time Christmas; every slave ketch white folks wid a holler, 'Christmas gift, Marster' and they holler it to each other. Us all hung our stockin's all 'bout de Big House, and then dere would be sumpin' in dere next mornin'. Lord, wasn't them good times!"

"Now how is it dese days? Young triflin' nigger boys and gals lyin' 'round puffin' cigarets, carryin' whiskey 'round wid them, and gittin' in jail on Christmas, grievin' de Lord and their pappies, and all sich things. OH! De risin' generation and de future! What is it comin' to? I just don't know, but dere is comin' a time to all them."

"I sho' like to dance when I was younger. De fiddlers was Henry Copley and Buck Manigault; and if anybody 'round here could make a fiddle ring like Buck could, wouldn't surprise me none if my heart wouldn't cry out to my legs, 'Fust lady to de right and cheat or swing as you like, and on to de right'."

"Stop dat laughin'. De Indian blood in me have hold me up over a hundred years, and de music might make me young again."

"Oh yes, us had ghost stories, make your hair stand on end, and us put iron in de fire when us hear screech owl, and put dream book under bed to keep off bad dreams."

"When de yankees come they took off all they couldn't cat or burn, but don't let's talk 'bout dat. Maybe if our folks had beat them and git up into dere country our folks would of done just like they did. Who knows?"

"You see dis new house, de flower pots, de dog out yonder, de cat in de sun lyin' in de chair on de porch, de seven tubs under de shed, de two big wash pots, you see de pictures hangin' round de wall, de nice beds, all dese things is de blessin's of de Lord through President Roosevelt. My grandson, Pinckney, is a World War man, and he got in de CCC Camp, still in it in North Carolina. When he got his bonus, he come down, and say, 'Grandma, you too old to walk, supposin' I git you a automobile?'

I allow, 'Son, de Indian blood rather make me want a house.' Then us laughs 'Well,' he say, 'Dis money I has and am continuin' to make, I wants you and mama to enjoy it.' Then he laugh fit to kill heself. Then I say, 'I been dreamin' of a tepee all our own, all my lifetime; buy us a lot over in Sugartown in New Brookland, and make a home of happiness for your ma, me and you!'

"And dis is de tepee you settin' in today. I feel like he's a young warrior, loyal and brave, off in de forests workin' for his chief, Mr. Roosevelt, and dat his dreams are 'bout me maybe some night wid de winds blowin' over dat three C camp where he is."