

Date: Sat, 15 Jan 2000 06:28:54 -0800 (PST)
From: William Reed <w2reed@yahoo.com>
To: Pelham L Spong <fairfieldmus@InfoAve.Net>

Dear Pelham,

Here is the information on Nicholas Peay.

Please don't put it on the Internet. I am not sure about the copyright restrictions.

It was done by the US Government (WPA) so should be free to the public.

Bill Reed

"The American Slave: A Composite Biography"
Volume 3 South Carolina Narratives Parts 3 and 4
George P. Rawick, General Editor
Greenwood Publishing Company Westport Connecticut
1972

This is from a WPA Project
Page 147
Project #1655 W.W. Dixon Winnsboro, South Carolina

Rosa Starke, Ex-slave, 85 years old (probably done in the 1930s)

Rosa's grandfather was a slave of Solicitor Starke. Although she has had two husbands since slavery, she has thrown their names into the discard and goes by the name of Rosa Starke. She lives in a three-room frame house with her son, John Harrison, two miles south of Winnsboro, S.C., on the plantation of Mrs. Rebecca V. Woodward. She still does farm work, hoeing and picking cotton.

"They say I was six years old when de war commence poppin' in Charleston. Mammy an pappy say dat I was born on de Graham place, one of de nineteen plantations of my old marster, Nick Peay, in 1854. My pappy was name Bob and my mammy name Salina. They had b'longed to old Marse Tom Starke befo' old Marse Nick bought them. My brudders was name Bob and John. I had a sister name Carrie. They was older than me.

"My marster, Nick Peay, had nineteen places, had a overseer and slave quarters on every place. Folks dat knows will tell you, dis day, dat dem nineteen plantations, in all, was twenty seven thousand acres. He had a thousand slaves, more or less, too many to take a census of. Befo' de numerator git 'round, some more would be born or bought, and de nominator had to be sent 'round Marse Nick, so old Miss Martha, our mistress, say. Her never could know just ho many dey was. Folks use d to come to see her and ask how many they had and her say it was one of them sums in de 'rithmetic dat a body never could take as slate and pencil and find out de correct answer to.

"Her was a Adamson befo' her marry old marster, a grand big buckra. Had a grand manner; no patience wid poor white folks. They couldn't come in de front yard; they knowed to pass by on de lot, hitch up deir hoss, and come knock on de kitchen door and make deir wants and wishes known to the butler.

"You wants me to tell 'bout what kind of house us niggers live in then? Well, it 'pend on de nigger and what him was doin'. Dere was just two classes to de

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white folks, buckra slave owners and poor white folks dat didn't own no slaves. Dere was more classes 'mongst de slaves. De fust class was de house servants. Dere was de butler, de maids, de nurses, chambermaids, and de cooks. De nex' class was de carriage drivers am de gardeners, de carpenters, de barber, and de stable men. Then come nex' class de wheelwright, wagoners, blacksmiths and slave foremen. De nex' class I 'members was de cow men and de niggers dat have care of de dogs. All dese have good houses and never have to work hard or git a beatin'. Then come de cradlers of de wheat, de threshers, and de millers of de corn and de wheat, and de feeders of de cotton gin. De lowest class was de common field niggers. A house nigger man might swoop down and mate wid a field hand's 'good lockin' daughter, now and then, for pure love of her, but you never see a house gal lower r herself by marryin' and matin' wid a common field-hand nigger. Dat offend de white folks, 'specially de young misses who liked de business of match makin' and matin' of de young slaves.

"My young marsters was Marse tom, Marse Nick, and Marse Austin. My young misses was Miss Martha, Miss Mary, and Miss Anne Eliza. I knows Marse Nick, Jr marry a Cunningham of Liberty Hill. Marse tom marry a Lyles and Marse Austin marry and move to Abbeville, after de war. Old marster die de year befo' de war, I think, 'cause my mammy and pappy fell in de division to Marse Nick and leave de Graham place to go t de home place. It was called de Melrose Place. And what a place dat was! 'Twas on a hill, overlookin' de place where de Longtown Presbyterian Church and cemetery is today. Dere was thirty rooms in it and a fish pond on top of it. A flower yard stretchin' clean down de hill to de big road, where de big gate, hangin' on big granite pillars, swung open to let de carriages, buggies, and wagons up to de house.

"Can I tell you some of de things dat was in dat house when de Yankees come? Golly no! Dat I can't, but I 'members some things that would 'stonish you as it 'stonished them. They had Marseilles carpets, linen table cloths, two silver candlesticks in every room, four wine decanters, four nut cracker, and two coffee pots, all of them silver. Silver castors for the pepper, salt, and vinegar bottles. All de plates was china. Ninety-eight silver folks, knives, teaspoons, and tablespoons. Four silver ladles, six silver sugar tongs, silver goblets, a silver mustard pot and tow silver fruit stands. All de fireplaces had brass firedogs and marble mantlepieces. Dere was four oil paintin's in de hall; each cost, so Marse Nick say, one hundred dollars. One was his ma, one his pa, one was his Uncle Austin and de other was of Colonel Lamar.

"De smoke-house had four rooms and a cellar. One room, every year, was filled wid brown sugar just shoveled in wid spades. In winter they wud drive up a drove of hogs from each plantation, kill them, scald de hair off them, and pack de meat away in salt, and hang up de hams and shoulders 'round and 'bout de smoke-house. Most of de rum and wine was kep' in barrels, in de cellar, but dere was a closet in de house where whiskey and brandy was kep' for quick use. All back on de east side of de mansion was de garden and terraces, acres of sweet 'taters, water melons (watermelons) and strawberries and two long rows of beehives.

"Ol marster die. De "praisers of de State come and

figure dat his mules, niggers, cows, hogs, and things worth .200,000.00. Land and houses I disremember 'bout. They, anyhow, say de property was over a million dollars. They put a price of \$1,600 on my mammy and \$1,800 on pappy. I 'member they say I was worth \$400. Young Marse Nick tell us dat the personal property of de estate was praised at \$288,168.78. (a)

"De Yankees come set all de cotton and de gin-house afire. Load up all de meat; take some of de sugar and shovel some over the yard; take all de wine, rum, and liquor; gut the house of all de silver and valuables, set it afire, and leave one thousand niggers cold and hongry, and our white folks in a misery they never has got over to de third generation of them. Some of them is de poorest whit folks in dis State today. I weeps when I see them sop poor, but they is 'spectable yet, thank God.

"After de war I stuck to de Peay white folks, 'til I got married to Will Harrison. I can't say I love him, though he was de father of all my chillun. My pappy, you know, was half a white man. Maybe dat explain it. Anyhow, when he took de fever I sent for Dr. Gibson, 'tend him faithful but he die and I felt more lie I was free, when I come back from de funeral than I did when Marse Abe Lincoln s3t us free. My brudder, Bob, has gone to Florida.

"I nex' marry, in a half-hearted way, John Pearson, to help take care of me and my three chillun, John, Bob, and Carrie. Him take pneumonia and die, and I never have a speck of heart to marry colored man since. I just have a mind to wit for de proper sort, till I get to Heaven, but these adult teachers 'stroy dat hope. They read me dat dere is no marryin' in heaven. Well, well, dat'll be a great disappointment to some I knows, both white and black, and de ginger-cake woman lak me.

"Is I got any more to tell you? Jus' dis: Dere was 365 windows and doors to Marse Nick Peay's house at Melrose, one of every day in de year, my mistress 'low. And dere was a peach tree in de orchard so grafted dat dat peach tree have ripe peaches on in May, June, July, August, September, and October."

(a) Probate records of Fairfield County. See Roll 110 of Judge of Probate for Fairfield County.

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