

Us Chullun Wore

Dist # 6

~~AUNT ESTHER GREEN - EX-SLAVE~~

Shoes like Grownups

"Aunt" Esther Green, of 554 Texas Street, Mobile, Alabama, was all too ready to talk about her slavery days in spite of her assertion that she didn't remember much about the war.

"I was jus' a chile", she says, "you can figure for yourself. Somebody tole me I was born in 1855, so I couldn't of been very old. I was born in State Line, Mississippi, and was owned by Edward Dairs. He owned my mother, Rachael Davis and her mother, Melinda Davis. I never did know who my pappy was 'cause I never did see him.

"To de bes' of my recollections, my whitefolks was allus good to us niggers. He neber allowed no overseers and he never whipped none of dem, 'ceptin maybe a switching once in a while for us litt'luns when we didn't behave. I never saw a growed up nigger whipped in all my life. Ole Massa jus' didn't b'lieve in dat. Massa was shorely a good man. Lots of times he would get us little niggers up on de porch at de big house and have us dance for him. We sho used to have a big time out on dem big white porches.

"I never had no work to do myself, 'cause I ~~was~~ always stayed in de big house wid Miss Mary Davis, ole Massa's wife. I was in de house one day and ole Massa asked me if I wantēd to eat at de table wid dem, so I pulled up a chair and spite of de fact dere was all kinds of good stuff to eat in front of me, I called for lye hominy. I sho did love dat stuff better'n anything else I ever et. Ole Massa and de res' of dem jus' laugh fit to kill. I reckon dey thought I was crazy sho' nuff', but I et hominy jus' de same.

"As to de number of slaves ole Massa had, I never knew. Us had log cabins to stay in. De cracks was chinked up wid

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yellow mud to keep de cold out and de chim'ney was made of straw and de same kind of mud, but dem cabins was warmer dan de house nowadays. We didn't have no furniture 'ceptin' a home-made bed which was nailed to de wall on one side and two legs out in de middle of de floor. De mattresses was made of straw and hay. All de cookin' was done on de big open fireplaces what had big pottracks to hang de pots on.

" Massa rationed out de food every week and we usually got a peck of meal. We had plenty of 'taters and peas and other vegetables dat we growed on de place. At Chris'mas time, we was give meat and molasses to make cakes. Us always had plenty of plain food. And too, de men would go huntin' at night and come back wid lots of big fat 'possums and rabbits by de dozen, and mos' of de time, dey would even catch a coon. And ole Ben, a nigger who had turkey traps, was always bringin' in lots of dem big fat birds.

" De men and women worked in de field all day, but I never picked a bit of cotton all my life. At night de women would spin and weave cloth, but I never did learn to do dat. Den dey would dye de cloth different colors, mostly red and blue though, and make dem into clothes. Us chilluns had a one-piece dress or slip. Our shoes was all homemade too. Massa had one man who tanned de leather. He would take it and put it into a long trough for a long time and den whatever was done dat was supposed to be done to it, he would take it out and cut it and make shoes. Us chilluns' had shoes same as de grown folks.

" On Sundays, we would go to de white folks church. Dere was a shed built onto de church and we would sit on benches out under de shed and listen to de preacher. De white folks would have lots of big baptizings, but I never did see no niggers baptized den.

" Ole Massa had a big fambly, three boys and six girls. My own ma had ei

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own Ma had eight chilluns. Us was always healthy and never had to have much medicine. 'Bout de only thing I remembers ever takin' was tea made from de root of de china berry tree. It made good tea for worms, but was to be used only at certain times of de moon. My man also used Jerusalem Oak seed for worms. I never fools wid tryin' to doctor nobody's chilluns now-a-days, things is all so different.

" My Grandma, Melinda, and ole Ben and his wife was three ole people Massa freed long time before de war. When all de niggers was freed, Massa called em up to de house and tole dem dat dey was loose to go wherever suited dem, but mos' of dem stayed on de place two or three weeks, and den one mornin' I woke up and all of dem had left durin' de night. I was de only nigger left on de place and I jus' cried and cried, mostly because I was jus' lonesome for some of my own kind to laugh and talk wid.

" I don' remember exactly what I did after de Surrender, but it was about four years afterwards dat I come to Mobile and I been here every since.

" I'se a member of de Mobile Delaware Baptist Church, but I can't attend very regular 'count of bein' all crippled up wid de rheumatisms. I reckon dat ailing is natural though, cause I been here a long time and I'se got forty grandchilluns and more dan dat many great-grandchilluns."

Week ending July 16, 1937.

S-200
S-260

Ila B. Prine, -1-
Identification No. 0149-5302.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

"AUNT" ESTHER GREEN, AN EX-SLAVE.

Dist # 6

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

"Aunt" Esther Green was born in 1855, in State Line, Mississippi, and was owned by Edward Dairs, who had owned her mother Rachael Davis and her grandmother, Melinda Davis before her. "Aunt" Esther does not know who her father was, and said she never saw him.

"Aunt" Esther does not remember much about the war, because she was just a child; however, she said that her whitefolks were good to all their negroes. She also said: "I 'members dat I neber had no wurk to do, caysse I stayed in de big house wid Miss Mary David, ol' Marsa's wife. Ol' marsa was shorely a good man, an' he wu'd git all se li'l niggers on de big wide porches an' hab dem dance.

"He neber 'lowed no o'seer ober his niggers, he wuldn't hab nobody beatin' dem. I neber seed a grown nigger whipped in mah life, he sumtimes wuld whip us chillun' wid a li'l switch when us war bad.

As to de number ob slaves ol' marsa's had I dunno, but us had log cabins to stay in, an' de cracks ob de cabin war daubed full ob yellow mud, an' de chimbney war made out ob de same yellow clay and sticks. Dem houses war a heaps warmer dan dese are nowadays. An' as fer furniture us didn't hab none 'cepting a home-made bed, nailed to de wall wid one leg out in de middle ob de floor. De mattresses war made out ob straw an' hay; an' us allus cooked on de big open fireplaces what had pot racks to hang de pots on.

"Marsa rationed out de food every week, us usually had a peck ob meal, an' 'taters an' peas an' vegetables, what war grown on de place.

"De men an' women all *work*ed in de fields all day, but I neber picked a bit ob cotton in mah life. An' at night de women w'uld spin an' weave cloth, but I ain't neber learnt to spin a spool ob thread. Atter de cloth war spun it war dyed blue, red, and different colors, den made into clothes. Us chillun' had a one piece dress or slip.

Week ending July 16, 1937.

S-200
S-260

Ila B. Prine,
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WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

"AUNT" ESTHER GREEN, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

"Our shoes war all home made, Marsa had one man who tanned de leather, he had big troughs in which he put de leather an' den atter so long a time, he cut it an' made shoes. Us chillun' had shoes, same as de grown folks.

"You said sumthing 'bout church? Yes, I 'members how us went to de white folks' church. Dere war a shed built onto dere church, I kin see dat shed now, how us wu'ld set on de benches out in dat shed an' listen to de preacher. I didn't neber seed any niggers baptized den, only white folks had big baptiz-
ing.

"At christmas time us war given meat an' molasses to make cakes. Us allus had plenty to eat ob plain food. Ol' Marsa neber 'lowed nobody to git on me, he allus called me big. One morning he called me an' asked me if I wanted to eat wid dem, an' I jes pulled my chair up to de table an' called for lye hominy, I war crazy 'bout good lye hominy, an' de white folks jes laffed at me. I guess dat dey thought I war crazy sho' nuff.

"You asked me 'bout de patty-rollers? Us neber seed any ob dem, cayse our ol' Marsa neber had no trouble wid none ob us, he neber 'lowed de patty-rollers on his place.

"Ol' Marsa had a big fambly ob chillun, three boys an' six girls, an' mah own maw had eight chillun. Us war allus very healthy, neber had to hab much medicine, 'bout de only thing I 'members takin' is a tea made from a certain root ob de china berry tree. Dis root had to be used only at a certain time ob de moon. Dis tea war good fer de worms. Mah man also used Jerusalem oak seed, for worms, but, chile, I neber fools wid doctorin' nobody's chillun' now-a-days.

"Things is do dif'rent now, lawsy, when de men went huntin' at night dey w'uld come back wid plenty ob 'possums, coons, an' rabbits, an' den dere war ol' Ben, a cullered man who had de turkey traps, an' he w'uld ketch plenty ob

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"AUNT" ESTHER GREEN, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

dem big fine, fat turkeys.

"Ol' Ben an' his wife, an' mah Grandma Melinda war the three ol' people Marsa Edward freed, long afore dat slavery war over.

"When all de niggers war freed Marsa called dem up and tole dem dat they war free, but dey stayed on de place for two or three weeks atter dat. One morning I 'woke up an' I war de only nigger on de place, all de res' had lef' durin' de night, an' I jes cried and cried.

I dosen't 'member much atter dat. I knows dat I cum to Mobile four years atter de Surrender, an' I'se been here eber since. I'se a member ob de Mobile Delaware Baptist Church but I can't 'tend very regularly any mo' since I'se so crippled up wid rheumatism.

"You knows, chile, I'se been here a long time 'cayse I'se got forty grand-chillun' and more dan forty great gran'chillun".

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal interview with "Aunt" Esther Green, 554 Texas Street. Mobile, Ala.

Mary A. Poole
John Morgan Smith

*Sho' I believe in
Spirits, Says Charles*

CHARLES HAYES

near Mobile

"Mistis," said Charles Hayes from his porch in Maysville, Alabama,
"I was a ~~big~~ ^{little better} nigger when de war broke out, an' I belonged to Massa
Ben Duncan who lived ~~den~~ at Day's Landin' on de Alabama Riber.

"Marse Ben's house was de regulation ~~southern~~ plantation wid
~~de usual~~ slave quarters. Most of de things ~~we~~ ^{us} used was made raght
dere on de plantation, sich as: beds, buckets, tools, soap, brogans,
breeches, an' chairs. Our mattresses was either made outen cornshucks
or cotton bolls. Us cooked on an open ~~fire~~ ^{fire} place, an' eve'y Saddy ^{night}
us would go to de big house for supplies. Marse Ben was good to
his slaves an' he 'lowed dem to have a little plot of groun' ~~next~~ ^{nex'}
to de cabins whar dey could raise dere own little crop.

"My mammy was a fiel' han' an' my pappy was a mechanic an' he
use to be de handy man aroun' de big house, makin' everything f'um
churns an' buckets to wagon wheels. My pappy ^{also} useta play de fiddle
for de white folks dances in de big house, an' he played it for de
colored frolics too. He sho could make dat thing sing.

"Us useta have all sorts of cures for de sick people, frinstance,
us used de Jerusalem ~~weed~~ ^{seed} cooked wid molasses into a candy for to
give to de chilluns to git rid of worms. Den us'd bile de root an'
make a kinda tea for de stomach worms. You know de kinds dat little
puppies an' little chilluns has dat eats all de food dat go's in to
de stomach, an' makes de chile or dog eat plenty but don't git no
benefits f'um all ~~dere~~ ^{dere} eatin'. Horehound, dat growed wild in Clarke
County, was used for ^{day're} colds. Mullen tea was used for colds an'
swollen jints. Den dere was de life everastin' tea dat was also
good for colds and Horse jint tea dat was good for de chills an'
fevers. Cose, Mistis, us niggers had a regular fambly doctah dat

tended to us when we was sho nuff down raght sick, But dese remedies I's⁷ tellin' you bout us used when warn't nothin' much ailin' us. It was always to de owners interest, Mistis, to have de niggers in a good, healthy condition.

"Does I believe in spirits, you say? ^S Sho I does. When Christ walked on de water, de Apostles was ~~shooked~~ skeered he was a spirit, but Jesus told dem dat he ~~wasn't~~ ^{warn't} no spirit, dat he was as live as dey was.. He tol' 'em dat spirits couldn't be teched, ~~an'~~ ^{dat} dey jus' melted when you tried to. So, Mistis, Jesus musta meant dat dere was sich a thing as spirits.

Atter de war my pappy an' mammy stayed on de Duncan plantation an' worked on share crops. Dere was a school on de groun's for us slave chilluns, an' my gran'mammy, Salina Duncan, ~~taught~~ taught de bible, caze she was f'um Virginny an' had been learnt to read an' write by her Mistis up dere.

"My fus' wife was named Alice Bush, an' us had ~~ten~~ ^{ten} chilluns; my second one was named Caroline Turner an' us didn't have but eight.

~~Both~~ Both my ole ~~womens~~ ^{women} is daid now, white folks an' I stays here wid ^{one} my daughter. You see, my eyesight is almos' gone due to one day when I was a workin' in de forge, a hot piece of ~~iron~~ ^{iron} steel flew up an' landed in my eye. Twarn't long befo' it started to hurtin' in my udder eye. Now both is bout to give out.

Week ending June 18, 1937.

S-260

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Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

EX-SLAVE STORY.

Charles Hayes

(Compiled by Mary A. Poole.)

Living at 1602 Belfast street, in Maysville, a suburb of Mobile, Alabama, the writer located Charles Hayes who stated he was born in 1860, on the plantation of Mr. Ben Duncan, at Day's Landing on the Alabama river, in Clarke County, and that his mother was Peggie Hayden, who belonged to Mr. Ben Duncan and his father was Isaac Hayes and belonged to Mr. John Hayes of an adjoining plantation.

The Duncan family home was a large white house with the regulation slave quarters, in which were beds made on the plantation, and mattresses made of either cotton or cornshucks.

They cooked in their open fireplaces, getting their allotments from the storehouse every Wednesday and Saturday nights, and Charles told the writer, Mr. Ben Duncan allowed the slaves to have a little extra patch of ground adjoining their cabins to raise their own vegetables.

He also stated his mother was a field hand and his father a mechanic and carpenter and made churns and buckets, repaired machinery on the plantation, and also played the fiddle at dances for the white folks, or at frolics given for the slaves.

Charles repeated the following remedies used by the slaves.

The seed of the Jerusalem Oak, (a weed) cooked with molasses into a candy and given children to get rid of worms, or the slaves would boil the root and make a tea for stomach worms. Horehound, which Charles said grew wild in Clarke County, Alabama, would be gathered and boiled to make a tea, for colds. Mullen tea was good for colds and swollen joints, also tea made from Life Everlasting was used for colds, and Horse Mint tea for fever. Charles added the master, Mr. Ben Duncan, had a doctor for his family and the slaves when they were seriously sick, also had the regular home remedies used on all the plantations, that it was always to the owners' interest to have their slaves

Week ending June 18, 1937.

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Mary A. Poole,
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WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

EX-SLAVE STORY.

(Compiled by Mary A. Poole.)

in healthy working condition so they were well fed and taken good care of on the plantations.

When the writer asked Charles if he believed in spirits, he answered, "yassum", When Christ walked on der water Apostles wuz skeered, he wuz a spirit but Christ told dem he wuz'nt no spirit, he wuz live, dat spirits cou'd'nt be tech'd, dey jes' melt'd when yo' tried ter tech dem". So Charles reasoned this out that Christ meant there was spirits, and they could be seen.

After the war his father and mother stayed on the Duncan plantation and worked on shares, they had a school on the grounds for the children of the ex-slave tenants, and that his grandmother Salina Duncan taught the Bible, as she was from Virginia and had been taught to read by her former owners in Virginia.

Charles' first wife was Alice Bush and they had five children, his second wife was Caroline Turner, and both are now dead.

One of his daughters keep house for him. He has almost lost his eyessight, which he says was caused while working as a blacksmith, and a piece of hot iron flying up and burning one of his eyes, which later affected the other eye.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal conversation with Charles Hayes, 1602 Belfast street,
Mobile, Alabama.

Ila B. Prine,
Mobile, Alabama.

Baldwin Co

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HONGRY FOR
PUN'KIN PIE

"Aunt[#] Adeline, a tall, gaunt, bright-skinned Negro woman, lives on Frye St. Mobile, Ala. The day I called she was sat nodding in a cane bottom rocking chair on a wide porch that extended across the front of a cottage almost hidden in a ^{grove} ~~cluster~~ of giant oaks. She opened her eyes, which were covered by a pair of steel-rimmed glasses with one lens badly cracked. The news that a search was being made for old people who had lived during slavery days acted like an electric shock on the old woman, who immediately sat up straight and said:

Pick up

Alabama

ADELINE HODGES

Ila B. Prine,

ADELINE HODGES

HONGRY FOR
PUN'KIN PIE

Balham Co
Dist # 6

"Aunt Adeline, a tall, gaunt, bright-skinned Negro woman, lives on Frye St. Mobile, Ala. The day I called she was nodding in a cane bottom rocking chair on a wide porch that extended across the front of a cottage almost hidden in a grove of giant oaks. She opened her eyes, which were covered by a pair of steel-rimmed glasses with one lens badly cracked. The news that a search was being made for old people who had lived during slavery days acted like an electric shock on the old woman, who immediately sat up straight and said:

"Lor, yes'm, I libed in dose days, and I tells you I 'members all 'bout dem. Do come in and set down. De fust white people I b'longed to was a man named Jones, who was a colonel in de war, but I can't tell you much 'bout dem, 'caze I was jes' a li'l gal den. I was jes' big 'nuff to tote water to de fiel' to de folks suking and to min' de gaps in de fence to keep de cattle out when dey was gatherin' de crops. I don't 'spec' you knows anything 'bout dose kind of fences. Dey was built of rails and when dey was gatherin' de crops dey jes' tuk down one section of de fence, so de wagons could git through.

"A'ter de war broke out ole Mister Jones went off to hit, and I 'members de day he lef'. He come to de fiel' to tell all de han's goodbye, wid a big white plume on his hat. Dat was in Bolivar County, Mississippi. A'ter ol' Mister Jones lef' for de war, den de nigger drivers an' oberseer begun to drive us 'round lack droves of cattle. Every time dey would hyar de Yankees was coming dey would take us out in de woods and hide us. Finally dey sold us a'ter carrying us away from Bolivar County. Some of us was sold to people in Demopolis, Alabama, an' Atlanta, Georgia, an' some to folks in Meridian and

Shubuta, Mississippi. I don't any more know whar my own folks went to dan you does.

"I 'members afore leaving ole Mister Jones' place how dey grabbed up all de chillun dat was too li'l to walk and puttin' us in wagons. Den de older folks had to walk, and dey marched all day long. Den at night dey would strike camp. I has seen de young niggers what was liable to run away wid dere legs chained to a tree or de wagon wheels. Dey would rake up straw and throw a quilt ober hit and lie dat way all night, while us chillun slep' in de wagons.

"When us come to de big river at Demopolis, Alabama, I 'members seein' de big steamboats dere, and dey said dat de sojers was goin' away en dem. Hit was in Demopolis us was sold, and a man name Ned Collins of Shubuta, Mississippi, bought me.

"Aunt" Adeline said that the houses the slaves lived in on the Jones plantation were board houses, and that Mr. Jones owned a big plantation and lots of slaves. She said that they had home-made beds, nailed to the walls, with mattresses made out of shucks.

After having been sold to Mr. Collins, of Shubuta, Mississippi, "Aunt" Adeline said that life was very hard, not so much for herself, but she saw how hard the other slaves worked. She was the house girl and helped clean house, wash dishes, and take care of the children. After finishing that work, she had to spin thread. Each day she would have to spin so many cuts, and if she did not finish the required number, she was punished.

She said that her mistress kept the finished work on top of a large wardrobe, and "Aunt" Adeline said that many times she would steal a out of thread off of that wardrobe to complete the day's task to keep from being punished.

As she grew older she did have to go to the field and pick oot-

ton. "Aunt" Adeline does not remember it pleasantly. She said:

"I jes' hates to hab to weigh anything today, 'caze I 'members so well dat each day dat de slaves was given a certain number of pounds of cotton to pick. When weighing up time come and you didn't hab de number of pounds set aside, you may be sho' dat you was goin' to be whupped. But hit wasn't all bad times 'caze us did hab plenty to eat, 'specially at hog killin' time. Dey would hab days ob hog killin' and de slaves would bake dere bread and come wid pots, pepper, and salt. A'ter cleanin' de hogs, dey would gib us de livers and lights, and us would cook dem ober a fire out in de open and hit sho' was good eatin'. De usual 'lowance a week of pickked pork was six or seven pounds, and iffen you had a big family of chillun dey gib you more. Den dey gib you a peck of meal, sweet 'taters, sorghum syrup, and plenty of buttermilk. At Christmas times, dey gib you extra syrup to make oakes wid and sweet 'taters to make 'tater pone. And, Lor', dey would hab big cribs of pun'kins. Hit makes me hongry to think 'bout dem good ol' pun'kin pies.

"And did dey raise chickens? You knows in Mississippi dat de minks was bad 'bout killin' dem. I 'members one time de minks got in de chicken house and killed nearly every chicken on de place. Ole Mister Jones had de cook to clean and cook dem, and he come out in de fiel' an' eat wid dem to let de slaves know dat hit was all right. Den us had dem good ol' cushaws and lye hominy, too.

"De clothes was made out ob homespun in one piece. I 'members I allus had mine split up de side so I could git 'bout in a hurry. De women had pantalettes made and tied to dere knees to wear in de fields to keep de dew off dere legs. De shoes was made of cow hide and was called red russets. De way dey got dem darker was to take a hog 'gristle' and hang up in de chimbley. When hiz git full of

soot, we rub de shoes wid dat. Den dey used de darker shoes for dere Sunday best.

"You asked me about huntin'? Lor', yes dey hunted in dem times. Up in dem swamps in Mississippi dere was bears as big as cows, and deers aplenty. Dey bofe was bad about comin' in de corn fiel's and tearin' down de corn. You could hyar dem at nights out in de fiel's. Dey also caught plenty of possums and coons.

"Of course, us got sick but dey had de doctor. In dose days de doctor would cup you and bleed you. I seen a many a person cupped. De doctor had a li'l square lookin' block of wood wid tiny li'l knives, attached to hit. On top was a trigger lack is on a gun, and de doctor would put de block of wood at de nape of dere neck an' pull dat trigger. Den he hab a piece of cotten wid somepin' on hit to stop de blood when he had cupped you long 'nough. Dey would allus gib us calamus (calomel) to clean us out, and den de nex' mawnin' dey gib us a big bowl of gruel made out ob meal and milk. Den us'd be all right.

"De slaves warn't 'lowed to go to church, but dey would whisper 'roun' and all meet in de woods and pray. De only time I 'members my pay was one time when I was a li'l chile, he set me on a log by him an' prayed, an' I knows dat was whar de seeds ob religion was planted in my min'. Today I's happy to tell folks 'bout Jesus and thank Him for His goodness to me. Hit won't be long twell I meet Him face to face and thank Him."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal interview with "Aunt" Adeline Hodges, 3 Frye Street, Mobile, Alabama.

R.LD.

7-23-37

Week ending July 23, 1937.

S-200
S-260

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Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

"DE SLAVES WAIN'T 'LOWED TO GO TO CHURCH".

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

Adeline Hodges

"Aunt" Adeline who lives on Frye street, Mobile, Alabama, is a tall, gaunt, bright-skinned, colored woman, who sat dozing in a cane bottom rocking chair on a wide porch that extended across the front of the house. This cottage was among a cluster of large oak trees, that almost hid it from view.

When the writer came up on the porch, "Aunt" Adeline opened her eyes, which were covered with a pair of glasses, with one lens badly cracked. The writer told "Aunt" Adeline she was trying to find old people who lived during slavery days, and it acted like an electric shock, for the old woman, immediately sat up straight and said. "Lor", yes, I libed in dose days, an' I tells you I members all 'bout dem, do cum in an' set down. De fust white people I b'longed to war a man named Jones, who war a colonel in de war but I can't tell you much 'bout dem, cayse I war jes' a li'l gal den. I war jes' big 'nuff to tote water to de fiel' to de folks wurking, an' to min' de gaps in de fence, to keep de cattle out when dey war gatherin' de crops. I don't 'spec' you knows anything 'bout dos kin' ob fences? dey war built ob rails an' when dey war gatherin' de crops dey jes tuk down one section ob de fence, so de wagons c'uld git thro'.

After de war broke out el' Mister Jones went off to hit, an' I members de day he lef', he cum to de fiel' to tell all de han's goo'bye, he had a big white plume on his hat. Dat war in Bolivar County, Mississippi. Atter ol' Mister Jones lef' for de war, den de nigger drivers an' o'seer began to drive us 'round lack droves ob cattle. Every time dey w'uld hyar de Yankees war cuming dey w'uld take us out in de woods an' hide us. Finally dey sold us atter carrying us away from Bolivar County, sum ob us war sold to people in Demopolis, Alabama, an' Atlanta Georgia, an' sum to folks in Meridian, and Shubuta, Mississippi. I don't any more know whar my own folks went to den

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When us cum to de big river at Demopolis, Alabama, I 'members seeing de big steamboats dere, an' dey said dat de sol'iers war goin' away on dem. Hit war in Demopolis us war sold, an' a man name Ned Collins ob Shubuta, Mississippi, bought me.

"Aunt" Adeline said that the houses the slaves lived in on the Jones plantation were board houses, and that Mr. Jones owned a big plantation and lots of slaves. She said that they had home-made beds, nailed to the walls, with mattresses made out ob shucks.

After having been sold to Mr. Collins of Shubuta, Mississippi, "Aunt" Adelin said that life was very hard, not so much for herself, but she saw how hard the other slaves worked. She was the house girl, and had certain tasks to perform. She helped clean house, wash dished, and take care of the children, and after finishing that work, she had to spin thread, and each day she would have to spin so many cuts, and if she did not finish the required number, she was punished.

She said that her mistress kept the finished work oh top of a large wardrobe, and "Aunt" Adeline said that many times she would steal a cut of thread off of that wardrobe to complete a certain task given her to keep from being punished.

Week ending July 23, 1937.

S-200
S-260

Ila B. Prine,
Identification No. 0149-5302.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

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"DE SLAVES WARN'T 'LOWED TO GO TO CHURCH".

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

As she grew older she did have to go to the field and pick cotton, and "I jes hates to hab to weigh any thing today, 'cayse I 'members so well dat each day dat de slaves war given certain number ob pounds of cotton to pick, an' when weighin - up time sum an' you didn't hab de number ob pounds, set hit aside, an' you may be sho' dat you war goin' to be whipped. But hit warn't all bad times 'cayse us did hab plenty to eat, an' 'specially at hog killin' time. Dey wuld hab days ob hog killin' an' de slaves w'uld bake dere bread, an' cum wid pots, pepper, salt, an' atter cleanin' de hogs, dey w'uld gib us de livers, and lights, an' us wuld cook dem ober a fire out in de open an' hit sho' war good eatin'. De usual 'lowance a week ob pickled pork, war six or seven pounds, an' if you had a big family ob chillun dey gib you more. Den dey gib you a peck ob meal, sweet 'taters, sorghum syrup, an' plenty ob buttermilk. An' at Christmas times, dey gib you extra syrup to make cakes wid an' sweet 'taters to make 'tater pone. An', 'lor', dey w'uld hab big cribs ob pun'kins, hit makes me hongry to think 'bout dem good ol' pun'kin pun'kin pies.

"An' did dey raise chickens? You knows in Mississippi dat de minks war bad 'bout killin' dem. I 'members one time de minks got in de chicken house an' killed nearly every chicken on de place, an' ol' Mister Jones had de cook to clean an' cook dem, an' he cum out in de fiel' an' eat wid dem, to let de slaves know dat hit war all right. Den us had dem good ol' cushaws an' lye hominy, too.

"De clothes war made out ob homespun, an' made in one piece, I 'members I allus had mine split up de side so I c'uld gir 'bout in a hurry. De women had pantalettes made an' tied to dere knees, to wear in de fields to keep de dew off dere legs. De shoes war made ob cow hide, an' war called red russets. De way dey got dem darker war to take a hog "gristle' an' hang up

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"DE SLAVES WARN'T 'LOWED TO GO TO CHURCH".

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

in de chim'ney an' git hit full ob soot, an' den rub de shoes wid dat. Den dey used de darker shoes for dere Sunday best.

"You asked me about huntin'? Lor', yes sey hunted in dem times, up in dem swamps in Mississippi dere war bears as big as cows, an' deers. Dey bof war bad about cumin' in de corn fiel's an' terain' down de corn. You could hyar dem at nights out in de fiel's. Dey also caught plenty ob possums an' coons.

"Ob course, us got sick but dey had de Doctor, in dos days de Doctor w'uld cup you an' bleed you. I seen a many a person cupped; de Doctor had a li'l square lookin' block of wood wid tiny li'l pen knives, attached to hit an' on top war a trigger lack is on a gun, an' de doctor w'uld put block ob wood at de nape ob dere neck, an' pull dat trigger, an' den hab a piece ob cotton wid sumpin' on hit to stop de blood when he shd cupped you long 'nuff. Dey w'uld allus gib us 'calamus' to clean us out, an' den de nex' mawnin' gib us a big bowl of gruel, made out ob meal and milk, an' den us w'uld be all right."

"Aunt" Adeline said that "de slaves warn't 'lowed to go to church, but they w'uld whisper 'roun' an', all meet, in de woods, an' pray. De only time I 'members my paw war one time when I war a li'l chile, he set me on a log by him an' prayed, an' I knows dat war whar de seeds ob religion war planted in my min'. Today I'se happy to tell folks 'bout Jesus, an' thank Him for His goodness to me. Hit warn't be long 'til I'll meet Him face to face an' thank Him".

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal interview with "Aunt" Adeline Hodges, 3 Frye Street,
Mobile, Alabama.

Twelve years I well I
Understood Surrender

D Russell, Editor

~~JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.~~

In the middle of the road ^{near} Prichard, an incorporated suburb of Mobile, stood an ^{aged} negro man, ~~eighty-one years of age~~, gesticulating ~~wildly~~ as he told a tale of other days to a small audience. Tall, straight, with grey hair and mustache, he was a picturesque figure. *He does not know whether he was in slavery, he said, but he knows his age to be about eighty-two.*

~~When asked if he was a slave, he replied:~~

"I doesn't know whether I was a slave, but jes' de same I seed General Grant's army when hit went ⁷ through Virginny, "Jes' as sho as yo' is standin' dar, lady, I seed ^{him and I seed} dem men all dressed in dem blue suits a-marchin' side by side, gwine down de road pas' our place. Hit tuk dem three days tuh git pas' our house.

"An ⁷ does I 'member when dem Yankees cum tuh Ol' Mistiss house an' tuk a ladder an' clim' up tuh de roof an' tear de boards outta de ceilin' tuh git dem big hams an' shoulders dey had hid up dar? De women folks make ^{I sho' does} ~~oh I means 'serves dat de Ol' Miss had de slaves hide wid de meat; an' when dem Yankees fin' dat stuff dey jes' gib hit all tuh de niggers, an' I 'members too, how Ol' Miss calls us all tuh her atter dey lef' an' tole us dat us was free, but she tole us dat us hab tuh gib back sum ob de meat an' 'serves 'case she didn't hab a bit tuh eat. 'Cose we was glad tuh do hit 'case Ol' Miss sho was good tuh her slaves.~~

"I 'members ebery Sunday mawnin' dat she make de older slaves bring all de little niggards up ^{to} her big white two-story house, so she ~~could~~ ^{could} read de Bible ~~tuh~~ ^{tuh} us, an' den she gib us plenty ~~of~~ dem good biscuits an' 'taters dat she had de cook, Susanne, cook fer us. She'd say 'git roun' dere, Susanne, an' he'p dem li'l niggards plates,' I raily thought Ol' Miss was an' angel.

"Talkin' 'bout niggards bein' freed, Ol' Miss tole us us was free but hit was ten' or twelve years atter de Surrender, befo' I ~~was~~ ^{was talkin' 'bout} knowed whut she ~~meant~~. I was a big boy goin' ^{to} school befo' I had any understandin' as tuh whut she meant.

"Ol' Miss taught de niggards ^{us} how ^{to} read an' write, an' ^{some} ob dem got ^{to} be too'ficient wid der writin', case dey larn how tuh write too many pass's so de 'patty-rollers' wudn't git dem, ~~an' den~~ ^{den} dat was de onliest time I ebber knowed Ol' Miss tuh hab de slaves punished.

"Ol' Miss nebber 'lowed no mistreatin' ~~of~~ de slaves, case dey was raisin' slaves for de market, an' hit ~~wudn't~~ ^{wudn't} be good ^{business} ~~to~~ ^{to} mistreat dem. Lor' mah white folks was rich; dey had as many as five or six hundred niggards, men, women an' chillun. De plantation was big but I don't 'member how many acres, ~~but~~ ^{was} I 'members de cabins was all built in rows, an' ~~de~~ ^{was} streets, laid out 'tween de cabins. De chimneys was built outta dirt an' sticks, an' yo' know up in Virginny hit got turrible cold, an' de snow ~~was~~ ^{would} pile up, so when de cabins was built, de men ~~wud~~ ^{wud} thow dirt up under de house ^{to} keep de snow an' cold out. yo' might think dat dirt ~~wud~~ ^{would} wash out from under de house, but hit didn't. Hit jes' made dem so warm an' com'fo'ble we din't suffer.

Joseph Holmes, An Ex-Slave .

"Dat was de way wid de white folks den; dey didn't do no whippin' an' mistreatin' ob de slaves. Oh, once in a while Ol' Miss might slap de cook's face an' tell her tuh bear 'roun' dere', an' if she wanted de servin' boys ^{to} hurry, she ~~would~~ ^{would} say 'cutch hit', meanin' fer dem ^{to} cut ^{some} steps an' git 'bout in a hurry.

"I'se de ol'est rat in de pon', an' 'case I aint hung in de smokehouse, folks think I'm ^S not as ol' as I says I is, but chile, I'se been heah. I 'members how Sam usta ^{to} preach ^{to} us, when we was at Ol' Miss's place, an' when I growed up, I 'members how I usta think nobody was a Christian 'ceptin' us Baptists, but I knows better ^{now}. An' de longan I lib de mo' I realize dat de chu'ches go away case dey leabes off de ordinances ob God, 'tho us has got de Bible an' mo' Christian litterchoor dan eber befo'.

"^{My} Maw's name was 'Liza Rowlets, an' mah dady's name was Joseph Holmes. Mah daddy had de same name as de people ^{who} ^d owned him, an' mah gran'maw's name was Lucy Holmes. Gran'maw Lucy libed to be a hundred yeahs old, an' she was de fust pusson I ebber seed daid. Hit tuk three days tuh bu'y a pusson den, 'case dey dug de graves as deep as yo' is tall, which means mo' than five feet deep. Lor' sakes a-livin' us had great times. ^I I forgot tuh tell yo' dat us had home-made beds wid two sides nailed tuh de wall, an' de mattresses was made outta wheat straw, ^{an'} dat minds me dat dere wa'nt no pore cattle in dem times, 'case yo' ^{could} go whar dey thresh de wheat an' git all de straw yo' wanted an' feed de dry cattle, on hit. An' ^{you} ^{wouldnt} ^{believe} ~~believe yo' me~~ de fruit us did hab, ^{yo'} don't neber see ^{de like} ~~sum-eb~~ hit down dis way. Sich as apples, cherries, quinces, peaches an' pears.

Joseph Holmes An Ex-Slave.

"As fer huntin', I done plenty ob hit, an' one thing I got tuh git forgiveness fer was when I lef' Virginny, I lef' 'bout sixty or seventy snares set tuh ketch rabbits an' birds.

"Mah Maw had eight chillun an' we was raised in pairs. I had a sister who ~~came~~ ^{to} along wid me, an' if I jumped in de ribber tuh swim, she did hit too; if I clum' a tree, or went ~~thru~~ ^{through} a briar patch, she done hit right behin' me. Maw wanted tuh know why her cloes' was so tore up, an' when dey was ~~miss~~ ^{pretty} den us 'al, we'd make hit right wid Maw by havin' a rabbit or coon wid us, an' sometimes a mud turtle. An' as fer 'possums an' coons, us ketch dem in plenty.

" 'Bout de fruit, hit makes mah mouf watah tuh think 'bout dem cheese apples dat was yaller lac' gold, an' dose Abraham Apples de lack of which aint now tuh be had. An' dose cherry trees as big as dese oaks, wid long limbs an' big sugar an' sweetheart, an' black heart cherries. Den dere ~~was~~ ^{was} annudder kin' of cherry called de gorilla, dat was roun' an' growed as big as de yaller plums down dis way.

"Now, let me tell yo' sumpin' 'bout Virginny, hit had hits own law 'bout drink. Dey made de bes' peach an' cherry brandy an' mos' any kin' yo' ebber heerd ob, 'ceptin' dey didn't 'low yo' tuh make drink out ob anythin' ~~yo'~~ ^{you could} ~~and~~ ^{into} make bread. Now yo' understand's, sich as co'n and rye.

"Us had our brandy same as yo' ~~and~~ ^{would} coffee, 'case hit was cold an' ~~sum~~ ^{some} maw'nin's us ~~wud~~ ^{would} git up an' de snow ~~wud~~ ^{would} be half-way up ~~tuh~~ ^{to} de do', an' de men ~~wud~~ ^{would} ~~had~~ ^{could} tuh ditch hit out, so us ~~wud~~ ^{would} git out ob de house. On dem rail cold maw'nins ~~wud~~ ^{would} daddy ~~wud~~ ^{would} git de brandy out an' ~~wud~~ ^{would} maw wud put a li'l water an' sugar wid hit an gib tuh us chillun. An' den she'd take ~~sum~~ ^{some} in her mouf' an' put hit in de baby's mouf an hit wud open hits eyes an' stamp hits foot rail peart lack.

"Us nebber thought nothin' of drinkin'. I kinda believes lack dat ol' infidel, Ingersoll, who said dat anythin' dat was de custom, was de religion. ~~Reilly~~ folks was a heap kind^{er}-hearted den den dey is now, 'case dey kep big dogs ^{to} hunt up people los' in de snow. Dey all seemed mo' happy 'case dey was all busy. At night instid of wastin' dey time, dey wud go tuh de big house an' spin an' weave an' make cloes.

I kin hyar dat ol' loom hummin' now, an' see great ^{comin'} cards ob cloth ^{comin'} out, an' dem was cloes den dat was made from hit. Hit tuk ^{to} tuh git dem offin' yo' dey was so stong. I dosen't 'member whut dey used fer dye, but I knows dey used copperas as sizin' ^{to} hol' de colors. ^{Some} ob de cloth was dyed red, blue an' black. I jes' can't 'member 'bout de dye, but dey used copperas, 'dat wuz de qualification ob de intelligence ob de primitive age', in usin' dat copperas. Dey not only made our cloes, but also made our hats. Ob co'se dey wa'n't very hatty, but was mo' cappy. Dey made dem wid tabs ober de ears, an' ^{to} tie under de chin, an' was dey warm, I'll say!

"Now, when yo' axed 'bout hawg killin' time, dat was de time! ~~at times~~. Fer weeks de men ~~wud~~ ^{would} haul wood and big rocks, an' pile hit all together as high as dat house; den hab sev'ral piles like dese 'roun a big hole in de groun' whut had been filled wid watah. Den jes' a li'l atter mid-night de boss ^{would} blow de ol' horn, an' all de men ^{would} git up an' git in dem big hog pens. Den dey ^{would} set dat pile ob wood on ^{fire}, an' den start knockin' dem hawgs in de haid. Us nebber shot a hawg like dey does now, us allus used an ax to kill 'em wid.

"Atter knockin' de hawg in de haid, dey ^{would} tie a rope on hits leg, an' atter de water got ^{to} de right heat from dose red hot rocks

whut had been pushed out ob dat pile ob nu'in wood into de watah, dey wud th' ^{up} of de hog in an' drag hit aroun' awhile, an' take him out an' hab him clean in 'bout three pair o' minutes. Atter he wuz clean dey hung ^{him} ~~him~~ up, an' den later cut ^{him} ~~den~~ up an' hung ^{him} ~~den~~ in de smoke house, an' smoke ^{him} ~~den~~ wid great oak logs. Huh, dey don't cu'ah meat now, dey jes' use sum kinda bresh an' liquid, but dey don't hab meat lack us did.

"Den ^{come} ~~den~~ co'nshuckin' time. Mah goodness I jes' ^{would love} ~~wud~~ ^{to} be dere now. De co'n ^{would} ~~was~~ be piled up high an' one man ^{would} ~~wud~~ git on dat pile, hit usually was one who was kinda ~~was~~ niggah fo'man ~~who~~ ^{dat could} ~~was~~ sing an' get de wuk out ob de odder niggahs. Dis fo'man ^{would} ~~wud~~ sing a verse ^{some} ~~some~~thin' lack dis:-

"Polk an' Clay went to war,
An' Polk ^{come} ~~come~~ back wid a broken jar."

"Den all de niggahs ^{wud} ~~wud~~ sing back ^{to} him, an' hallo, a kinda ~~of~~ shoutin' soun'. Ginerally dis fo'man made up his songs by pickin' dem up from whut he had heerd white folks tell ob wars. But Miss yo' know whut was de motor powah ob dat co'n shuckin' ? Hit was de ol' jug dat was brung 'roun' ebery hour. Dat's de onliest time any ob de slaves raily got drunk.

"I wish I ^{could} ~~wud~~ 'member dose ol' songs, but all dat hallo done lef' me, 'case de onliest ^{was} ~~was~~ singin' I ^{was} ~~was~~ heerd is de good ol' ^{was} ~~was~~ sistahs singin' an' sayin' 'Amen'.

"In days gone by I went ^{to} ~~in~~ plenty ob dances an' candy pullins ~~durin' de wuk season~~ but I dosen't do dat any mo'. I'se a preacher, an' when I fust lef' Virginny I ^{come} ~~was~~ to Georgia an' stayed dere twenty yeahs, an' I kicked up a plenty ob dust in Georgia. I eben taught school an' built a plenty ob chu'ches dere. Den I ^{come} ~~was~~ on ^{to} ~~in~~ Alabama, an' libed in Evergreen fo' about twenty mo' yeahs, an' I built a two-

story brick chu'ch dere. Since I'se been in Mobile I'se wuked by dat
Bienville Squah ^{for} twenty-eight years, fer sich men as ol' man Simon,
Damrich, an' Van Antwerp, an all dere chillun has been in dese arms. I'se
been a squah citizen, an' dere hasn't been but one time in mah life I'se
had to call on anybody, an' dat wuz when I had tuh call on Uncle Sam
when ol' man Dep^{re}ssion got me. But thank God I'se still able to be 'bout
an' have all mah ^{my} faculties, 'ceptin' mah ^{my} eyesight, is a li'l porely. I still
has all mah teeth, 'ceptin' one, an ^{my} mah ^{tick} allus tuk ~~great~~ pride in mah
haih, yo' see how fine an' silky hit is, an' hit aint snow white yit. Dere
is one thing ^{to} be thankful fer. Dat is 'case I'se so near home."

Bibliography; Personal interview with Joseph Holmes, Grand Avenue,
Prichard Alabama.

TWELVE YEARS 'TWEEL I
UNDERSTOOD SURRENDER.

Joseph Holmes

In the middle of the road near Prichard, an incorporated suburb of Mobile, stood ^{Joseph Holmes} an aged Negro man, gesticulating as he told a tale of other days to a small audience. Tall, straight, with gray hair and mustache, he was a picturesque figure. He does not know whether he was born in slavery, he said, but he knows his age to be about eighty-one.

"I doesn't know whether I was a slave, but jes' de same I seed General Grant's army when hit went th'ough Virginnny," he said "Jes' as sho' as yo' is standin' dar, lady, I seed him and I seed dem men all dressed in dem blue suits a-marchin' side by side, gwine down de road pas' our place. Hit tuk dem three days tuh git pas' our house,

"An' does I 'member when dem Yankees cum tuh Ol' Mistiss house an' tuk a ladder an' clim' up tuh de roof an' tear de boards outta de ceilin' tuh git dem big hams an' shoulders dey had hid up dar? I sho' does. De women folks makes de slaves hide wid de meat; an' when dem Yankees fin' dat stuff dey jes' gib hit all tuh de niggers, an' I 'members too, how Ol' Miss calls us all to her atter dey lef' an' tole us dat us was free, but she tole us dat us hab tuh gib back ob de meat an' 'serves 'case she didn't hab a bit tuh eat. 'Cose we was glad tuh do hit 'case Ol' Miss sho' was good tuh her slaves.

"I 'members ebery Sunday mawnin' dat she make de older slaves bring all de little niggers up to her big white two-story house, so she could read de Bible to us, an' den she gib us plenty dem good biscuits an' 'taters dat she had de cook, Susanne, cook for us. She'd say 'Git 'roun' dere, Susanne, an' he'p dem li'l niggers' plates,' I raily thought Ol' Miss was a angel.

"Talkin' 'bout niggers bein' freed, Ol' Miss tole us us was free but hit was ten or twelve years atter de Surrender, befo' I knowed whut

she was talkin' 'bout. I was a big boy goin' to school befo' I had any understandin' as tuh whut she meant.

"Ol' Miss taught de niggers how to read an' write, an' some ob dem got to be too 'ficient wid de writin', 'case dey larn how tuh write too many passes so de pattyrollers wudn't git dem. Dat was de onliest time I ebber knowed Ol' Miss tuh hab de slaves punished.

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"Us had our brandy same as yo' would coffee, 'case hit was cold an' some mawnin's us would git up an' de snow would be halfway up de do', an' de men would hab to ditch hit out, so us could git out of de house. On dem rail cold mawnin's my daddy would git de brandy out an' my ma wud put a li'l water an' sugar wid hit an gib to us chillun. An' den she'd take some in her mouf' an' put hit in de baby's mouf' an' hit wud open hits eyes an' stamp hits foot rail peart lack.

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but was mo' cappy. Dey made 'em wid tabs ober de ears, an' to tie under de chin, an' was dey warm, I'll say!

"Now, when yo' axes 'bout hawg killin' time, dat was de time! Fer weeks de men would haul wood and big rocks, an' pile hit all together as high as dat house; den hab sev'ral piles like dese 'roun' a big hole in de groun' whut had been filled wid watah. Den jes' a li'l atter mid-night de boss would blow de ol' horn, an' all de men would git up an' git in dem hog pens. Den dey would set dat pile of wood on fire, an' den start knockin' dem hawgs in de haid. Us nebber shot a hawg like dey does now. Us allus used an ax to kill 'em wid.

"Atter knockin' de hawg in de haid, dey would tie a rope on hits leg, an atter de water got to de right heat from dose red hot rocks whut had been pushed out ob dat pile ob nu'in wood into de watah, dey wud th'ow de hog in an' drag hit aroun' awhile, an' take him out an' hab him clean in 'bout three pair o' minutes. Atter he was clean dey hung him up, an' den later cut him up an' hung him in de smoke house, an' smoke him wid great oak logs. Huh, dey don't cu'ah meat now, dey jes' use sum kinda bresh an' liquid, but dey don't hab meat lack us did.

"Den come co'shuckin' time. Mah goodness I jes' would love to be dere now. De co'n would be piled up high an' one man would git on dat pile. Hit usually was one who was kinda niggah fo'man dat could sing an' get de wuck out of de odder niggera. Dis fo'man would sing a verse somethin' lack dis:

"Polk an' Clay went to War,
An' Polk come back wid a broken jar."

"Den all de niggers would sing back to him, an' hallo, a kinder shoutin' soun'. Ginerally dis fo'man made up his songs by pickin' dem up from whut he had heard white folks tell of wars. But Miss yo' know whut was de motor powah of dat co'n shuckin'? Hit was de ol' jug dat was drung 'roun' ebery hour. Dat's de onliest time any ob de slaves

rally got drunk.

"I wish I could 'member dose ol' songs, but all dat hallo done lef' me, 'case de onliest singin' I hears now is de good ol' sisters singin' an' sayin' 'Amen.'

"In days gone by I went to plenty of dances an' candy pullins but I doesn't do dat any mo'. I's a preacher, an' when I fu'st lef' Virginy I come to Georgia an' stayed dere twenty yeahs, an' I kicked up a plenty of dust in Georgia. I eben taught school an' built a plenty of chu'ches dere. Den I come ^{on} to Alabammy, an' libed in Evergreen fo' about twenty mo' yeahs, an' I built a two-story brick chu'ch dere. Since I's been in Mobile I's wu'ked by dat Bienville Squah for twenty-eight years, for sich men as ol' man Simon, Damrich, an' Van Antwerp, an' all dere chillun has been in dese arms. I's been a squah citizen an' dere hasn't been but one time in mah life I's had to call on anybody, an' dat was when I had tuh call on Uncle Sam when ol' man Depression got me. But thank God I's still able to be 'bout an' have all my faculties, 'ceptin' my eyesight is a li'l porely. I still has all mah teeth, 'ceptin' one, an' my ma allus tuck pride in mah hair, yo' see how fine an' silky hit is, an' hit ain't snow white yit. Dere is one thing to be thankful fer. Dat is 'case I's so near home."

Bibliography: Personal interview with Joseph Holmes, Grand Avenue,
Prichard, Alabama.

Washington Copy,

6/15/37.

L. H.

Joseph Holmes

6

Ila B Prine, *Mobile Co.*
John Morgan Smith, *Editor*

at
Say 'Tep' niggers in
Good Condition to Sell

JOSEPH HOLMES, EX SLAVE

at *Suburb of Mobile, and*
Standing in the middle of the road *at* Prichard, Alabama, gesticulating while holding *talking to a small group of interested listeners* several people in conversation, an old negro man ended his talk to the small gathering and punctuated his last sentence with a spat of tobacco.

"No'm", he continued after I had put in my appearance and asked him a question, "I doesn't know whether I was a slave, but jus' de same I seed Gen'l Grant's army when it went th'ough Virginy. Jus' as sho as you is standin' dar, lady, I seed dem mens all dressed in blue suits, a-marchin' side by side, gwine down de road pas' our place. It tuk dem three days to go by our house.

"An' I remembers when dem Yankees come to our ole *Mistis'* house an' take a ladder an' *climb* ~~climb~~ up to de roof an' tear de boards *outta* ~~outta~~ de ceilin' to git dem big hams an' shoulders my white folks done had hid up dar. When de Yankees find dat stuff dey give it all to de niggers. *When* atter de solgers lef' ole Miss called us to her an' tol' us we was free, but for us to give back some of de meat an' things dat de Yankees done ~~give~~ give us, caze she didn't have nothin' to eat roun' de place. 'Course we was glad to do it, caze Mistis sho was good to us.

"I remembers ebery Sunday mawnin' dat she'd make de older slaves bring all de little niggers up to de big house, so she could read de Bible to 'em, an' den she give us plenty of dem good biscuits an' taters ~~dat~~ dat Susanne cook for us. She'd say: 'Git 'roun' dere, Susanne, an' he'p dem little niggers' plates.' I really thought Mistis was an angel.

"Talkin' 'bout niggers bein' freed, Ole Miss tol' us we was

free, but it was ten or twelve years after de surrender befo' I ~~really~~ knowed what she meant. I was a big boy goin' to school befo' I had an understandin' as to what she meant.

"Ole Miss taught de niggers how to read an' write an' some of 'em got to be too good at it, caze dey learned how to write too many passes so's de pattyrollers wouldn't cotch dem, an' on dem ~~occasions~~ occasions was de onlyes times dat I ever seed one of our niggers punished.

"Mistis never 'lowed no mistreatin' of de slaves, ~~cause~~ caze dey was raisin' ~~some~~ slaves for de market, an' it wouldn't be good ~~business~~ bizzness to mistreat dem. Lor' Miss, my white folks was rich; dey had as many as five or six hundred niggers; men women an' chillans. De plantation was big, but

I doesn't remember how many acres it was, but I does remember dat de cabins was all built in rows, an' dere was streets laid out among de cabins. De chimneys was built outten dirt an' sticks, an' you know up in Virginiy it got powerful cold, so when dey built de cabins dey th'owed dirt up under dem to keep de wind an' snow out.

"I was bawn in Henry County, Virginy, near Danville, an' I'se been to Vicksburg, an' Petersburg a many a time wid my pappy to de wheat an' 'bacca market. Lor', honey, Virginy is de bes' place on earth for good ~~meat~~ eatin' an' good white folks. If anybody tells you dat de white folks was mean to dere niggers, dey neber come from Virginiy, caze us was too near de free states, an' I done already tol' you dat dey raised niggers to sell an' dey kep' 'em in good condition. In ~~does~~ days white folks was white folks ~~and~~ an' black folks was black folks. Jus' lak Booker T. Washington was a riber between de niggers of dis generation an' learnin. He had all dat was fine an' good, an' he give de bes' to his people iffen dey would take it.

~~Sam~~ "Dat was de way ~~was~~ wid de white folks den; dey didn't do no whuppin'.

"I'se de onlyes ratⁱⁿ de poud, an' caze I ain't hung in de smoke house, folks thinks I'm not as old as I say I is, but chile, I'se been here a long time. I 'members how black Sam useta preach to us an' when I growed up I useta think warnat nobody 'hristians cep'n us babtists, but I knows better now, an' de longer I live de mo' I realizes dat de churches go 'way' caze dey leaves off de ordinances of God, although us has a bible an' mo' Christian readin' dan ever befo'.

"My mammy's name was Eliza Rowlets an' my ~~mammy~~ pappy's was Joeshp Holmes. My pappy had de ~~same~~ ^{same} name as de peop'les dat owned him an' my granmammy's name was Lucy Holmes. Gran'mammy Holmes lived to be ower a hundred years old, an' she was de fust ~~mammy~~ ^{purson} I ever seed daid. In dem days it tuk three days to bury a ~~mammy~~ ^{purson}, caze dey dug de graves as deep as ~~you~~ ^{de corpse was} takl.

"Lend sakes a-living us had great times, an' I forgot to tell you dat us ~~had~~ had home-made beds wid twa sides nailed to de wall an' de mattresses was made outen wheat straw.

"As for huntin' I done plenty of it an' one thing I got to git forgiveness for was when I ~~was in~~ ^{left} ~~Virginia~~ ^{Virginny}, I lef' 'bout fifty or sixty snares sat to cotch rabbits an' birds.

"My mammy had ~~me~~ eight chilluns an' we was raised in pairs. I had a sister who come along wid me, an' iffen I jumped in de river she done it too. An' iffen I go th'ough a briar patch, here she come along too.

"'Bout de fruit; it makes my mouth water to think about dem cheeze apples, dat was yallar lak gold, an' dose Abraham apples, an' de cherry trees as big as dese oaks here. I'se eatin' many a big sugar and sweetheart cherry. But dere was anudder kind called de Gorilla

dat growed as big as de yaller plums down dis way. Now let me tell you somp'n 'bout Virginy: Dey had dere laws 'bout drink. Dey had de bes' peach an' cherry brandy an' mos' any kin' you eber heared of, but dey didn't 'low you to make drink outten anything you could make bread wid; sich as corn or rye. Us had our brandy same as you would coffee, 'caze it was cold, an' some mawnin's my pappy would git de brandy out an' my mammy would putt a little water an' sugar wid it an' gib it to us chilluns. Us neber thought nothin 'bout drinkin'. I kinda believes lak dat ole infidel Ingersoll who said dat anything dat was a custom was dere religion.

"Now you axed about hog-killin' time? Dat was de time of times. For weeks de mens would haul wood an' big rocks, an' pile 'em together as high as dis house, an' den have several piles, lak dat 'roun' a big hole in de groun' what had been filled wid water. Den jus' a little atter midnight, de boss would blow de ole hawn, an' all de mens would git up an' ~~git~~ git in dem big hog pens. Den dey would sot dat pile of wood on fife an' den start knockin' dem hogs in de haid,-- us neber

shot a hog lak us does now; us always used an axe to kill 'em wid. Atter knockin' de hog in de haid, dey would tie a rope on his leg an' atter de water got to de right head, fum does red-hot rocks de hog ~~would~~ would be throwed in an' drug aroun' a while, den taken out an' cleaned. Atter he was cleaned he was cut up into sections an' hung up in de smoe house. Lawsie, lady, dey don't cure meat dese days; dey jus' use some kind of liquid to bresh over it. we useta ~~have~~ have sho nuff meat.

"Den come ^{cawn} cornshuckin' time, my goodness, I would ~~love~~ jus' love to be dar now. De cawn would ~~be~~ be piled up high an' one man would git on dat pile it was usually a kinda nigger foreman who could sing an' git de work outten de niggers. iub

Dis fo'man would sing a verse somp'n lak dis:

"Polk and Clay went to war,
Polk come back wid a broken jaw."

Den all de niggers would sing back at him wid a kinda shoutin' sound.

Near bout all de times de fo'man made up his own songs, by pickin' dem outen de history. But, Miss, does you know what was de real motor power of dat shuckin'? It war de jug dat dey ^{bring} brought aroun' eve'y hour.. ^{dat} Dat de onlyes time de slaves really got drunk.

"In dem ole days I went to plenty of dances ~~and~~ an' candy pullin's curin' de Yule season, but I doesn't do dat no mo'. I'se a preacher an' when I fus' lef' Virginy, I come to Georgy an' stayed dar twenty years whar I kicked up plenty of ~~money~~ dus'. I even taught school dar. Den I come to Alabamy ~~and~~ an' lived in Evergreen for ~~some~~ 'bout' twenty mo' years. Since I been in Mobile I'se worked for sich men as ole ^{Man} ~~was~~ Simon, Damrich, an' Van Antwerp, an' all dere chilluns has been in dese ~~arms~~ here arms of mine. I'se been a square citizen an' dere hasn't been a time dat I is ~~had~~ had to call on nobody, but Uncle Sam when ole man 'pression ~~was~~ cotched me. But thank de Lawd I is still able to git about an' have all my senses 'cep' my eyesight, an' it's jus' a little po'ly. I is got all my teeth 'cep' one, an' my mammy was always proud of my hair.. See how silky an' fine it is? Not quite white, dough. I hope I ~~is~~ lives long enough for it to turn white as snow. I think St. Peter will lak it better dat way.

Week ending June 11, 1937.

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#6. mobile co. -1-
Ila B. Prine,
Identification No. 0149-5302.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

Standing in the middle of the road of Prichard the incorporated suburb of Mobile, gesticulating while talking to several people, was an old negro man eighty-one years of age. He was a tall, straight, dark-skinned negro, with grey hair and moustache.

When the writer asked him if he was a slave, he said:

"I doesn't ~~know~~ ^{know} w'ether I wuz a slave, but jes' de s^{me} I seed General Grant's army when hit went through Virginny. Jes' as sho' as yo' is standing dar, lady, I seed dem men all dressed in dem blue suits a marchin' side by side, gwine down de road pas' our place. Hit tuk dem three days tuh git pas' our house.

"An' does I 'member when dem Yankees, cum tuh our Ol' Mistiss house an' take a ladder an' clim' up tuh de roof an' ~~take~~ ^{tear} de boards outta de ceilin' tuh git dem big hams an' shoulders, dey had hid up dar? Yo' women folks make.- Oh! I means 'serves dat de Ol' Miss had de slaves hide wid de meat; an' when dem Yankees find dat stuff, dey jes' gib hit all tuh de niggers, an' I 'members too, how Ol' Miss, calls us all tuh her atter dey lef' an' tole us dat us wuz free, but she tole dat us had tuh gib bac' sum ob de meat an' 'perves 'cayse she didn't hab a bit tuh eat. Course we wuz glad tuh do hit, 'cayse Ol' Miss sho' wuz good tuh her slaves.

I 'members ebery Sunday mawning dat she make de older slaves bring all de little niggers up tuh her big white two-story house, so she sud read de bible tuh us, an' den she gib us plenty ob dem good biscuits an' 'taters dat she had de cook Susanne cook fer us. She'd say 'git 'roun' dere, Susanne, an' he'p dem li'l niggers' plates', I raily thought Ol' Miss wuz an' angel.

"Talkin' 'bout niggers bein' freed, Ol' Miss tole us us ~~wuz~~ ^{was} free but hit wuz ten or twelve years atter de Surrender befo' I raily knowed whut she meant, I wuz a big boy goin' tuh school afore I had any understandin' as tuh

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Ila B. Prine,
Identification No. 0149-5302.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

whut she meant.

"Ol' Miss taught de niggers how tuh read an' write an' sum ob dem got tuh be too proficient wid dere writin', 'cayse dey larn how tuh write too many pass's so de 'patty-rollers' wudn't git dem, an' den dat wuz de onlinest time I ebber knowed Ol' Miss tuh hab de slaves punished.

Ol' Miss nebber 'lowed no mistreatin' ob de slaves, 'cayse dey wuz raisin' slaves for de market, an' hit wudn't be good bizness tuh mistreat dem. Lor' mah white folks wuz rich, dey had as many as five or six hundred niggers, men, women, an' chillun. De plantation wuz big but I dosen't 'member how many acres, but I 'members de cabins wuz all built out ob logs an' ceiled or chinked wid, boards an' de cabins wuz built in rows, an' derer wuz streets laid out among de cabins. De chimneys wuz built outta dirt an' sticks, an' yo' kno' up in Virginny hit got turrible cold, an' de snow wud pile up, so when de cabins wuz built, de men wud throw dirt up under de house tuh keep de snow an' cold out. Yo' might think dat dirt wud wash out from under de house, but hit didn't. Hit jes' made dem so warm an' confor'mable us didn't suffer from de cold.

I wuz borned in Henry County, Virginny near Danville, an' I'se been to Vicksburg, an' Petersburg a-many-a-time wid mah daddy to de wheat an' tobacey market. Lor' honey, Virginny is de bes' place on earth fer good eatin' an' good white folks. If any body tells yo' dat de white folks wuz mean tuh dere niggers, dey nebber cum from Virginny, 'cayse us wuz tuh near de free states, an den I'se already tole yo' dey raised niggers tuh sell an' dey kept dem in good condition, an' in dose days white folks wuz white folks an' black folks wuz black folks. Jes lac' Booker T. Washington wuz a river between de niggers ob dis later generation in larnin'. He had all dat's fine an' good an' he gib ob de bes' tuh his people, if dey wud take hit.

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JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

"Pats wuz de way wid de white folks den, dey didn't do no whippin' an' mistreatin' ob de slaves. Oh! once in a while Ol' Miss might slap de cooks face an' tell her tuh bear 'round dere', an' if she wanted de servin' boys to hurry, she wud say 'cutch hit', meanin' fer dem tuh cut sum steps an' git 'bout in a hurry.

"I'se de oldest rat in de pond, an' 'cayse I aint hung in de smokehouse, folks think I'm not as old as I says I is, but, chile, I'se been here. I 'members how Sam usta tuh preach tuh us, when us wuz at de ol' Miss's place, an' when I growed up I 'members how I usta think nobody wuz a Christian 'ceptin' us Baptists, but I knows betta now. An' de longer I lib de more I realize dat de churches go away, 'cayse dey leaves off de ordinances of God, altho' us has got de Bible an' mo' Christian literature dan ebber afore.

"Mah maw's name wuz Eliza Rowlets an' mah daddy's name wuz Joseph Holmes. Mah daddy had de same name as de people who owned him, an' mah gran'maw's name wuz Lucy Holmes. Gran'maw Lucy lived to be a hundred years old, an' she war de fust person I ebber seed dead. Hit tuk three days tuh bury a person den, 'cayse dey dug de graves as deep as you is tall, which means more than five feet deep. Lor's sakes a-livin' us had great times, an' ah, yes, I forgot tuh tell yo dat us had home-made beds wid two sides nailed tuh de wall, an' de mattresses wuz made outta wheat straw, an' dat 'minds me dat dere warn't no pore cattle in dem times, 'cayse yo' cud go whar dey thresh de wheat an' git all de straw yo' wanted an' feed de dry cattle on hit. An' believe y o', me, de fruit us did hab yo' don't nebber see sum ob hit down dis way. Sich as apples, cherries, quinces, peaches and pears.

"As fer huntin' I done plenty ob hit, an' one thing I got tuh git forgiveness fer, wuz when I lef' Wirginny, I lef' 'bout sixty or seventy snares sat

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JOSEPH HOLMES, EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

sat tuh katch rabbits an' birds.

"Mah maw had eight chillun an' we wuz raised in pairs. I had a sister who cum alon' wid me, an' if I jumped in de river tuh swim, she did hit tuh, if I clim' a tree, or go through a brair patch, she went, tuh. Many's-a-time Maw wanted tuh know why her clos wuz so tore up, but we'd make hit all right by having a rabbit or coon, sumtime mud turtles. An' as fer 'possums an' coons, us katch dem in abundance.

"'Bout de fruit, hit makes mah mouth water tuh think about dem cheese apples, dat wuz yaller lac' gold, an' dose Abraham apples. An' dose cherry trees as big as dese oaks, wid long lim's an' big sugar an' sweetheart, an' black heart cherries. Den dere wuz anudder kin' ob cherry called de gorilla cherry dat wuz roun' an' growed as big as de yaller plums de down dis way. Now, let me tell yo' sumpin' 'bout Virginny, but had its own law about drink. Dey made de bes' peach an' cherry brandy an' mos' any kin' yo' ebber hyeard ob, 'ceptin' dey didn't 'low yo' tuh make drink out ob anything yo' cud make bread. Now you understan', sich as corn or rye.

"Us had our brandy same as yo' wud coffee, 'cayse hit wuz cold, an' sum mawnings us wud git up an' de snow wud be half way up tuh de doo', an de men wud hab tuh ditch it out, so us cud git out ob de house. On dem rail col' mawnings mah daddy wud git de brandy out an' mah maw wud put a li'l water an' sugar wid hit an' gib tuh us chillun. An' den she'd take sum in her mouf' an' put hit in de baby's mouf an' hit wud open hits eyes an' stamp hits foot rail peart lac.

"Us nebber thought nothin' ob drinkin'. I kinda believes lac' dat ol' infidel Ingersoll, who said dat anything dat wuz de custom, wuz dere religion. Really speaking, folks wuz kinda hearted den dan dey is now, 'cayse dey kept big dogs tuh huntup people in de snow. Dey all seemed more happy, 'cayse at ri

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JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

night dey wud go tuh de big house an' spin an' weave, an' make de clos.

"I kin hyar dat ol' loom hummin' now an' see great yards ob cloth cummin' out, an' dem wuz clos' den dat wuz made from hit. Hit tuk fire tuh git it offin' yo' 'cayse hit wuz so strong. I dosen't 'member whut dey used fer dye, but I knows dey used copperas as sizin' tuh hol' de colors. Sum ob de cloth wuzed dyed, red blue an' black. I jes' can't 'member abouy de dye, but dey use copperas, 'dat wuz de qualification ob de intelligence ob de primitive age', in using dat spooeras. Dey not only made our clos but also made nor hats. 'Ob course de warn't very hatty, but wuz more cappy'. Dey made dem wid tabs ober de ears, an' tuh tie under de chin, an' wuz dey warm, I'll say!

"Now, when yo' axed 'bout hog killin' time, dat wuz de time ob times. Fer weeks de men wud haul wood an' big rocks, an' pile hit together as high as dis house, an' den hab several piles, lac' dat 'roun' a big hole in de 'groun' whut had been filled wid water. Den jes' a li'l atter midnight, de boss wud blow de ol' horn, an' all de men wud git up an' git in dem big hog pens. Den dey wud set dat pile ob wood on fire an' den start knockin' dem hogs in de haid- us neber shot a hog lac' dey does now, us allus used an ax to kill dem wid. Atter knockin' de hog in de haid, dey wud tie a rope on his laig, an' atter de water got tuh de right heat frum dose red-hot rocks whut had been pushed out ob dat oile ob wood into de water, dey wud throw de hog in an' drag it aroun' awhile, an' take him out an' hab him clean in about three minutes. Atter he wuz clean dey hung dem up, an' den later cut dem up an' hung dem in de smoke house, an' smoke dem wid great oak logs. Huh, dey don't cuore meat now, dey jes' use sum kinda brush an' liquid, but dey don't hab meat lac' us did.

"Den cum cornshucking time, mah goodness, I jes' wud love tuh be dere now. De corn wud be piled up high an' one man wud git on dat pile, hit usually wuz kinda ob a nigger foreman who cud sing an' get de wurk out ob de odder niggers.

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JOSEPH HOLMES, AN EX-SLAVE.

(Written by Ila B. Prine.)

Dis foreman wud sing a verse sumthin' lac' dis.

"Polk an' Clay went to War,

And Polk cum back wid a broken jar".

Den all de niggers wud sing back tuh him, an' hallo' a kinda ob shoutin' soun'. Usually dis foreman made up his songs, by pickin' dem up historically. But, Miss, you know whut wuz de motor power ob dat shucking? Hit wuz de ol' jug dat wuz brung 'roun' ebery hour, dats de only time any ob de slaves really got drunk.

I wish I cud 'member 'dose ol' songs, but all dat hallo' done lef' me, 'cayse de only singin' I hyear is de good ol' sisters singin' an' sayin' 'Amen'.

In days gone by, I went tuh plenty ob dances, an' candy pullin's durin' de yule season, but I dosen't do dat any mo'. I'se a preacher, an' when I fust lef' Virginny I cum to Georgia an' stayed dere twenty years, an' I kicked up a plenty ob dust in Georgia. I eben taught school an' built a plenty ob chu churches dere. Den I cum on tuh Alabamy, an' lived in Evergreen fer 'bout twenty mo' years, an' I built a two story brick church dere. Since I'se been in Mobile I'se wurked by dat Bienville Square fer twenty eight years, fer sich men as ol' man Simon, Damrich, an' Van Antwerp, an' all dere chillun has been in dese arms. I'se been a square citizen, an' dere hasn't been but one time in mah life I'se had to call on anybody, an' dat wuz when I had tuh call on Uncle Sam, when ol' man depression got me. But thank God I'se still able to be 'bout, an' have all my faculties, 'ceptin' mah eyesight is a li'l porely. Isstill has all mah teeth 'ceptin' one, an' mah maw allus tuk great pride in mah hair, you see how fine an' silky hit is, an' hit ain't snow white yit. Dere is one thing, tuh be thankful fer is, 'cayse I'se so near home.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal interview with Joseph Holmes, Grand Avenue, Prichard, Alabama.

Francois Ludgere Diard
John Morgan Smith

The Fulfilled Wish

f MAMMY LUCY KIMBALL

I made two visits to the home of Mammy Lucy Kimball.

~~was~~ The first was during the ~~month~~ month of April, 1937, the next was ^{nearly} a month later. On the first trip I had a very successful talk with the old negro woman, but on the last, she wasn't at home, and so the information I sought had to wait. ~~I~~ I was very disappointed that I couldn't see her on my second venture, but it was impossible. Perhaps I shall ask her my question later on.

Mammy Lucy had ^{not} grown very feeble when I last saw her, ~~but~~ ^{and} her former methodical ~~way~~ mode of living can be attributed to the cause of her obtaining the venerable old age of 85 years. She was born into slavery in 1851 at Swift's Landing near the town of Blakeley, ^{Baldwin} in Baldwin County. She was a slave in the ~~noted~~ Charles Hall family of that county before and during The War between The States. In 1907, she came to work for E.S. Fry and Santos Rubira families of Mobile.

Following the War between The States, Mammy Lucy Kimball worked in ^{various} ~~different~~ families at the summer resorts of Baldwin County.

When a young girl, Mammy Lucy performed the duties of a children's nurse, and worked as a dining room servant. She had some education, and as she had worked in families of refinement and culture all her life, her manner was that of a well educated person. However, like the average [^] educated Negro, she still displayed the ~~characteristics~~ characteristics of the ante-bellum days. She said that she strictly adhered to old fashioned methods, such as; going to church twice

a week, not believing in doctors, and always taking home-concocted remedies.

I asked her if she believed in carrying a rabbit's foot for luck, to which she responded:

"Honey, you don't think I'm like these other Negroes, who still ^{believe in} ~~believe in~~ that ^{old} ~~is~~ nonsense? I might tell the children that a rabbit foot brings good luck because it is an old custom for superstitious persons to carry one, but, honey, you'd have just as good luck if you carried ~~a large quantity of~~ brick-bats in your coat. My white people in Balwin County never brought me up to believe in such ~~strange or weird~~ things.

"Well, Mammy Lucy," I asked, "do you remember any ~~strange or weird~~ ^{strange or weird} stories ~~that~~ ^{happened} during the ~~times~~ of the Civil War?"

"Yes," she answered slowly, "I remember during the civil War some of the mischievous Sibley boys who were kin ^{to} the ~~Hall~~ ^{Hall} family over in Balwin County, tied a ^{strange} long black thread to the ankle of a black boy named Slow Poke. ~~On the end of the~~ thread was fastened two cow bladders filled with pebbles to make a rattling noise as they were dragged over the ground. ~~Some~~ ^P Some Negroes were going ~~to~~ ^{that} town ~~that~~ night to fetch ~~some~~ supplies and among ~~them~~ ^{them} was Slow Poke. The boys jokingly asked him if he had his rabbit foot with him as he might need it to keep the the rattling noises away at night. Slow Poke showed them his rabbit foot, and ^{displaying} ~~showing~~ ^{displaying} his ~~teeth~~ ^{teeth} in a broad grin he said that they warn't goin' to be no ~~ghosts~~ ^{ghosts} after him. The boys deftly tied the string to Slow Poke's ankle while some of their friends held his attention ^{on something else} ~~on something else~~. Slow Poke hadn't gone ~~far~~ when ~~he~~ he heard the bladders rattling at his heels. He immediately ~~stopped~~

decided whole troop

~~that~~ that there was a ~~group~~ of ~~ghosts~~ after him, and so began to hit his fastest gait down the middle of the dark road. He ran till he reached Montgomery Hill some miles distant where the string finally wore out. ~~His~~ His people didn't find him till three days later, then they took him home and gave him a sound whipping for running away??"

Mammy Lucy talked ~~a good deal~~ ^{of} the Hall ~~and~~ and Sibley families and of the wealth that they once had, and what happiness she found ⁱⁿ being slave to such good people. She remembered all the summer resorts on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay when they were in their glory before the Civil War, and how the Mobile ferries landed bringing over all the fashionable Mobile families to their summer ~~homes~~ homes on the bay. She remembered hearing father Ryan, the poet-priest of the south, preaching at the dedication of the Catholic Church

at Montrose and ~~when~~ the storm in the '70's almost demolished Alabama City (now Fairhope). She recalls ~~the~~ ^{landing of} the Confederate ~~troops~~ ^{troops or Hollywood} ~~at~~ Mobile at the outbreak of the war for ~~active service~~ ^{at}

wood on their way to Fort Pickens, Fla. ^{for active service.}

I found Mammy Lucy to be neat and prim as she must have been thirty years ago, when she first went to work for the Fry and ~~Ubira~~ families. She still walked ~~with~~ with the agility of a young person, and her mind ~~was~~ ^{is} fertile with fresh thoughts and with the deeds of the past. "I have found happiness," she said, ~~in doing simple things.~~ People have been good to me and ~~in~~ in return, have tried to be kind ~~and~~ to those around me. I have lived a plain ~~life~~ ^{life} and ~~have~~ have been rewarded ^{with} a ripe age that still finds me feeling young. I shall never grow old in my thoughts and actions, but always keep a place in my mind to welcome something new. I will have had a complete life if I can live only two weeks longer. There is something

I like
I want to see."

I left ~~her~~ ^{her} after a few more minutes of ~~her~~ and returned home ~~but~~ there ~~was~~ ^{was} something I wanted to ask Mammy Lucy;

something that ~~prayed~~ ^{had} on my mind ~~for days~~ ^{for days}. I wanted to ask her

what the thing ~~was~~ that she wanted to see ~~in the house~~ ^{She was so gentle and}

content, my interest, seemed obvious

~~prying into her affairs. Oh, dear, I'll~~

Some day I shall I decided

go to see her again, and bring up the subject casually ~~and~~ ^{then} she'll

of my curiosity

never know. Three weeks later I walked to the door of Mammy Lucy's

cabin and on the porch stood a negro girl watering a few pots of

flowers. "Is Mammy Lucy at home?" I asked.

The girl was silent for a moment, then she spoke in a high-

pitched whining voice: "Mammy Lucy, she daid."

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said. "When did she die?"

"Fo' days ago," was the reply.

I walked down the path of pebbles toward ~~the~~ the bay. The question

would never be ~~answered~~ ^{answered}, but I knew that Mammy Lucy ~~had~~ ^{died content}

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Week ending May 14, 1937.

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Francois Ludgere Diard,
Identification No. 0149-5252.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist.2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

MAMMY LUCY KIMBALL, EX-NEGRO SLAVE.

(Written by Francois Ludgere Diard.)

The last conversations the writer had with "Mammy Lucy" Kimball, ex-slave, was during the last week in April, 1937. "Mammy Lucy" had grown very feeble, but her former methodical mode of living can be attributed to the cause of her obtaining the venerable old age of 85 years. She was born a slave in 1851, at Swift's Landing near the town of Blakeley, in Baldwin County, across the Mobile river and bay delta, and was a slave in the noted Charles Hall family of Baldwin County during the War between the States. In 1907 she came to work for the T. S. Fry and Santos Rubira families of Mobile. On Friday May 7th., 1937, she became suddenly ill and succumbed that night.

Following the war between the States, "Mammy Lucy" Kimball worked in different families at the summer resorts of Baldwin County, then came to Mobile where she worked in a number of Mobile families before going to work in the T. S. Fry and Santos Rubiro families.

"Mammy Lucy" Kimball mostly performed the duties of children's nurse, and had formerly been a dining room servant. She had some education, and as she had worked only in refined and cultured families her entire life, her language and manner was that of a well educated person. However, like the average educated negro, she still displayed the characteristics of the ante-bellum days. She said she strictly adhered to old-fashioned methods, went to church as often as she could, believed very little in doctors and always took when sick simple home remedies.

While conversing with "Mammy Lucy", the writer asked her if she believed in carrying around a rabbit's foot, as he never knew for a fact she was not superstitious like other negroes. She replied with a broad grin:

"Honey, you don't believe I am like these other negroes, who still cling to all ^{that} taht before the war nonsense?" I might tell the children a rabbit foot brings good luck because it is an old custom for superstitious persons to car-

Week endign May 14, 1900.

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Francis Ludgere Diard,
Identification No. 0149-5252.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist.2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

MAMMY LUCY KIMBALL, EX-NEGRO SLAVE.

(Written by Francois Ludgere Diard.)

ry one. But, honey, you'd have just as good luck if you carried a lot of brick-bats in your pocket. My white folks in Baldwin County never brought me up to believe in superstitious things."

"Do you remember any superstitious happenings during the Civil War, when you were a slave in the Hall family?" asked the writer.

"I remember during the Civil War some of the mischievous Sibley boys, who were kinsfolks of the Hall family over in Baldwin County, the folks who last owned me, on a dark, damp Sunday night tied a black cotton thread of several yards in length to a young stripling of a brown skinned slave boy named "Slow Poke." All the slaves in the neighborhood were going to church that night, and Slow Poke was far behind. The Sibley boys had tied to the end of the cotton thread two cow bladders containing pebbles in each to make them rattle when pulled along on the ground. However, before the negroes were atarting from the Hall home, the Sibley boys asked Slow Poke did he have his rabbit foot with him. Slow Poke showed them he had it well strung around his neck.

" 'Well,' said one of the Sibley boys, 'remember Slow Poke take the middle of the road and dont look back, for if you do the spirits will be right on your heels and rattle you to death and you bound to see your ancestors. Nigger, you won't fail to kiss your rabbit foot ten thousand times.' "

All the time young Sibley was telling this to Slow Poke, said Mammy Lucy, he was walking along side of him, and when they got to the darkest spot along the road young Sibley tied the cow bladder to the end of the cotton thread attached unknowingly to Slow Poke and laid them noiselessly on the ground, and then disappeared to the side of the road to join his brothers and young friends, who were waiting to see the "rabbit foot" work on Slow Poke.

When Slow Poke, continued Mammy Lucy, got almost up to the other negroes going to church, the black thread stretched out at full length and the cow

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Francois Ludgere Diard,
Identification No. 0149-5252.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist.2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

MAMMY LUCY KIMBALL, EX-NEGRO SLAVE.

(Written by Francois Ludgere Diard.)

bladders with their pebbles soon began to rattle. Slow Poke broke out and ran and never stopped until he got to Montgomery Hill, in upper Baldwin County, where he hid for a whole month and the Sibley boys had to go and get him.

"Bless you, honey," said Mammy Lucy, "when they found him he was kissing over and over again his rabbit foot, as he was scared to distress. Slow Poke was brought back to the Hall home, and given a beating and warned never to run away."

Mammy Lucy talked a good deal of the Hall and the Sibley families and all the wealth that they once had, and what happiness it was to be a slave to such good white people. She remembered all the summer resorts on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, when they were in their glory before the War between the States and following for many years, and how the Mobile Bay ferries landed, bringing over all the fashionable and wealthy families of Mobile to their summer homes by the bay. She said that she remembered hearing Father Ryan, the poet-priest of the South, preaching at the dedication of the Catholic Church at Montrose; and also when the storms in the 1870's almost destroyed old Alabama City (now the town of Fairhope.) She also remembered when the Confederate troops, leaving Mobile at the outbreak of the war for active service, landed at Hollywood between Montrose and the present Daphne on their way to Fort Pickens, Fla., and other points.

Mammy Lucy Kimball during this last interview in April was found by the writer to be still neat and prim as she was thirty years before, when she first went to work for the Fry and Rubira families. She was now 85 years of age, and had all the venerableness of a person that age. She still walked with the agility of a younger person, however, and her mind still fertile and vivid.

Week ending May 14, 1937.

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Francois Ludgere Diard.
Identification No. 0149-5252.
Federal Writers' Project, Dist.2.
WPA Project 3014, Mobile, Ala.

MAMMY LUCY KIMBALL, EX-NEGRO SLAVE.

(Written by Francois Ludgere Diard.)

She remarked that if she lived for just a little while longer, she would be so happy.

This happiness came to Mammy Lucy Kimball in death following a brief illness at the home of a friend on Ann street, on Friday night, May 7th, 1937.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal interview with Mammy Lucy Kimball.

Week ending Aug. 20, 1937.

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"Satan Done Got His
Juking Generation"
AUNT ELLEN KING DOESN'T LIKE PRESENT

Mary A. Poole,
Mobile

Identification No. 0149-4366

Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.

WPA Project 3609, Mobile, Ala.

DAY-DANCING.

(Written by Mary A. Poole.)

Aunt Ellen King Living ^{as} in a two room cabin nestling back in the woods near Mauvilla, Ala., about twelve miles above Mobile, ~~the writer~~ guided ~~by~~ ^{now} a little colored boy ^{led me} along a circuitous path finally ^{to} located ^{the} an old ex-slave, Ellen King by name, showing the weight of her 86 years; but after talking awhile she became interested and told ~~the writer~~ ^{that} she was born at Enterprise, Mississippi, on the plantation of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey,, but could not recall their given names, or the names of their children, of which there were three, two girls and one boy.

They lived in a big white house and the cabins in the slave quarters were built of planks, with streets between and little gardens in front of them, some having vegetables planted and others flowers.

The Harveys were good masters, they had plenty to eat, and good homespun clothes to wear and home-tanned leather shoes. The women gathered leaves, ~~and~~ bark, and indigo to dye the cloth to make their dresses of different colors.

The plantation was large and had several slaves. Aunt Ellen, however, could not recall the number of acres or the number of slaves, but knew there was a crowd of them. The Harvey's raised wheat, cotton and corn, and lots of live stock.

Aunt Ellen sat quiet for a few moments and said:

"Lady, when I sits and thinks of all the good things us had to eat and all the fun we had 'course we had to work, but

Week ending Aug. 20, 1937.
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2.
Mary A. Poole,
Identification No. 0149-4366
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2
WPA Project 3609, Mobile, Ala.

AUNT ELLEN KING DOESN'T LIKE PRESENT

DAY DANCING.

(Written by Mary A. Poole.)

you knows lady, when a crowd all works together and sings and laughs, first thing you know ~~s~~ work's done."

Aunt Ellen recalled the Yankees coming through and telling all the slaves they were free, and that a lot of the slaves went with them, but Aunt Ellen laughed and said:

"My Pa and some of the others got scared and hid in a big cave and just ~~staid~~ ^{stayed} there until the soldiers left, and, lady, he still ~~staid~~ ^{stayed} on after the war, with the Harveys, and I was married there in the white folks church, ~~and~~ they gave me a big wedding, lots to eat, plenty of music, singing and dancing, ~~jest~~ like they used to say, we danced all night to broad daylight!"

^{The wr} The ~~writer~~ ^{was asked} asked Aunt Ellen how many times she was married and she replied:

"Twice, first one dead and dont know where ~~the second~~ ^{+ 'other} is, and had no children by either".

When asked about religion Aunt Ellen said:

"Lady, I prayed and prayed and religion came to me, and I ~~joined~~ ^{joined} the Big Zion Methodist Church, in Mobile, Ala., but ^{would have} moving to Mauvilla where there was no Methodist Church, ^{so} I ~~joined~~ ^{joined} the Baptist Church."

Aunt Ellen says the people of today are going back not forward, "all they study is idleness and to do devilment these days. Young generation done gone, Satan got ~~them~~, too much 'joking' these days, have no time to study 'bout the Lord and their dying

Week ending Aug. 20, 1937.
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3.
Mary A. Poole,
Identification No. 0149-4366
Federal Writers' Project, Dist. 2.
WPA Project 3609, Mobile, Ala.

~~AUNT ELLEN KING DOESN'T LIKE PRESENT~~
~~DAY DANCING.~~

~~(Written by Mary A. Poole.)~~

day ^{all} they do, is juke, juke, juke! When they closed the schools up here in Mauvilla, they had children all juking.

The writer was somewhat at a loss to know just what Aunt Ellen meant by "juking," but thought best to let her talk on and not make a direct inquiry, and after a little Aunt Ellen continued:

"No, lady, we used to call ^{fiddlers} ~~figures~~ for our dancing, had a big fiddle and two small fiddles, and a set in one room and one in ^{the other} ~~another~~, none of this twisting and turning. I just can't stand all that juking, just won't look at it."

~~For the reader's information~~ by "juking" Aunt Ellen meant rough dancing, ^{as} ~~perpetrated~~ by the generation of today.

Aunt Ellen firmly believes the old-time religion was best for all, and tried to sing in a wavering voice the following:

"Down by the river side,
Jesus will talk and walk,
Ain't going to study the world no more,
Ain't going to study the world no more,
For down by the river side,
Jesus will talk and walk."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal conversation with Aunt Ellen King,
Mauvilla, Ala.

"SATAN DONE GOT DIS
JUKING GENERATION"

Ellen King lives in a two room cabin nestling back in the woods near Mauvilla, Ala., about twelve miles above Mobile. A little Negro boy led me along a circuitous path to the ex-slave, showing the weight of her 86 years. After talking awhile she became interested and told that she was born at Enterprise, Miss. on the plantation of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey., but could not recall their given names, or the names of their children, of which there were three, two girls and one boy.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY: Personal conversation with Aunt Ellen King,
Mauvilla, Ala.

R.L.D.

9-9-37