

Sam Lynn (Negro)
Mufaula, Alabama

Gertha Couric
Barbour County
Jan. 11, 1939

SAM LYNN, FISHERMAN AND RIVER RAT

Sam Lynn lives on the banks of the Chattahoochee River in a little four-room cottage, high up and with concrete steps leading to it.

Sam has five children, all living and all married but the youngest boy. He married Hattie Wright about 25 years ago. She is an expert laundress.

Hattie has never had any children of her own. She tells her story in this way:

"Sam just heired his children. All five of them are bastards, but Sam gave them his name; ain't none got the same ma. But Sam has been mighty good to all of them.

"Sam has been a fisherman all of his life. He started when he was just a little boy. He and Sam been married nigh unto twenty-five years. His youngest child was just two years old when I married him. His Ma was dead and he and Sam was living down here all by themselves. He had a 'oman that cooked and looked after little Sam for him, and his other chillun was living with their Mas. Sam always took care of them. I mean he supported them, clothed them and fed them. The two oldest boys are fishermen with him. He pays them just like he does his other help. His two girls live up North.

"Little Sam lives with us; he railroads. I loves him just like he is my own and he sho is a smart and good boy. He ain't married; hope he won't; nigger gals is so trifling these days. Ain't got no morals a-tall.

"Sam says the best he can recollect is he was about ten years old

when he first started to fishing. He is sixty now. So that means he's been fishing fifty years. The way he started was this. Ransom Lynn, Sam's pa, owned this ^{place} house on the river. I'll tell you about Ransom later on. He owned this house we live in now, only we have added two rooms and a porch and a lots of other things.

Mr. George Vaughn had a little one-room house further down on the river. You'member him? He's been dead now 'bout twenty years. Well he is the man that learnt Sam to fish and swim. At first Sam said he used to follow him about just like a little puppy; would get up before day and go with him in his batteau a-fishing. In them days they used to seine in the Chetalla Creek; its ag'in' the law now. Mr. Vaughn learnt him how to set out traps and lines; he learnt him every-thing there is about fishing. He makes good money at it. Mr. Vaughn learnt all the older white men in Mufaula to swim and Sam learnt all the niggers. Whenever any-body ever fell in the river or jumped in to kill themselves Sam and Mr. Vaughn would always do the diving to find the bodies. Since Mr. Vaughn has been dead, Sam's been doing it and many a body has he found. Folks don't drown themselves like they used to, though, I am glad to say.

"In Sam's young days - he dont do it now - he used to swim across the Chattahoochee right here at the wharf four and five times without stopping, and they says its third to the swiftest river in the world; and its terrible wide. They call him the 'river rat'. When he was a young man he lived on the river, slept in a tent, camped there. I thought it was awful but he would do it. Now, he is not well, his heart is bad, he works too hard. Gets up at four in the morning. I get up and cook his breakfast. He goes all day without food and when he comes home at night he

eats too much. ~~Won't take time to eat or cook any fish.~~ Yes'us, he is a fisherman right. In the days when the steam boats was a-running, them was the days for Sam. The 'Kelly' and the 'Bradley' and the 'City of Mufsula': he never missed a boat. He could hear her miles long 'fore he could see the smoke.

"When Sam gets through in the day, you know the winter days are so short, he puts his lines out at four o'clock in the afternoon, then comes home. I always have a good hot meal for him with plenty of coffee. He wont eat fish except now and then. He smells 'em so much he turns ag'in 'em. He likes his collard greens and beef steak.

"Now he goes back at eight and gets his fish off his lines and puts 'em in the fish boxes all along the sides of the river. That keeps 'em alive. The boxes have a wire top that lets the water in. He has four and five men that work for him. He owns twelve batteaus. He has his fish boxes miles up and down the river and creeks on both sides. He changes 'em every now and then. He fishes mostly in the Chattahoochee River, but he works the Chewalla, the White Oak and Barbour Creeks. His average catch a day is about two hundred pounds; sometimes a hundred and fifty and again two hundred and fifty. He don't fish on Saturday and Sunday. He's got religion. He wouldn't fish on Sunday for nothing!

"Sam couldn't get along without his little 'nip' when he is working; its so damp and foggy and wet on the banks. He would die with pneumonia sho' if he didn't have it. But I ain't never seen him drunk in his life. He knows how to take it. Its a pity these other nigger men and white gentlemens too don't know how. Sam is honest too. That's his religion. He would cut off his right hand before he would sell a fish that wasn't alright. His fish are all breathing and

wiggling on his lines. He works every day and night from January 'til June, then stops off in June. In the Summer months he has his fish fries. Dont sell fish in the Summer because its too hot to keep them. When he has his fish fries, the fish are still alive; that's why they are so good.

"Sam is famous for his fish. He puts out his nets (he don't seine) from January the first 'till the fifteenth of March. Then after that he just hooks and lines. In September he starts back to work. He don't work in the Christmas month though.

"He has certain days to sell his fish in different places. He sells four lines .25¢, .50¢, .75¢ and \$1.00 depending on how many and the kind of fish. He has better luck 'catching' at night than he does in the day. The best time is in the full moon. He catches channel cat fish, bream, perch and carp. These are his best sellers, but sucker fish, rock fish, mud cat, cels and any fish that runs in the stream he sho' gets 'em. He sho' is lucky and they calls him a expert. If he comes across a ^{tainted} ~~tired~~ fish he gives 'em to the niggers. They hangs around him like 'Grant around Richmond'. The stronger a fish smells the better a nigger likes 'em.

"He has made good money too. He has a car; 'taint much of a car, just a fish car. He sells his fish in Mafaula Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Thursdays and Fridays he goes out of town. He don't go hisself though; he sends one of his men. They peddle Georgia Thursday; Cuthbert, Dawson, Albany and little places. Then Friday they peddle Alabama; Clayton, Comer, Midway and Union Springs. He has regular customers and always sells out. Saturdays he sells 'cut fish' to niggers. 'Cut fish' is the big red fish he cuts in small pieces. The red fish he catches weighs from eight to twelve pounds

and more. All the red fish he gets in the week time, he puts in his fish boxes and keeps 'em live till Saturday morning. Then 'bout four o'clock he gets up and with one or two of his men he gathers 'em up and cuts 'em in small pieces; puts 'em in push carts, takes 'em up town and before nine o'clock he is sold plus out to niggers and poor white folks. The ⁿSam comes back home and has a day of rest. He sho' needs it, cause he is sho' over-worked. There is a lot of folks right here in Mufaula been living here all their lives, ain't got no idea what a big business the fish business is right here.

"He has had some narrow escapes too. Fell in the river lots. Course he is a fine swimmer, but this last time his clothes and boots was so heavy it was hard to swim and the current was swift. He lost his gun and his batteau. The batteau was over-loaded; thats what made it sink.

"He is a good batteau maker too. He makes his own boats. He also makes boats for sale. They are row boats.

"Fish bite better when the moon is full. He has a cusp on the mouth of White Oak Creek, on the banks of the Chattahoochee River.

"He uses spring lizards and stump grubs to bait his hooks and trot lines. A trot line goes from one side of the river to the other with heavy weights on it. The spring lizards are caught in little branches or springs, under leaves and moss and make fine bait. A 'set hook' is just one hook, close on the banks, scattered up and down sometimes a hundred or more tied on willow trees or put on sticks stuck in the bank. Some of these set hooks catch cat fish over night weighing twelve pounds and over. He fishes too with a basket made cone-shape, out of white oak or hickory strips. This is

baited with old cheese or peanut meal or sour meal put in the baskets at the bottom of the river or creek bed. A wire is tied to a tree ~~to~~ it on the bank to hold it. It is made just like a rat trap. If a large fish gets in it, it can never get out. He puts all these lines out at night. His fishing is done mostly at night.

"He has little nigger boys that gets most of his bait; his spring lizards and his stump grubs. They find the stump grubs mostly in old wood, old stumps and old trees. Stump grubs are worms, she explained.

"I'll tell you a secret, missy, I know you wont tell, but that's all right, I ain't gonner call no names. Many a night Sam comes home just a-laughing. A lot of these white gentlemen that goes a-fishing, if they don't have no luck, they buys a string of live fish from Sam. They goes home with a string of fish just a-kicking. They strut up town and tells everybody and their wives and brage about what a fine fisherman they is. That is what you calls 'fish caught with a silver hook'. Sam has the silver jingling in his pocket and he is glad.

"I told you that he dont sell fish in the Summer, but he has his 'fish-frys' from June till September. He makes right good money at it. It depends on how many comes. He gets .50 cents a person. They always lets him know about how many is coming so he will know how much to fix for. They brings the pickles, the bread and the beer and 'things'. She winked at me and said, you know what I means when I said 'things', I means liquor. He furnishes the fish, the onion bread and the coffee. It aint no easy job. If it is a big fish-fry, say fifty men or more, he fishes two nights all night long straight

running. My God, how them men can eat fish! Some eat ten and fifteen apiece. You know a drink or two before eating sho' gives you an appetite. I help him always at the frys; help his cook.

"He has a long wooden table that he made. We have two large coffee pots that hold two gallons apiece. We puts two pounds of coffee apiece in sacks in each pot. That makes enough coffee. We have over a hundred tin cups and use paper plates. We make two fires. Get our wood first thing, then we cleans our fish. That's not hard; we are used to it. Then we make our onion bread, (hush puppies). To make 'em you cut up a pair of onions real fine, mix that with meal, add salt, make in small balls and fry in the same pot the fish are fried in. Put 'em together when they rise to the top they are done, a golden brown, piping hot, and are they good? We uses as much as three and four gallons of boiling lard. Our frys are sho' ²with ₁ fifty cents a plate."

I asked Hattie how she liked living near the river. She said: "It's lonely sometimes, when the wind blows at night. Sounds are lonely, the hooting of an owl from away down the river, the whip-o-will, the bull-frogs, crying for rain; and the crickets. I dont like to hear no screech owl, that's a sign of death. When the river overflows, Sam checks out. He takes out his traps, boxes and lines. We are too high up on the bluff for it to come to our house. Its a big river and it gets over in Georgia terrible.

"Sam's good and steady now. Before I married him he was one bad man after woman in his young days. He ain't no more. We are both getting along.

"Sam was proud of his Pa, Ransom Lynn and his Ma, Mandy. Ransom been dead 'bout fifteen years. He was born in Virginia and

was Lieutenant Lynn's bodyguard. Went through the War with him until Gettysburg. He died on the battlefield there in the arms of Mr. William Bray of Eufaula and as he was dying gave Ransom to Mr. Bray. After the War Mr. Bray brought Ransom back to Eufaula with him and built him a house on the bluff. He was carriage driver and butler for Mr. Chauncey Rhodes. He married Mandy Thomas and they had seven children. Sam being one of the youngest. Sam always likes to talk of his father."

To have one's home on the high banks is pleasant: Sam's home is on such a bank. One can look across the lovely Chattahoochee; see the sun rise and set; see in the moonlight and starlight the deep, swift river and the expanse of fertile savannahs below it.

The Alabama side - all down the steep 150 foot bank of Sam's home - nature has landscaped lavishly with an abundance of green growth, oak and hickory trees, long and short-leaf pines, white, rare mirica, seven-bark, heart-shaped leaves of red bud, magnolias starred with blossoms, blooming elderberries, mulberries festooned with grey moss; lacy maiden-hair ferns hanging in bunches from the marl banks. In the spring the yellow jessamine, dog-wood, honey suckle and red-bud give color to the green. All of this glorious beauty spreads to the water's edge.

Sandy beaches reach along the opposite shore. A silvery ribbon of road starts at the filigree-like steel bridge, and runs its way on to the inviting tree-covered rises where the river curves.

Nestled in all this loveliness is the cottage of Sam Lynn, fisherman and 'river rat'.

1/18/39
MS.

Name of Interviewed. Aunt Savannah Rice. 624 Orange Street.

Describe Neighborhood and Environment.

A negro settlement of about twenty cabins, mostly two-room cabins, none over three, some one-room. A large majority of the woemn are "wash-women" and you can see the clothes hanging on the lines, and wash pots in the yards. Some are cooks. The men all seem to have jobs. They are all happy; you can hear them singing and laughing, when you go by. Some times there are fights, when the women get unruly, and the men come home drunk, but not often.

Describe House. Almost a hovel; terrible dirty walls. Two front rooms and a shed room. Aunt Savannah and her granddaughter, Lou and the baby, Maide Dell, live in one room in the other room and shed room, another family of six, making nine that live in the cabin. There are two beds in Aunt Savannah's "apartment", a battered bureau, and a trunk, a chest, an open fire-place, two lamps, one with chimney, one without chimney, the two polocias tacked over the mantle, pictures of negroes on the walls and advertisements. On one bed is a pink bed spread, the other piled high with quilts. There are some flowers in the front yard. All of the cooking for both families is done on a little stove in the shed room. Most of the family work out and "toat a pan". Aunt Savannah gets commodities(modditias) from the Government. "Hit show hope me but I wish dey would give me just a little grease". I asked Aunt Savannah if Lou had a husband, she said, "No, honey chile, I didn't tole you bout dat, cause I wuz shame-faced. Done tole you bout Rosie ingraced(disgraced) you knows niggers ain't lak white folks, she ain't nebber tole who dat chile's paw is, but when she birthed dat chile, he paid de mid-wife fer hit, Aunt Dora Queen katched dat baby and named hit too.

"Now Lou is a sweet chile, ain't roudy, dont toat no party razor lak ~~some~~ some ob dese nigger gals does, but she ain't got no ligeon; she prays fer hit, but hit ain't camed yet. I hopes when she does "come through" and git ligeon she will git her a husband so dis sweet little Maide Dell wont be no bastard chile no more."

Physical Description.

Aunt Savannah is very old, she says, "I speck I bout fifty, I been here, was birthed fore freedom", but was too young to remember much about it. She is about eighty years old, her youngest child is almost forty-five. She is very crippled, has rheumatism badly in one leg, walks with a stick and can hardly walk at all. Her hair is gray, but she wears a head-rag and smokes a pipe most of the time. She is black and has a sweet soft voice.

She was born on one of "Marse Cullen 'attles' plantation" near Tuskegee, then "atter freedom Marse Cullen brung her to his river plantation North of New Fallah". She said, "My Marster and my Mistis wuz grand, good folks, nebber lowd no cheap over-seeer to whop air slave he had, and once a month upon a Sunday, he would preach and xplain de Gospel to us niggers, dats how I got my "ligeon", she said. "I ain't no count no more, all I kin do now is ^{set} to rock Maide Dell."

Alabama
Aunt Savannah Rice.
624 Orange Street,
Eufaula, Ala.

#1.

Gertha Couric.
Eufaula, Ala.
March, 1, 1939.

"Come in, honey, you come in un-be-nounce ter me; I didn't heard you, but I is pow'ful glad to see you". How she was feeling. She said, "Honey chile, I jist sorta tollable, but I is low in de spirit dis morning. I been terrible worried bout Rosie. She ain't right in her mind. She my half-sister. We is proudful niggers though. Ain't got no loose ones in our family. I means, women, not mens. Course all men's loose. But what you speck dat Rosie Said to me? She been moping round de house. I say, "Rosie, what in de world is de matter wid you? Is you sick? She say, "Oh, I think I is gwina birth a baby". Then I say, "Lawd, God, Rosie, why you ain't even married". Then she said, "Dat ain't no sign I ain't got no nature". Now ain't she a hussy?" I asked her if she couldn't make the man marry Rosie. She said, "Honey, dat nigger done gone to Georgy and he got a wife too I hears. Hit sho hurted me, but Rosie say dat low down bastard put a spell on her, and she is half witted too. Nigger gals show is unruly and trifling.

"Let me tell you what Rev. Brown, our pastor said bout a gal in his flock. Her husband died last week and she took on awful lak. They thunk she was grieving terrible. So he and two of the elders went down dar to 'sole her. Dey say, "Don't cry, sister, you is stylish, young, and good-looking, and you kin soon be gitting round atter you gits through mourning and de young mens will come to visit with you and you will soon be married agin". She looked at the pastor scornful lak and what you reckon dat gal say? She say, "Rev. what in de 'ebil is I gwiner do til den?" He sho wuz plum 'gusted wid her. You cant put no 'pendence in 'em dese days.

Alabama

Aunt Savannah Rice.

624 Orange Street

Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.

Eufaula, Ala.

March, 1, 1939.

A knock rattled abruptly on the door. Aunt Savannah mused a moment, half rose and then asked in a roar, "Who dat?" Then a man's voice answered, "Who dat?" Then with further indignation Aunt Savannah said, "Who dat say 'who dat' when I say 'who dat'?" And looking at me she said, "I don't lak no body to mock me; dat's de way you gits conjured". She opened the door and a negro man asked her if she wanted to buy a load of oak wood. She said, "No", and closed the door in his face, and said to me, "Missey, please mam, scuse me, but dat nigger looked at me with 'spicion. I think hit were de "polish man"(policy man) or I nebber would have opened dat door. I drapped my dish rag dis morning and dat's a ssho sign some body is coming empty handed.

"Now, you axe me bout de "polish man". Dat's one thing I b'lieve is fur sho. I is got two polishes. I pays by de week. I pays Mr. Loach(Mr. Belote) thirty cents upon a Tuesday. Ef I don't have hit on a Tuesday I goes forth to de office up town and pays him. He keeps hit open on a Saturday. She said, "What is de name ob de polish?", Honey I can't read, I don't know de name, but hits health and acci-dent; dar hit on de wall. "Industrial Life and Health Insurance Company, Atlanta, Ga. Address, A. Belote, Eufaula, Ala. P.O. Box # 25". Have your book and premiums ready each week in order to help the collector in giving prompt service to all policy holders", was the gaudy inscription on an acient calendar tacked over the mantle.

"Honey, you knows I got two polishes. De next I pays Mr. Baker. I pays him twenty-five cents every week. Dar his polishy; please mam read hit out loud to me, honey". And the legend on this was "Life and Casulty Insurance

Alabama
 Aunt Savannah Rice.
 624 Orange Street,
 Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.
 Eufaula, Ala.
 March, 1, 1939.

Company of Tennessee, Nashville Tenn", with an accompanying "Notice to Policy Holders," giving this;

The authorized agent of the Company when first calling upon a policyholder, will always be introduced by the district superintendent. All payments must be entered in the premium receipt book by the authorized agent at the time of payment or they will not be credited by the Company. Premiums are due each Monday (Tuesday) in advance. All premiums in advance. If address is changed the policy holder should immediately notify the district officer, or the Home Office, giving the following information: Policy number, old address, new address, and name of agent collecting last premium. Any agent who asked you to discontinue your policy in order to take another in its place is usually seeking his own profit at your expense. Have him put his proposition in writing, then submit same to either our District Manager or Home Office for advice, which is always at your service. It is not necessary to employ anyone to collect any claim under the policy with this company. Notify our District Office which will gladly assist you or else write to the Home office."

I read every line to her at her request. She said, "Dat's de God's truth, honey, every word ob hit. Last Summer I was pow'ful sick. De Docotr says I had too much blood, high blood impression. I fell out going home one day. Had to stay home two weeks; couldn't work. But my polishes paid me five dollars a week. I show believes in them. Dey's grand. Now, I don't put much 'pendence in de "Rollins Man" (Rawleigh

Alabama.

4.

Gertha Couric.

Aunt Savannah Rice.

Eufaula, Ala.

624 Orange Street,

March, 1, 1939.

Eufaula, Ala.

Patent Medicine). Dat's de one dat sells things. Old man "D", he sells "Rollins" stuff . He sells lotions, lak make your kinky hair straight and ef you is black, ligh-en your color. Son't you know nobody kin do dat but de Lawd? I byed some rubbing salve, though; stuff to rub limbs with, musta-row(Musterole). Dat's de rubbing medicine".

The door opened and Lou came in (her granddaughter that lives with her) with her three month's old baby in her arms, laughing and cooing and rolling in fat. I said, "What a fine baby, what does Lou feed her on?" "She nurses her in de night (she ain't here in de day). And us has to feed her. We gives her one bottle of carry-nation milk and pot-likker and coffee and most airthing else. She is greedy, she hogish. But she sho is a good chile. Don't know nothing bout crying.

"Honey, I kin do air thing 'at other nigger kin do. Dats why dey calls me a "commidition oman" (combination). I kin cook, nurse, wash, sew, farm and I means I kin. And I's birthed eight head of chillun, but I sot in misery fore dis last chile came, cause I got scared ob de cy-clone. Honey you 'member dat. Hit were de terriblist thing dat ever I did see. And I thought dat chile were gwina be marked. But he come here alright, praise de Lawd. But he died in 'fancy (infancy). Three others went de same way. I got thrae living chillun. Scrap and my granddaughter, Lou, live here. De others livees up North. Dey sends me money now and den. I ain't been no count since my boy John died. He had de con-sumption. He had de flues when he wuz in de War. Now, he didn't fought. He had to go, dey 'scripted him. He stayed there two year, but dey paid him. A man, name Mr. Sammy (Uncle Sam)

Alabama.

Aunt Savannah Rice.

624 Orange Street.

Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.

Eufaula, Ala.

March, 1, 1939.

sont me money. Hit sho hope.me. I sho did grieve atter him when he wuz a-gwining. But I praised de Lawd when he was a-coming."

She went to the door, spit her tobacco out, said, "I chaws, I dips, and I smokes air thing I kin git in de 'bacca line. Hits ~~so~~ expenseless.

Then calling her boy she said, "Scrap, bring dat skittle(skuttle) here and de charcoal in hit and put some on de fire and shot dat door. I ain't nebber seen a nigger yet dat would shot a door and dey is so cold-harded (cold natured) too."

After Scrap "shot" the door he grinned and said, "Ma, I got a piece of good news fer you. Dr. L-- axe me to axe you ef his oversee(overseer) from the farm in Georgy could sleep at your house tonight; said he would pay you fifty cents. I tole him you had a extry bed in your room. He came ober to formulate business fer de Spring". Then Aunt Savannah said, "Sho, he kin, dat's grand. I is glad to git dat money". And as Scrap was leaving Aunt Savannah called to him and said, "Scrap, is hit a man or a oman?".

I asked her could she tell me something about the old days here in Eufaula. She said, "Sho, Honey chile, I members better bout olden days than I does bout now. All de white folks ride in carriages. I means quality, not po white trash. And Lawdy, how dem horses would step wid plumes in dey head. And dey had grand funerals. Dem carriages would formulate in a long line and at de head would be de hearse and old Abe settin up dar with a silk hat on his head a-driving hit. Den de church bell would toll, so sorrowful lak, not gladsome lak hit does upon de Sabbeth day. Old man Vaughn wuz de grave digger. Now, bless God, de automobiles goes so fast lak dey is gwining to a fire, lak dey wants to git shed ob yer quick.

Alabama.

6.

Aunt Savannah Rice.
624 Orange Street,
Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.
Eufaula, Ala.
March, 1, 1939.

"Yes, honey, I been here a long time. I kin tell you some other things you don't know 'bout. Imembers de Spring eb de year, de robins would come here to New-Fallah by de thousands. Hit wasn't agin de law to kill em. Every boy, white and black, would have a shot-sling or air gun and fore you could say scat, you would have fifteen or twenty. And robin pie is so tasty. I jist sees a few now. Den, de blue birds was plentiful. Course you didn't eat blue birds. But deys wuz so pretty. I ain't seed nary a one now. Course dar is plenty of mocking birds, and red birds and pecker-woods and pww-wees and sich lak. Now when I wuz young, de most pleasuring I had wuz meeting de steam boats. When us nigger gals would heard dem three long whistles, Lawd, we would hot foot hit down to de wharf. Lawd, how dem niggers would sing; sing and work, toating off de freight. I kin hear 'em now. Dey wuz de good old days. Didn't have no time to "court", though. Us gals would jist be flitacious lak".

And what a busy scene was the landing of the boats; the clanging of the bells, the shouts of the officers, the letting down of the gang planks, the outcoming of the passengers and as she said, the singing of the negroes unloading the freight. She continued her reminiscing: "Now, Honey, us did court when de boats had ter tie up and dey couldn't git under de bridge on account of de high water. Another thing I members wuz dey would bring "Apalac" barrels of oysters fer one dollar a barrel, and us would buy as many as we could eat for a dime. De mens would set us up. I means, dey would pay fer hit. Treat us and den us would go to Mr. Zack Barnes bottle works and git a bottle of strawberry soda-water. Dem

Alabama.

Aunt Savannah Rice.

624 Orange Street,

Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.

Eufaula, Ala.

March, 1, 1939.

Days niggers didn't git drunk lak dey does now, excusing upon a Saturday, and dey had a bar-room on every corner, "Stern and Bloom," "Cohan," "Seligman," "Cargille", and lots more side dat. Now dey ain't got no bar-rooms, jist de "liquor store". But dey don't wait fer Saturday. Mena and womens, black and white gits drunk."

I asked her to tell me some of her special recipes. That she was such a good cook. She said, "You gwiner rit em down?" I told her, "yes". She said, "Well, I will tole you fust bout de cup custard; hit's good. You puts 2 eggs in sugar, jist a little pinch; a little of dat and a little of dis; whip hit good and one quart of sweet milk. You git bout one half dozen little pi-rix(pyrex) glass cups, set em in water with your custard in hit. Sprinkle nutmeg on top, dont let de oben be too hot; set em inside in de water. Dats de cheapest good custard eber been fixed.

"Now, cakes is real common now. Let me tell you bout my pies. De reason folks don't make good pies is case deys scared to use de stuff. Dis is de way I makes lemon pie. 1 pint milk, three yokes of de yallow, and a hold cup sugar in dat yallow and a tablespoon full of corn starch. Whip hit light and I means light, and add hit to de hot milk. Put jist de end of a pinch of a teaspoon full of butter in de milk. Then de tang(meringue) is de three whites lef ober from de yallows. You whip dat light and add four tablespoon fulls of sugar. Put hit in de crust and brown lightly.

"De best tasting chicken you eber et is milk fried chicken. Cut up in pieces to fry. Then put salt and pepper in de milk, sweet milk or buttermilk, air one is tasty. Put dat chicken in de milk; kiver hit ober with

Alabama.

Aunt Savannah Rice.

624 Orange Street.

Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.

Eufaula, Ala.

March, 1, 1939.

de milk; put hit in de frigerator, let hit set all night long. Next day hits tenderized. Den flour hit, have your pan full ob hot grease, an fry. I is gwiner tell you de truth. I kin eat two whole fryers myself, hits so good, Hits so tender you don't eben have to chaw hit".

I thanked her for her information and as I was leaving an unexpected shower came up. She looked up at the sky and said, "Dat rain comes lak death comes, hit gwiner steal upon you".

I asked her if Lou, her granddaughter was a help to her and she said, "She is a sweet little gal, but she's a sinner. She dances, she's obeying de debbil cause she dances. She ain't obeying Jesus". I told her it was not wrong to dance. She said, "Honey, I done heard scripture read from kiver to kiver, and hits in dar. You is gwina burn in hell if you dances. Let me tell you bout when I "comed thru". I seen my way in God's kingdom, honey chile. I was a sinner. I wuz jist a missey gal toating my Ma's chillum around. My Pa had died wicked and went to torment. My Ma had done got ligeon long time fore dat. Dis is de way de Lawd veiled hit to me. I thunk I wuz sick, I wuzn't sick in de body, jist sick in de mind. I looked up in de heavens, de skies split. I seed de host of heaven sending and descending, glitterin lak stars, but dey wuz peoples when I saw all dat glory. I knowed I'de been borned agin. I knowed I wuz saved, blessed God. I been washed in de blood. I is Jesus' chile. Dot host dat I seed wuz he host dat John saw. Some folks say I got too much ligeon; dat I talks too much. But I believe in Him, seen His great works. I is born of Him. I seed Jesus, honey chile; I met him half way de world. Everything wuz so white, every-

Alabama.

Aunt Savannah Rice.

624 Orange Street,

Eufaula, Ala.

Gertha Couric.

Eufaula, Ala.

March, 1, 1939.

thing was so beauty. He is ready to save air sinner dat comes to Him by faith and humble prayer. He don't care how white you is. He don't care how black you is. I so so glad I knows. I wuz ready to go dis year, but I is still here. I seed a mighty shade. I dreaded hit; hit wuz so dark. I wuz pantin lak a lizzard/ Hit wuz de Lawd. He ain't got here, honey chile, but he is coming. I is looking fer de King. I wants to go home wid Him when he comes. Praise de Lord! "

Every word Aunt Savannah said came from the depths of her soul.

*Gertha Conner
Barlow County
Nov. 30, 1938*

Project # 4454

Federal Writers Project WPA Page # 1.

Doc Hughes, Mill Worker.

Re-visited Doc Hughes Nov. 23, 1938.

Mrs. Hughes (Miss Dru) came to the door, wiping her hands on her apron, saying: "Honey, come in, and dont look at me. I been in the kitchen all day making cake and charlotterusse and candy for Thanksgiving. My chillun is coming to spend the day with me. My old man is in the back yard er killing chickens. We ain't got no Turkey fer to-morrow, but we will have one Xmas, the Lord willing."

Then she called her old man. He came in smiling in his over-alls saying: "Missey, you will have to excuse me the way I looks. I just come in from the Mill bout half an hour ago." I then asked Mrs. Hughes could she tell me something about the boy-hood days. He said: "Show I kin. I wuz born on er farm seven and a hald miles South of Eufaula on the Baker Hill road. My father's name was John Wesley and my mother's name was Nancy Anne. There was a big family of us; nine in all. My life was just like any other boy's on the farm. Wetting up at sun up and working all day, but I liked hit. I went to a country school some, bout three or four years. Long time ago hit wasn't like hit is now you know, bout education. My chillun all got good education. Went ter high school. I am strong and well but me and Dru is both gitting old. I enjoy reading the paper, The Eufaula Tribune and the Avondale Sun and my Bible. I love that. I see God, I feel His presence and I know He is with me all the time. When I git up in the morning at five and hit is dark, I thank Him them for takin' care of us through the night. And all the day at the Mill God is with me, til I lay down at night ter sleep.

"Tomorrow is Thanksgiving and we is thankful me and Dru. I jist killed the chickens fur tomorrow. The Missus been er cooking all day. We going ter have our chillun tomorrow for dinner. She done tell you?

"Yes'um we are thankful God has given us strength and guidance on every-

Doc Hughes, Mill Worker.

thing. We love our friends too. Rather have friends than money. My parents sold their farm and moved to Eufaula when cotton went down ter four and er hald cents. We jist couldn't make er living. I wuz eighteen then and started working in the Mill. Been there ever since; most forty-five years now. Oh, how, Mr. Donold(Comee) has improved everything. I done told yer all about that, ain't I? Jist think, I use ter work from six in the morning til six in the evening for thirty-five cents a day. Now from six in the morning til two in the afternoon, thirty-five cents an hours Mr. Donold done that when he bought the Mill. There ain't never been no body jist like him. He wuz jist sent ter us by God, I believe. And how we all love him fer what he has done fer us."

~~Mid-Wife. Aunt Dora Queen.(continued.)~~

Several years ago Aunt Dora married a boy about twenty five and she was about fifty.

He went off with another woman. He had not been gone but two weeks when he was killed. When they told Aunt Dora, she said, "No, God, I aint guin'ter let dem cops(corpse) come in my house, cause he went off with another omen". She was told she had better claim the "cops" because he had life insurance. Then she changed her attitude.

Some of her white friends furnished her a long black veil, black dress, black bordered handkerchief, etc. You couldn't even see her. She turned and said, "I show ought ter have on something red, cause I is show mourning fer de devil".

Aunt Dora said, "I show is scared he's guin'ter come back here and hant me, but dey says if you shut up your house hard and tight, de hant kant git in."

The Tom Alsobrook Family
400 South Randolph Street
Cowikee Mill Village
Eufaula, Alabama

new

FIFTY-TWO YEARS IN THE COTTON MILL

By Gertha Couric

His hair is almost the color of the cotton that furnishes his livelihood. He is seventy-two and is thin and stooped. Because he works now where he worked at twenty, Tom Alsobrook represents the past and the present of the cotton textile industry in Alabama.

"I moved to Eufaula with my mother fifty-two years ago," he says. She worked in the mill a little while, then died. I buried her here."

It was the old Eufaula Cotton Mill when he began work. Captain Tullis was president. According to Mr. Alsobrook, the old mill must have been a haphazard affair.

"Donald Comer bought the property in 1908," he said. "Old machinery was torn down and new put in. I helped wear the new out, then personally, took a sledge hammer and beat the skeletons so that they could be thrown out the window. New machinery was again put in, and now it's about wore out."

"I started as a 'sweeper' at fifty cents a day. I been assistant overseer and overseer in the 'carding' department. Right now, I work the 'fly frames'. Annie Lou -- that's my old lady -- works with me. I work extra Saturday and Sunday 'watching'". We each make thirty cents an hour for a forty-hour week, working eight hours a day. Ain't nobody like us makes under twelve dollars a week or more'n

sixteen dollars a week. 'Course, when we have to stay home sick, we lose the time.

The Alsobrook home is surrounded with a wall of neatly trimmed hedge. The yard has a variety of flowers.

"I love to work outdoors," Mr. Alsobrook says. "Soon's I get home -- I get off at two -- I start diggin' 'round in the yard whether it needs it or not."

The house is painted yellow with white trimmings. Five rooms -- two bedrooms, a dining room, and bathroom -- have plain furnishings, with oak predominating. All are neat and clean. An organ is in the corner of a bedroom. There are no electric facilities. Kerosene lamps are used for lighting. The house is heated by wood in open fireplaces.

"We bought this place through the mill," says Mr. Alsobrook. "Paid for it ten dollars a month, just like rent. It took us eight years, but it's been paid for several years now.

"A lot of folks here own their homes. The mill loans the money at 5%, and payments are ten dollars a month, but lots pay back twice that fast. In case anybody has to skip a few payments, that's all right with the mill. Ain't nobody had their home taken from them yet.

"That ain't all either. The mill loans money for college educations, no security or nothin'. Most young folks, like the assistant superintendant, Cleveland Adams, come back to work in the mill. He borrowed a thousand dollars and took a four-year course in textile engineerin' at Auburn. Tyson Smith, assistant secretary at the mill, is another one that the mill owners helped to get a college education. The band boys, who learn to play under the teacher here at the mill, earn their way through college by playin' in the college band."

A wood house stands at the rear of the Alsobrook home, with wood already cut and piled in for the winter. Nearby is a Fall garden with a small flock of chickens hovering dangerously close. Mr. Alsobrook halted the tour in this vicinity in order to shoo them away, and mutter:

"Dang 'em. They eat the vegetables and we eat the chickens. Reckon it makes us about even though, don't it? Yep, I reckon its about as broad as its long. But I get tired of chicken sometimes and bring home a steak for supper to go with the biscuits and cold vegetables. Our vegetables are always cooked ahead. When Annie Lou comes home at two, she cooks whatever she wants out of the garden, peas, beans, collards, turnip greens, white or sweet potatoes-- just whatever is handiest -- and then heats them over the next day at twelve when we come home for dinner.

"Mostly for breakfast we have fried white meat, eggs, hoeecake, and coffee, because we have to be at work by six and naturally have to hurry.

"That's one thing I'm gettin' just a little too old for, that hurry, hurry, hurry! I think maybe if I can sell the house, I'll buy a place in the country and take my time for awhile. Then, I could stay outdoors as much as I wanted; dig around a lot; and raise me a few chickens. I been thinkin' 'bout that every since my bones started achin' nights, but somehow, I ain't got around to it yet.

"Might be that I just hate to leave Cowikee. Its a pretty good place, mighty pretty. My place is pretty. I'd hate to have somebody rent it after I left that wouldn't keep the hedge and flowers pretty. I cut that hedge every other day."

Mr. Alsobrook and Annie Lou Freeman were married in 1912. It is his second marriage.

"I first married Minnie Lee Price, soon after my mother died, but Minnie Lee died too, leaving two little boys. I had been moved away a little while when Minnie died, but I brought her here for burial.

"Then a wagon run over one of my little boys, Thomas Neville, and killed him. My other little boy, Earnest, died from a bone infection about 1922. Dr. Britt cut off his leg trying to save him, but it was too late. He was a pretty boy."

Mrs. Alsobrook, the former Annie Lou Freeman, is sixty-three, tall and thin, with streaks of gray running through hair that is courageously trying to retain its blackness. She has worked beside her husband for twenty-two years.

"I been cotton millin' since I was nine," she says. "I started as a 'spooler hand' for fifty cents a day. Ma and us kids had to keep body and soul together somehow. She used to sit up nights makin' quilts, then cook breakfast at five o'clock so us kids could be workin' at six. She'd have sent us to school if she could. Ma said the reason us 'younguns started workin' so young was mostly to keep warm; and then, too, she always knowed where we was at.

"It ain't that way now, though," continues Mrs. Alsobrook. "Mothers ain't got that worry. Ther's a kindergarten and nursery for the babies and a public school for the bigger younguns. Eatin' ain't no worry, because at the school, them that ain't able to buy their lunch get it free -- with milk, too.

"Then, after school is out, all them younguns light a shuck

for that pretty playground over yonder that the company provides. They stay out of their mothers' way and off the streets too.

"But pshaw," says Mrs. Alsobrook, "them younguns ain't the only ones that have fun. Us old folks have our pleasures too. Lots of nights I set and gossip with my friends and listen to the free band concerts all at the same time."

"Yeah," puts in Mr. Alsobrook, "and I ease over to the Community house about that time and read. I'm beginning to realize more'n ever what it means to be educated. I never got but five years schooling, but it comes in mighty handy when I want to sit and rest and find out what's happening in other places."

"Lots of times, though," says Mrs. Alsobrook, "I stay home and can. I put up a lot of stuff durin' the summer. Me and Tom have always tried to save what we could. We have a little bank account. We figure on usin' that if we move out in the country. Our expenses are low. Taxes and insurance come first. We figure we'll save some on taxes if we take a farm."

"But I'll have to come back every once in awhile to vote," says Mr. Alsobrook. "Us Democrats have to stick together. The old lady is a Democrat too, but she don't vote. I ain't got no use for women votin'."

So there they are, the Alsobrooks. They have spent their lives in cotton mills, and are now ready to rest. But the lure of life-long friends, with whom they have been in daily contact, the beauty and convenience of a well appointed village, and the sharp contrast between present and past working conditions, combine to make their choice of whether to remain in Cowikee and

be in "the run of things," or to move to the comparative isolation of the country, a difficult decision.

"I'd hate to have somebody rent our house after I left that wouldn't keep the hedge and flowers pretty. I cut that hedge every other day."

"But pshaw! Them younguns ain't the only ones that have fun. Us old folks have our pleasures too."

10/13/39

S.B.J.

11-8- Come Boldly throne
Mercy + Grace

Sub. mercy Heb 4.16

Let Come Boldly unto the
throne of grace that we may
obtain mercy + find
grace to help in time
of need

first how to come to god
1 Boldly 2 god's favor to man
in His mercy to man or our man
3 come because god has + throne
of grace + A throne peace + of love

• Come Boldly: because it is
free to all that comes

Come because it will help
in time of need

for David he claims
that god will reward His
mercy + His truth to

have man

mercy means +

favor of god + god's

Pity on man -

laborer + Worker (E)
with god

When god wants His
miracles + His most wonder-
full-works Out over
He sends man - to
Ketch His Lightning
+ Put it to work + Put the

2 the world to be
come as a whispering
gallery so that one
man's voice can be
heard by millions
at the same time
or when He wants
Tunnels + Bridges or
Built-up cities what does
He do He puts it on to the
Heart + Brain of Edison

1) Laborers & Workers
With God

1 Cor 3: 9
2 Cor = - Paul - says

We are laborers together
with God

2 Tim 2 15 We are work
men that need not to
- Be ashamed

Rightly dividing
the word of truth =

not - God honoring as
co workers - in this

Practical every day
world so we may look

Daily to see how men
work with God in the
improvement of this
world

Labourers + Workers
+ Helpers together
= With God =
2 How the Work of
↑
Salvation would be
Be carried forward =
on Earth =

Jesus told that He had
Called + trained
twelve men who
would do all that they
could + they were
Promised Jesus that they
would train others
to take up the work

Labourers + Workers B

to gether with god
there is a real sense in
which men + women
can be + are workers
in union to gether
with god - first for the
- Betterment of this world
+ for the bringing
on the Kingdom of god

Let us recall the
supposed - conversation
be taken cern + the
angel gabriel in -
Heaven after cern

had ceded to Heaven
the angel asked cern

A 1. corinthians 3.9

1. cor 12.11 12.2.6-1-

to Labourers together
With god

Christ is the only
foundation

→ And Man is the temple
of God + this temple
must Be kept Holy

1. Man must work
With god + god with
Man - they must work
in Union together

Man must Help god +
god will Help man

god Has a great
Program to put order
+ He expects man to do
his part of the work

A Sermon. "Laboring Together With God".

By, Rev. Gene Perry. Negro Baptist Preacher.

1 Corinthians 3-9.

1 Cor. 12-11-12: 2-6-1.

Laborers together with God.

Christ is the only foundation. And man is the temple of God and this temple must be kept Holy. Man must work with God and God with man. They must move in union together. Man must help God and God will help man.

God has a great program to put over and He expects man to do his part of the work.

Laborers and Workers together with God. There is a real service in which men and women can be and are workers in union together with God; first for the betterment of this world and for the bringing in the Kingdom of God.

Let us recall the the supposed conversation. Between Jesus and the angel Gabriel in Heaven after Jesus had cended to Heaven, the angel asked Jesus . Laborers and workers and helpers together with God.

How the work of salvation would be carried forward on earth. Jesus told that he had called and trained twelve men that they could and the twelve promised Jesus that they would train others to take up the work.

2 Cor. Paul says, "we are Laborers together with God."

2 Tim 2:15. We are workmen that need not to be ashamed.

Rightly dividing the word of truth. Now, God have us as co workmen in this practical every day world se we mus look daly to see how men work with God in the improvement of this world.

When God wanted his minsters and His most wonderful works put over

Project # 4454

Federal Writers Project WPA Page # 2.

A Sermon. "Laboring Together With God".

By, Rev. Gene Perry. Negro Baptist Preacher.

He needs man to letch His lightening and put it to work and put the world to be come as a wispering gallery so that one mans voice can be heard by millions at the same time or when he wants tunnels and bridges built or cities. What does He do he puts it in to the heart and brains of Edison.

Ed. West (white)
Birmingham, Alabama

Gertha Couric
Barbour County

ED WEST-INSTALLMENT COLLECTOR

Ed West is employed by the Satterwhite Furniture Store of Birmingham. A great deal of the store's business is done on the installment plan, payments being made weekly, tri-weekly, and monthly, according to the original contract. However, as pointed out by Ed, the contracts are not always strictly adhered to, and it sometimes becomes necessary to go on a collection tour.

"When I am out collecting," Ed said, "and the Negroes haven't the money to pay they run and jump in bed. From their means and groans, you'd think they were at death's door. So we drive on down the road and when we come back, they'll be hard at work at the wash pot or in the field. We drive up to the door and pretend that we're going to take the furniture, but, as a matter of fact, we seldom have to do it. Negroes are good pay. When they see they're caught, they'll say: 'Wait a minute, Boss. I's gwinter borry dat money from my sister.' She had it all the time.

"Sometimes they pay a dollar a month, 25¢ weekly, or two dollars a month, 50¢ weekly, according to the contract. If a month elapses the payment has to be made up the next month. We're never hard on them; in fact we would rather wait longer for the money than take the old furniture back.

"When they come in to buy chairs, they always ask for 'settin' chairs.' I tell them all chairs are made to sit in, but one old Negro said: 'No sir, Boss; settin' chairs is made fer white folks and cane-bottom chairs is made fer niggers.'

Recently I was showing a dresser to a Negro and had almost sold it when the woman with her said: 'No, God, I wouldn't have dat dresser. Some-

body done died whar dat dresser was. Look how dull lookin' dat glass is. Now, iffen a sheet had been put over it, it wouldn' have got dull.' Then my prospective customer said: 'Well, I spects I better git anyway, 'cause iffen you looks too long in a brightlookin' glass it makes you a sinner.'

"I was at the store on New Year's, doing a little book work, and although the store wasn't open, a Negro man appeared at the door to ask me if he could pay me a little money. Naturally I was agreeable and told him to come in and get warn. He said: 'Is I de fu'st person been in dis store today?' I told him he was and he said: 'Dat's good. You guiner have good luck all de year 'cause I's a man. Now iffen it had been a woman comin' inter a house er buildin' fu'st, dat's hard luck.'

"I run into a lot of superstitions," Ed said. "I was out trying to collect from a Negro woman and she told me to wait a minute; that she had 'scnt' for her old man and he was on his way to pay me. When he arrived, he hurried into the house without bothering to leave his axe outside and the woman landed on him flat-footedly. 'Nigger,' she said, 'ain't you go' no better gumption dan to bring a axe in de house? Don' you know dat's bad luck?' He looked at her an instant. 'Tain't but one bad luck, old 'oman,' he said, 'and dat's to miss Heab'n and go ter Hd 1.'

"Buster, my truck driver, is as superstitious as any of them. One day a rabbit ran across the road in front of the truck and Buster immediately jumped into the road and turned his pockets wrong side out.

"'I ain' guiner have no bad luck,' he said, 'and Mr. Ed., if you don' want none, you'd better turn your'n, too!' I told him I wasn't superstitious, but before I got home I had lost my watch. Buster wisely shook his head. 'I tole you to turn your pockets.'

"On another occasion, we were parked beside the highway talking

to a Negro when a dead limb fell from a tree nearby. Buster immediately predicted rain and I so quickly told him it wouldn't rain for a week. I was wrong. Before dark it was raining in torrents. Buster said: 'White folks don't believe nothin' like dat, but you see it's true.'

"I saw a Negro lose the sale of his gray mule," Ed said. "Just because another Negro standing nearby said: 'Don't never buy no gray mule 'cause when dey die, dey turn to han'ts and dey'll come back and heht you fer workin' dem so hard.' There was nothing for the Negro with the mule to do but go elsewhere."

"After we had passed a Negro on the highway one day I asked Buster to turn around and see if he wasn't the one we were looking for. 'No sir,' Buster said, 'Hit's bad luck to look back and you know what I done told you 'bout bad luck. I's gwinner turn dis truck aroun' and look. I ain't gwinner turn my head.'

"Negroes have funny names for things in the store," Ed said. "A linoleum rug is a magnolia; an electric stove a leg twister; a victrola a victoria; artificial flowers artificialous; and a buffet is a goo-face."

"A Negro farmer who came in to pay his bill said he got the money from the president. 'He sho' is kind to giver us farmers money, but I wants to know one thing. Is de president a man or a women? I think he's a man, but he's got a wesen's name, Rosebell, but I is proud of one thing for sho' - I ain' on 'leaf' (relief)."

"They have a language all their own," Ed said, "But I think I know it now, and if I continue my bill collecting, I'll know all their superstitions, so if I never collect all the money, I still won't have a total loss."

2/14/39

S.J.

*Gertha Conine
Enfanta, Ala
Feb. 8, 1939*

Negro Stories.

Story of Persons Engaged in Installment,

Furniture Selling. Given me by Ed West of "Satterwhite's", Furniture Store.

"When I am out collecting on certain days each week, if they have'nt the money to pay on their weekly, tri-weekly or monthly installment, they run and jump in bed and pretend they are sick, sometimes at death's door, moaning and groaning. We drive on down the road and when we come back they will be hard at work at the wash pot or in the field. We drive up to the door, pretend we are going to take the furniture. As a matter of fact we seldom have to. Negroes are good pay. They then say, "Wait a minute, boss, I's guin'er borrow dat money from my sister". She had it all the time.

Sometimes they pay a dollar a month, .25¢ weekly, or two dollars a month, .50¢ weekly or more according to their contract. If they miss a month they make it up the next. We are never hard on them. Had rather they take longer paying than take the old furniture back. When they come in to buy chairs they always ask for "setting chairs". I tell all chairs are made to sit in. One old negro said, "No sir, boss, sitting chairs are made for white folks and cane bottom setting chairs is made for niggers.

Was showing a dresser to a negro lately and had almost sold it when the negro woman with her said, "No, God, I wouldn't have dat dresser, somebody done died where dat dresser was. Look at dat glass how dull looking hit is. Now if dey had put a sheet over hit, hit wouldn't have gone dull on you". Then the other negro woman said, "Well, I speck I better git hit anyway, cause hits dull. If you looks too long in a bright lookin glass it makes you a sinner".

New years eve I went down to do a little book work. The store was not open

Negro Stories.

Stories of Persons engaged in Installment.

open but a negro man opened the door and asked me if he could come in and pay me a little money. I told him that would be fine. To come in and warm. He said, "Is I de first person been in dis store today?" I told him, "Yes, that we were not open today". He said, "Dats good, you guin'er have good luck all de year, cause I's a man, but if a omen comes ina house or building first, hits hard luck".

One day I was out collecting and the negro woman told me to just wait a minute, she had "sont" fer her old man and he was coming to pay me. He came hurriedly with an axe on his shoulder. She said, "Nigger, ain't you got no better gumption than to bring a axe in de house. Don't you know hits bad luck". He looked at her with disgust and said, "Taint but one bad luck, old oman, and dats to miss Heaven and go to hell."

"Buster", my truck driver, is very superstitious and I get a lot of kick out of him. One day a rabbitt ran across the road in front of the truck. He got out and turned his pockets wrong side out, saying, "he wasn't guin'er have bad luck and Mr. Ed, you better turn your'n". I told him I wasn't superstitious, but before I got home I had lost my watch. He said, "I tole you to turn your pockets."

"Another time it was a very fair day and we were riding along the highway. We had stopped to interview a negro, when a large dead limb fell from a tree nearby. "Buster" said, "Mr. Ed, look out for a rain". I said, "Buster, its not going to rain in a week". And sure enough before five o'clock it was raining in torrents. "Buster said, "white folks, dont believe nothing lak dat, but you sees hits true, don't you?"

"We saw some negroes standing in the road with a gray mule. The negro with the mule was trying to sell it to the other negro, when a

Negro Stories.

Stories of Persons Engaged In installment.

negro standing near by said, "Nigger, don't nebber buy no gray mule; when dey dies, dey turns to hants and dey'll come back and hant you for working dem so hard." So the other negro man went on down the road with the mule to try and sell it to some one else.

"One day we passed a negro on the highway and I thought I recognized her as the one I wanted to see. I said, "Buster, look back and see if that's the negro I want to see". Buster said, " No sir, Mr. Ed, hits bad luck to look back and you knows what I done tole you bout bad luck. I's ^{turn ~~back~~} ~~back~~ this truck around, I ain't guin'er look back".

" They ask for funny things in the store. Always a lineoleum rug is a "magnolia"; electric stove, a "leg twister; a victrola; a victoria"; artificial flowers, "articious flowers"; buffet, a "goo-face."

" One day an old negro farmer came in to pay a bill and he said he got the money from the President and said, "He show is kind to give us farmers money, but I want to ask you is de President a man or a oman? I think hit were a man but he got a oman name, "Rosa-Bell" (Roosevelt), but I is proud of one thing for show, I ain't on "leaf" (relief). They have a language all their own, but I know it now.

*Gertha Conner.
Barbour County*

Stage Travel Down The Chattahoochee Valley.

Taken from sketch By, Peter Brannon.

From Columbus to Eufaula, Barbour County. Taken from a little volume presented to the Archives and History, Montgomery by Judge and Mrs. & Mrs. Lucien D. Gardner.

The accounts, entries, references and notations are given for the years 1842-44. Cash received from post routes between Fort Mitchell, Eufaula and Franklin on the west side of the river. Stage transportation for a black boy from Eufaula to Fort Gaines, Ga. was \$3.00 but the stage would take a box weighing 100 pounds all the way from Columbus to Eufaula for .45¢.

1843 Post Records.

By reference to the Acts of Congress one finds that there was a post route in Alabama from Fort Mitchell, by Roanoke postoffice (Stewart County, Alabama, Eufaula, Barbour County, Alabama, to Fort Gaines, Early County, Georgia, the mail to be carried on the west side of the Chattahoochee River. This shows that Columbus, Ga. mail to Fort Gaines which at the date of this account, July 1836, was a place of some importance, was transported over what is today known as the River Road from the present Columbus in old Henry County, Alabama, as far north as Columbus, Ga. The road goes by our Fort Mitchell through Oswichee by Cottonton, on to Eufaula, south by old Franklin and on toward Alaga. The Florida Short Route of the Alabama highway system parallels much of this way, and it touches the road at points.

Stage Accounts.

The stage accounts in this ledger (which looks quite like, except that it is slightly larger, a blue/black spelling book) are most interesting and one can almost compile a census of families from these records. Either the stage driver or the contractor, seems to have kept an account against all of his passengers to most of all he charged their fare and if we may accept this

Stage Travel Down The Chattahoochee Valley.

By, Peter Brannon.(Continued.)

ledger, some of it he never collected. On the 26th. day of July 1842, he carried one "Hamilton" from Columbus to Eufaula and charged him \$6.00. Entered opposite his name and written at a different time is "run away, never paid." McCall, another passenger on that day was charged the amount of \$6.00 and A. Lovelace has entered "Paid". Mr. Lovelace was the stage driver. On the first day of July of that year, Mr. N. Gardner rode down from Florence to Eufaula. The charge was \$ 3.00. He was "to pay Lovelace." At the same time his wife and daughter accompanied him and the charge may have been for the three of them. Old Florence is not far from Eufaula, so the amount should not be much. Entered is "to be settled in my account with William McLeod". In July of that year, Mr, McKay, Mr. Crowell, Mr. Wiley, Mr. Chittle, Mr. Williams, Mr. Coleman, Miss Brown, Mr. Booth, Miss Sergeant, Mr. Brocaw, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Bateman were "charge" passengers. On Aug. 5th. Mrs. Wellborn and her negro girl traveled from Columbus to Eufaula and occupied one seat. We must imagine that the lady shared the middle swinging seat, always reserved for the ladies, with the little colored girl and the fare was \$ 6.00. She had three trunks, one carpet-bag, one sword and the excess charge was \$3.54. Mr. R. Shannon shipped some goods down by the same stage but the record shows that he never paid the transportation them. During that August Col. Toney (without doubt, the reference is to Col. Washington Toney whose plantation was several miles north of the present Eufaula), went down from Columbus to Sandy Creek. He charged his fare as \$7.00, for Mr. Lovelace to collect later. He brought down at the same time a bundle for Mr. Davis and the Charge was .50¢. On the 18th. of August

Stage Travel Down The Chattahoochee Valley.

By, Peter Brannon.(continued.)

Mrs. Gardner, Benjamin Gardner and little daughter, the three being charged for one seat through paying two fares, are shown as traveling from Eufaula to Florence. Mr. J.P. Pigg is traveler on the coach. I do not identify the name in that section though they may belong there. John P. Harvey rode the stage quite often, Col. Hunter was a passenger quite often, Thomas Henry, Mr. Hardaway, Mr. Wakefield, Mr. Laney, Miss Murphy, Maj. McCoy, Mr. H. Winget (this name would be spelled that way at the present time), Mr. Stow, (without doubt the old hardware family of Eufaula), and scores of other names are entered. Sometimes the gentlemen traveled with a boy, and the ladies traveled with a girl, showing that they they carried their maid. He rarely ever charges the ladies for their maid, though this does not always apply in the case of a negro boy.

As I read along through this volume, I find that one of the drivers on the line, maybe the substitute man, was named Preston. His first name or initial was "T". The driver did not charge "round trips", but he did enter thus: "Mr. Hunt, up and down, Columbus to Eufaula". No reduced rates were made for the round trip. The stage took on passengers at Uchee Creek, a few miles south of Fort Mitchell. Apparently between regular stops, passengers were charged at a higher rate. While practically all the passengers names are identified, occasionally we see the word "stranger", and always in that case the amount is entered as "paid". Sometimes it is "pd" and sometimes "payd".

In August 1843, Col. Toney had a \$22 charge. He went down on the 17th. from Columbus "down home", the fare being \$7 and he carried down 100 pounds

Stage Travel Down The Chattahoochee Valley.

By, Peter Brannon.(Continued.)

of flour, express on same being \$3. Apparently as entered at the same time, but intended to be the charge for the trip up to Columbus, is the fare from Eufaula, which is entered as \$5, whereas the stage from his home on Sandy Creek is as at other times \$7. The Millwards used the stage quite often. Sometimes it is charged to Mrs. Millward who carried her maid with her and then again it is charged to S.W. Millward, "wife's fare" and "negro woman's", each being entered separately. The stage fare for a negro boy when traveling by himself from Columbus is not as much as if accompanied by someone. I presume that the negro boys must have ridden with the driver on the box. "Aleson Jagchat" is undoubtedly an entry for "Allison Gachett". One interesting entry here is "Johnson's wife rode twice and himself rode three times". Thomas Cargile is charged quite often for other folk's fare. The driver, Lovelace, seems not to have asked their names, for always the "strangers" were entered by Lovelace. Mr. Preston must have asked their names. A Lovelace, sometimes entered as A.A.L gave way as driver to James J. Lovelace on July 1, 1843. Entered, very modestly and almost out of sight is "July 1, (no year) James J. Lovelace commenced driving". Entered more boldly is "1843, July L. A.A. Lovelace, debtor to cash when going to Chambers, \$10. Quit driving same day".

Business Accounts.

As well as entering accounts against his stage passengers, the contractor injects certain other little business matters. For example, on July 1, 1843 he paid, "Mr. Lomax" \$8.39. This is either the father of, or our own Col. Tenne Lomax who lived at Eufaula in the forties. On July 4, is entered that Mr. Gray commenced riding the mail at \$6 per mile. It is also entered that he, the stag

Stage Travel Down The Chattahoochee Valley.

By, Peter Brannon.(continued.)

contractor, put stock on from Fort Gaines July 3, 1843. "One horse was kept at Lumpkin(from 3rd. instnt.July)", and one boy on the 4th. at supper." In 1844, this contractor bought of S. Pasmore 3,664 feet of plank at \$27.48. He sold the account to James H. Smith and gave his note for the amount. Several other pertinent facts come out. A credit for "by services driving the stage", one time entered as \$15 for two months, and a charge to "driving the stage for two months at \$7.50" gives the student an opportunity to arrive at fixed salaries for the period. Samuel M. Latimer, who ran a regular account with the stage, and who seems to have paid many passenger's fare, furnished the feed for the stage horses at \$11 a month for four horses. His son, Archy, seems to have borrowed on the account for once this unknown contractor paid cash to "son Archy" \$22 and another time \$50. I do not identify Col. Corcoran, but on January 24, 1845, he came down from Columbus to Eufaula and paid \$5 fare and \$5 express on a 200-pound box of books. On August 14, of that year, he paid \$2 express on a box of books. In 1845, the stage fare to Columbus had been reduced from \$6 to \$5 each way. The contractor seems to have bought items in Columbus for his friends, charged it on their accounts and then charged express for bringing down these commodities. Thomas Cargile(who is sometimes "gle", sometimes "gil" and sometimes "gile") had him buy tools in Columbus and bring them down. The Gordons, that well known family in East Henry, must have had a bank account with Mr, Cargile for I see Col. Gordon's stage fare always charged to Mr. Cargile.

Gertha Couric
Eufaula, Ala.

AUNT LUCY THOMAS, WASH-'OMAN, HOBOKEN

Aunt Lucy's face is lined and her voice cracked; but kindness shines ihhher dim old eyes.

"I ain't spry no more, honey," she said, "my time is mighty nigh out, but I's ready to go when old Marster sees fit to call me dar. I's got a bad cold, and I been scatterin' chicken manure to cure it. Hit's good to break up a head cold.

"I seen you comin' way off. You sho' does step it, you walks proudful like." Aunt Lucy gave her chair a hitch that brought it closer, then leaned forward eagerly as she spoke. "I wants to axe you a question 'bout Garrie Bell, Mandy's gal, she ain't never had no pa. She's sho' pretty, a high breded, no-nation nigger. I sho' is glad I ain't no mixture breed. You know her husband is in de pen. De one dat kilt Mr. Will Britt. Lawd, dat was one awful night. I'll tell you 'bout dat. Nigger gals dese days sho' is sinners, sings reals, gits drunk and shakes dey foot all night. No wonder dey no count; ain't got no 'ligion. I holds myself above sinners. Don't shout either lak dey used to. Book-reading done ruint 'em."

I said "Aunt Lucy, tell me first about Aunt Mollie Almonds. You know I wrote her up as one of the old slaves." "Honey, she sho' was a ageable 'oman. Dey planted her de fu'st Tuesday after the fu'st Sunday in fodder-pulling time."

I said, "What do you mean by 'planted?'"

"Dat means dey funeralized her honey. I been unrestless ever since she gone. Ain't had nobody to set and talk with and smoke my pipe in peace. Just look at Mandy Jordan. She ain't no count. Young as she is she already got nine head of chillun. She's the outbreedingest 'oman that ever I did see.

She ain't much over thirty year old. She had two by her first husband, Tobe. He's dead. Three by her second husband; he runned away. And de other four is slow-footed bastards. She sho' do dominise her chillun though. Honey, here I is telling you 'bout Mandy and you want to know 'bout wash 'omans. I been one all my life and I use' to be the best in New-fallah. Course now I ain't no-count. I's on 'leaf and dey gives me termodities (commodities). Dat sho' hope me. I goes out in de woods down by de creek and gits my wood.

"Talking 'bout when I wuz a wash-'oman. I was high-class. Washed party dresses, window curtains and men's white shirts. Had a fluting machine. Ain't but one other 'dman had a fluting machine 'side me an' hit was Bunch. Here's de way we do:" She thus explained the technique of her craft.

"First, Monday morning you goes to de white folks' house and gits de wash. When I gits home, I makes a fire under de pot. Then you puts on your pot of water and let hit git hot. Then I sorts out clothes. Fu'st your white clothes. You puts 'em in a number three rubbing tub. Then you runs out de white clothes and put 'em in de pot, then cuts up your bar soap and puts hit in de pot, then puts in your washing powder. Then you rubs out your towels in de tub. An' all dis time your white clothes is boiling in de pot. Then you takes your white clothes out and puts your towels in, and rinses your white clothes out through two tubs of water with 'blueing' in hit. Then you starches 'em.

"To make your starch you lets your water boil, then puts a little piece of lard in it. Make up your starch in a pan and stir it in de boiling water. Let hit cook 'bout twenty minutes. Then you git a pan and strain your starch through a clean cloth so de starch won't be lumpy and trashy. Then you starch de clothes and hang 'em on de lines with clothes pins. Then your towels you wash the same way but you don't starch 'em. Then you wash the colored clothes like the white unlesseen you don't boil

de ones dat fade. Jist put 'em in de hot water and take 'em right out, unlesen hits over-halls.

"That's Monday, washing-day. Then on Tuesday you starts ironing.

"When you git ready to iron and take your clothes and wrinkle 'em down, roll 'em tight and put 'em in a basket. Kiver 'em up with a white piece of cloth and let 'em set. You make a fire over your ironing bucket with charcoals, then put up your ironing board whilst your fire is burping and then you scrub your irons and wash 'em an' put 'em on de fire. Then you git your iron holder and a cloth to wipe your irons as you take 'em off de fire. You must watch out that you don't have a rough iron. Put cedar or wax to wipe your iron so hit will be smooth. Then start ironing your towels fu'st, then you iron silk pieces you don't have to sprinkle, like gowns, slips, missouries (brassieres), panties and things. Next you gits a clean white cloth and keep hit damp to wipe de wrinkles out de clothes while you iron. You irons upon a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Pack in a basket and upon a Friday you takes 'em home to de white folks and gits your money. Then," she added, "beaming broadly, "on Saturday you pleasure and you goes to 'meetin'' on Sunday.

"Honey, wash-omens has a good time in Summer, excusing a rainy spell. But in Winter, Lawd, hit's hard. I is had my hands split wide open and my feets might nigh froze washing out doore at de wash pot in Winter. I speck de turpentine in de soap hopes your hands and keeps 'em from gitting 'fected. If hit rains, dat's sho' verrisome. Has to dry de clothes in de house by de open fireplace. If hit rains on Monday us has to wash on de back porch. Some niggers has a shed-room, but I ain't never had one.

"But you takes hit all in all, hit ain't bad. Us don't have long cold spells, you know dat.

"I hears de white ladies up North does dey own wahsing. Ain't dat somepin'? Lawd, wesen you had to do it? You just couldn't had done it,

honey, 'cause you is 'quality'. Dey tells me dem Northerz ladies sets and eats with niggers, but dey must be po' white trash, lak dat 'oman dat lives in de alley."

I told Aunt Lucy that the women up North had washing machines and it wasn't a bit of trouble and some women down South also had them and did their own work, but I couldn't convince her. She talked on and on shaking her ol head that I've never seen without it's head-rag. She said, she was born "'fore freedom", but who can tell? Few ever know their age. I asked one old woman how old she was and she looked about eighty. She said, "Missy, I speck I's 'bout twenty-one."

Aunt Lucy then said, "Honey, Aunt Hannah is dead too. You writ 'bout her and had her picture took. She showed dat picture to everybody. Hit seems lak all de old niggers is dying out. But dey don't have big 'settin' ups' no more. Dat's 'cause dey takes de body to de funeral home and enflumes (embalm) hit. Dey don't ever burn no fire in de room with de body, 'cause smoke would mix up wid de spirit and scatter hit. But us still has big funerals though and they's grand. Yes'um, I sho' believes in ha'nts but dey walks at special times, most ingenerally when de moon is young. Look at dem little kinky headed pickaninneys. Dey sho' do pester me. Dey's Mandy's and dey so light-fingered dey steal air thing dey sees, whether dey needs hit or not."

I asked Aunt Lucy why they all wear earrings.

She said, "Honey, dey Ma's punches holes in de years (ears) to make 'em see good out de eyes. Two of her gals is 'blue gum'. You know when a blue-gum nigger bites you, hit's pizen. Don't you 'member dat time Mr. Charlie Skillman hit dat nigger in de mouth wid his fist and Dr. Britt had to cut his hand off, den his arm? I vaz washin' fer dem and dey sho' thought he was gwiner die. He didn't die but he came mighty nigh hit, and his arm did. I don't want no blue gum nigger to bite me! I is too old to

do air work but I nurses de sick. Don't do hit fer pay. I does hit fer 'Oid Marster'.

"I kin make good poultices, keep hât bricks to dey feets, rub 'em with kerosene, lard and turpentine. When Lavinia Roberson had de per-mourney jâst 'fore Christmas, de white lady nurse dat comes 'round and visits said I done fine. She kept on poking a little glass stick in her mouth. (Lavinia called hit a 'mama-ter) and took her 'temptation', but I don't know nothin' 'bout dat. I can't read. Dey didn't let her eat nothin', excusing orange jâice, milk and female (premium) crackers which had been rolled with a rolling pin. Times sho' is changed. In my day, dey said, 'stuff a cold and starve a fever'. Ain't but one kind ob medicine I takes and dat's 'black draws', (black draught). Hit does all de good.

"Honey, I ain't been deessame since Dr. Britt died. Hit pretty nigh broke all us niggers' hearts. He didn't care ef you had no money. You say, 'Doc, I ain't got no money' and he say 'I ain't ask you, is I?' He ain't never turned nobody down and ef you were bad off rick he would take you to his horse-pital and never charge you one red copper cent. Bless God, he's settin' right up dar by de throne. 'Thar ain't never been sich a funeral in de United States and hit took one hour fer de parade (funeral procession) to pass. (And it did!) Dey let you view the body and I hears ten thousand folke passed by and everybody crying; mens, chillun, niggers and all. God bless him.

"No, honey, I never did marry. Didn't have no chillun neither. I speck dat's why I is so calm-like. I is glad I didn't have no husband to pester and rule me. I ain't never seen air nigger man a woman can trust. Didn't have none to throw sand in my eye. Look at Haida grieving 'cause Carrie Bell's husband in de pen. She ought to thank God he's dar; he would have kilt her by now. He went up North to Detroit. That's what roun't him. And he come back here talking like a Yankee, puttin' on airs.

He got a good pa and ma. I feels sorry for them, but I is glad he's 'sont up'." I thanked her for telling me about washing clothes.

She said, "I know one thing I forgot to tole you, how much money I made. I made good money; sometimes eight dollars a week and de white folks furnished soap and starch. Dese days taint hard lak hit use ter be. All dem white, stiff, starch petticoats, corset covers, drawers and oh lawd, de ruffles! In dese days ladies almost bees naked."

2/11/39

S.J.

Emma Porter. Negro Cook.

625 Orange Street, Eufaula, Ala.

Always laughing, nothing worries Emma much, "cusing Mary Lou and Black done been betrayed by those low down black niggers."

She is one of Eufaula's best cooks. Makes the most beautiful and delicious cakes, pastries, pies; splendid meat cook, hams, turkeys and "Oh, boy, how I fries chicken, dont say nothing."

For eight years she was head cook at Tea Room and before and since cooked at the most exclusive homes of the city. She is also an excellent laundress.

"I was a 'Rogers', father named Gabe and mother Lindy. My Pa was the father of nine children, he got five dead. I's next to the one that's living, they's all in the North but me". "Did you live on your father's farm?" "He didn't have no farm, jist had patches, My Ma died when I was ten, then ~~we~~ moved to town. I used ter peddle vegetables. That's when I learnt to cook, When I'de sell out, I go ter Mrs. Bray's to help her and she's the omen that learnt me ter make sweet and buttermilk biscuit, cakes and things. In them days white folks had patience to learnt you. Then I worked fer "Miss" Esther McKenzie. I nursed Dan & Robert. I travelled with them, honey. I went everywhere. First time I ever ride on a train, went ter Brewton and Montgomery. Seed everything then but Jesus. I was nineteen when I married. Married in Miss Mary Lou McKenzies kitchen. Married Arthur Porter. He got kilt six years atter we married. Boy was born two months atter he got kilt. I got a little money, not much. Mary Lou would have been five years old the third of November. "ad three chillun under Mary Lou and she jist five. The Lord knowed what he was er doing. I would er had fourteen chillun by now. I raised all my chillun with the help of Miss Esther. She give em all their clothes. When there was a circus in

Emma Porter. Negro Cook.(Continued.)

town she's have us all sent in a car and give us the tickets. She sho was good. Course hit was hard paying house rent and buying vittals."

What she bought always "toted a pain."

"Lord, honey, you aint guine-ter took my picture lak I is, out here washing de white folks clothes, wid all ~~the~~ black little niggers laugh- ing all the time? I ain't cooking ater Miss Mae's dis week, kase Mary Lou's down. Honey, didn't you knowed she had er baby Monday? Yessum, I show was sprised. It hurted me terrible. Never thunk it of Mary Lou. Now Black, I knowed she had de debil in her eye first time I seed her. Hit show is hard on me. Here I's got my four head of chillun, Aunt Mae and three grand-chillun. My chillun, Kate, Black, and Boy is working. Hit show is expenseless fer Mary Lou ter have er baby and ain't got no hus- band ter pay fer hit. And Black'd two younguns and Aunt Mae just like er baby".

"But my children is smart. I got three cooks right behind me. Mary Lou, Kate and Black. Boy, he can cook too. I stopped cooking at Miss Mae's, gwineing back to next week. Soona as Mary Lou gats up. I stopped to help Mary Lou till she gits well. She named her baby Maide Dell, atter de Granny. But Mary Lou was so fractious before she was born, no wonder hit is fractious".

I heard a funny noise, like the growling of a little dog, and I said, "Emma, what is that noise?" "That's Moot eating bread, quarreling ater hit just like a little puppy, ater while she'll drap off ter sleep, Her real name is Lottie, us jist calls her Moot. Everybody's crazy bout Moot. Della Mae is Black's oldest chile. She one good chile"

"Honey, you members dat night I drinked dat quart ob likker and you didn't know I was lit. Think I was sick and sent me home in a taxi. Next

Emma Porter, Negro Cook.(Continued.)

morning dar I was right on de job agin. Hit didn't hurt me none. Hit took er quart fer me. You knows I weighs 230 pounds and ef I lives I'll be forty-four year old next month. Was birthed the third day of November"

Emma never went to school. Cant read or write. All of her children went to school some, third or fourth grade. Nine live in the little three room house. Emma, her four children, three grand-children and Aunt Mae Rice, Emma's old aunt, an ex-slave, ninety-two years old. They are all a smart croud of negroes. Emma makes them "hustle". Emma is honest and kind and good and always happy. I asked her what she fed all her "chillun" on. She said "Honey, I mostly gives em series(cereal) fer breakfast, then dinner, pot-likker, corn bread, maters and taters(tomaters and potatoes). They's crazy about lasses(molasses) too. I just made some crap-apple jelly (crab apple), deys laks dat."

Gertha Couric
Eufaula, Alabama

AUNT LUCY THOMAS, WASH-'OMAN, HOBOKEN

Aunt Lucy's face is lined and her voice cracked; but kindness shines in her dim old eyes.

"I ain't spry no more, honey," she said. "My time is mighty nigh out, but I's ready to go when old Marster sees fit to call me." She paused to cough hollowly, laying her hand impressively on her chest. "I's got a bad cold, and I been scatterin' chicken manure to cure it. Hit's good to break up a head cold," she explained.

"I seen you comin' way off. You sho' does step it; you walks proudful-like." Aunt Lucy gave her chair a hitch that brought it closer, then leaned forward eagerly as she spoke. "I wants to axe you a question 'bout Carrie Bell, Mandy's gal. Did you know her husband is in de pen? Carrie Bell ain't never had no pa. She's sho' pretty; a high breded, no-nation nigger. I sho' is glad I ain't no mixture breed.

"Carrie Bell's husband is de one dat kilt Mr. Will Britt. Lawd, dat was one awful night. Dey wuz heap of evil goin's on dat night. No wonder dey no count; ain't got no 'ligion. Now, I holds myself above sinners. Folks don't shout either lak dey used to. Book-reading done ruint 'em," she finished her rambling complaint, and I asked about Aunt Molly Almonds, one of the old slaves.

"Honey, Aunt Mollie was a ageable 'oman. You know dat. She done gone now. Dey planted her de fu'st Tuesday after the fu'st Sundar in fodder-pulling time."

"What do you mean by planted? Aunt Lucy?"

"Dat means dey funeralized her, honey. I been unrestless ever since she gone. Ain't had nobody to set and talk with and smoke my pipe in peace. Just look at Mandy Jordan. She don't count. Young as she is

she already got nine head of chillun. She's the outbreedingest 'oman that ever I did see. She ain't much over thirty year old. She had two by her fu'st husband, Tobe. He's dead. Three by her second husband; he runned away. And de other four is slow-footed bastards. She sho' do deminize her chillun though." Here Aunt Lucy laughed gleefully. "Honey, here I is tellin' you 'bout Mandy and you wants to know 'bout wash-'omens," she said. "But what you wants to know all dat for, I sho' can't see, a white lady like you.

"I been a wash-'oman all my life, an' I used to be de best in New-Fallah, 'course now I ain't no count. I's on 'leaf and dey gives me termodities (commodities). Dat sho' hopes me. Then I goes out in de woods down by de creek and gits my wood.

"Talking 'bout when I wuz a wash-'oman, I wuz high-class; washed party dresses, window curtains and men's white shirts. Had a fluting machine. Ain't but one other 'oman had a fluting machine 'side me an' hit wuz Bunch.

"Here's de way we do:" she thus began to explain the technique of her craft.

"Fu'st, Monday morning you goes to de white folks' house and gits de wash. When I gits home, I makes a fire under de pot. Den I puts on a pot of water and let hit git hot. Then I sorts out de clothes.

"Fu'st you sorts your white clothes. You puts 'em in a number three rubbing tub. Then you rubs out de white clothes and puts 'em in de pot, then cuts up your bar soap and puts hit in de pot, then puts in your washing powder. Then you rubs out your towels in de tub. An' all dis time your white clothes is boiling in de pot. Then you takes your white clothes out and puts your towels in, and rinses your white clothes out through two tubs of water wid blueing in hit. Then you starches 'em.

"To make your starch you lets your water boil, then puts a little

piece of lard in it. Make up your starch in a pan and stir it in de boiling water, and let hit cook 'bout twenty minutes. Then you gits a pan and strains your starch through a clean cloth so de starch won't be lumpy and trashy. Then you starch de clothes and hang 'em on de lines with clothes pins. Then your towels you wash the same way but you don't starch 'em. Then you wash the colored clothes like the white unlesseen you don't boil de ones dat fade. Jist put 'em in de hot water and take 'em right out, unlesseen hit's over-halls.

"That's Monday, washing-day. Then on Tuesday you starte ironing.

"When you git ready to iron and take your clothes and sprinkle 'em down, roll 'em tight and put 'em in a basket. River 'em up with a white piece of cloth and let 'em set. You make a fire over your ironing bucket with charcoals, then put your ironing board whilst your fire is burning and then you scrub your irons and wash 'em an' put 'em on de fire. Then you git your iron holder and a cloth to wipe your irons as you take 'em off de fire. You must watch out that you don't have a rough iron. Use cedar or wax to wipe your iron so hit will be smooth. Then start ironing your towels fu'st, then iron your silk pieces that you don't have to sprinkle, like gowns, slips, missouries (brassieres), panties and things. Next you gits a clean white cloth and keep hit damp to wipe de wrinkles out de clothes while you iron. You irons upon a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Pack in a basket and upon a Friday you takes 'em home to de white folks and gits your money. Then" she added, blessing broadly, "on Saturday you pleasure; and you goes to meetin' on Sunday.

"Honey, wash-'emans has a good time in Summer - excusing a rainy spell. But in winter, Lawd, hit's hard. I is had my hands split wide open and my foots night' nigh froze washing out doors at de wash pot in Winter. I speck de turpentine in de soap hopes your hands and keeps 'em from getting 'fected. If hit rains, dat's sho' worrisome. Has to dry de clothes in de house by de open fireplace. If hit rains on Monday us has wash on de

back porch. Some niggers has a shed-room, but I ain't never had one.

"But you takes hit all in all, hit ain't bad. Us don't have long cold spells, you know dat.

"I hears de white ladies up North does dey own washing. Ain't dat somepin'? Lawd, sposed you had to do it? You just couldn't have done it, honey, 'cause you is quality!' Dey tells me dem Northern ladies sets and eats with niggers, but dey must be po' white trash, lak dat 'oman dat lives in de alley."

I told Aunt Lucy that the women up North had washing machines and it wasn't a bit of trouble and that some women down South have them and do their own work, but she couldn't be convinced. She talked on and on, shaking her old head that I've never seen without it's head-rag.

She said, she was born "fore freedom" but who can tell? Few ever know their age. I asked one old woman how old she was; and she looked about eighty. She said "Missy, I 'speck I's 'bout twentysone."

Aunt Lucy then said, "Honey, Aunt Hannah is dead too. You writ 'bout her and had her picture took. She showed dat picture to everybody. Hit seems lak all de old niggers is dying out. But dey don' have big settin' ups no more. Dat's 'cause dey takes de body to de funeral home and enflumes (embalm) hit. Dey don't ever burn no fire in de room with de body, 'cause smoke would mix up wid de spirit and scatter hit. But us still has big funerals though and they's grand. Yes'um, I sho' believes in ha'nts but dey walks in special times, most ingenerally when de moon is young." She broke off suddenly to move stiffly to her door and scold several small and noisy black girls. "Dem little kinky-headed pickaninnies" she mumbled. "Dey sho' do pester me. Dey's Mandy's and dey so light-fingered dey steal air thing dey sees, whether dey needs hit or not."

I asked Aunt Lucy why they all wore earrings.

She said, "Honey, dey Ma's punches holes in de years (ears) to make

'em see good out de eyes. Two of her gals is 'blue gum'. You know when a blue-gum nigger bites you, hit's pisen. Don't you 'member dat time Mr. Charlie Skillman hit dat nigger in de mouth wid his fist and Dr. Britt had to cut his hand off; den his arm? I wuz washin' fer dem and dey sho' thought he was gwiner die. He didn't die but he come mighty nigh hit, and his arm sho' did. I don't want no blue gum nigger to bit me!" Then she resumed her story. "I is too old to do air work but I nurses de sick," she said. "Don't do hit fer pay. I does hit fer 'Old Marster.'

"I kin make good poultices, keep hot bricks to dey feets, rub 'em with kerosene, lard and turpentine. When Lavinia Roberson had de per-journey just 'fore Christmas, de white lady nurse dat comes 'round and visits said I done fine. She kept on poking a little glass stick in her mouth. (Lavinia called hit a 'mass-ter) and took her 'temptation,' but I don't know nothin' 'bout dat. I can't read. Dey didn't let her eat nothin', excusin' orange juice, milk and female (premium) crackers which had been rolled with a rolling pin. Times sho' is changed. In my day, dey said, 'stuff a cold and starve a fever.' Ain't but one kind o' medicine I takes an' dat's 'black draws,' (black draught). Hit does all de good.

"Honey, I ain't been de same since Dr. Britt died. Hit pretty nigh broke all us niggers' hearts. He didn't care ef you had no money. You say, 'Dec, I ain't got no money,' and he say 'I ain't ask you, is '?' He ain't never turned nobody down and ef you were bad-off sick he would take you to his horse-pital and never charge you one red copper cent. Bless God, he's settin' right up dar by de throne right now. There ain't never been sich a funeral in de United States and hit took one hour fer de parade (funeral procession) to pass. (And it did!) Dey let you view the body and I hears ten thousand folks passed by and everybody crying; wene, chillun, niggers and all. God bless him!

"No, honey, I never did marry. Didn't have no chillun neither. I

speck dat's de reason I'm so calm-like. I is glad I didn't have no husband to pester and rule me. I ain't never seen air nigger man a woman can trust. Didn't have none to throw sand in my eye. Look at Maida grieving 'cause Carrie Bell's husband in de pen. She ought to thank God he's dar; he would have kilt her by now. He went up North to Detroit. That's what runit him. And he come back here talking like a Yankee, puttin' on airs. He got a good pa and ma. I feels sorry for them, but I is sho' glad he's 'sont up'." I thanked her for telling me about washing clothes.

She said, "I know one thing I forget to tole you; how much money I made. I made good money; sometimes eight dollars a week and de white folke furnished soap and starch. Dese days tain't hard lak hit use ter be. All dem white, stiff, starch petticoats I've wakked and ironed; all de corset covers, drawers and oh Lawd, de fuffles!

"In dese days ladies almost bees naked."

2/1^h/39

S.J.

Gertha Conrice
Barbours County
Nov 23, 1978

Project # 4454

Federal Writers Project WPA Page # 1.

Negro Baptist Preacher.

"Pastor Gemes" (James)

Rev. Robert James, Route # 2, P.O.Box 15, Hoboken, Eufaula, Ala.

"I was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Brought here when I was a baby. My father was Durn James and my Mother Srrah James. I was born August 1876. I was just nineteen years old when I started preaching. I have been in the ministry now about fort-three years; always in Alabama.

"Two living children; two dead.

"I am now pastor of four churches, "Friendship" at Hatchuchubbee; "Thankful" at Eufaula; White Oak Chapel", near Clayton; "Humble Zion", Spring Hill. Preach one Sunday at each. I have a car but its giving down now and I guin'ter try and get another. My flocks have always hoped me when they could. Now they are mostly all poor. They ain't got no money but they give me food stuff if they got it. Many dont have it. Dont have nothing. They gives me chickens, corn, taters, hog-meat in Winter. We have our baptising in August and September. Its been too cold ter baptise. I's baptised as many as forty-five at er time. Its er grand sight.

"I think some of my best sermons are First Romans, 10th Chapter, 10th, Verse. "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation", Now we git our subject: Faith and Belief. That takes care of the text. Another: John 3rd. Chapter, 7th. Verse, Text: "Marvel not for I say unto you, ye must be born again". The subject, "A Holy dispensation of the mind". When our mindis changed from evil to good, then we sees it as the holy dispensation of the mind. With an inward eye of faith we sees God. Nobody in the world can turn that down. Many a time I have been setting by the death bed in the sick room and the diseased one was dying. I would see them wave their hand and say, "come on death, I'll gladly go with thee", and oft-time I have heard them say, "yonder is my mother or Father".