

## **Andrew Simms: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project 1936-1938**

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938 Oklahoma Narratives, Volume xIII Andrew Simms. Age 80. Sapulpa, Okla.

My parents come over on a slave ship from Africa about twenty year before I was born on the William Driver plantation down in Florida. My folks didn't know each other in Africa but my old Mammy told me she was captured by Negro slave hunters over there and brought to some coast town where the white buyers took her and carried her to America.

She was kinder a young gal then and was sold to some white folks when the boat landed here. Dunno who they was. The same thing happen to my pappy. Must have been about the same time from the way they tells it. Maybe they was on the same boat, I dunno.

They was traded around and then mammy was sold to William Driver. The plantation was down in Florida. Another white folks had a plantation close by. Mister Simms was the owner. Bill Simms—that's the name pappy kept after the War.

Somehow or other mammy and pappy meets 'round the place and the first thing happens they is in love. That's what mammy say. And the next thing happen is me. They didn't get married. The Master's say it is alright for them to have a baby. They never gets married, even after the War. Just jumped the broomstick and goes to living with somebody else I reckon.

Then when I was four year old along come the War and Master Driver takes up his slaves and leaves the Florida country and goes way out to Texas. Mammy goes along, I goes along, all the children goes along. I don't remember about the trip but I hears mammy talk about it when I gets older.

Texas, that was the place, down near Fairfield. That's where I learn

to do chores. But the work was easy for the Master was kind as old Mammy herself and he never gae me no hard jobs that would wear me down.

All the slaves on our place was treated good. All the time. They didn't whip. The Master feeds all the slaves on good clean foods and lean meats so's they be strong and healthy.

Master Driver had four children, Mary, Julia, Frank and George. Every one of them children kind and good just the old Master. They was never mean and could I find some of 'em now hard times would leave me on the run. They'd help this old man get catched up in his eating!

Makes me think of the old song we use to sing: Don't mind working from Sun to Sun, Iffen you give me my dinner—when the dinner time comes!

Nowadays I gets me something to eat when I can catch it. The trouble is sometimes I can't catch! But that ain't telling about the slave days.

In them times it was mostly the overseers and the drivers who was the mean ones. They caused all the misery. There was other white folks caused troubles too. Sneak around where there was lots of the black children on the plantation and steal them. Take them poor children away off and sell them.

There wasn't any Sunday Schooling. There was no place to learn to read and write—no big brick schools like they is now. The old Master say we can teach ourselves but we can't do it. Old Klem Bowman owned the place next door to Mister Driver. If he catch his slaves toying with the pencil, why, he cut off one of their fingers. Then I reckon they lost interest in education and get their mind back on the hoe and plow like he say for them to do.

I didn't see no fighting during of the War. If they was any Yankees soldiering around the country I don't remember nothing of it.

Long time after the War is over, about 1885, I meets a gal named Angeline. We courts pretty fast and gets married. The wedding was a sure enough affair with the preacher saying the words just like the white folks marriage. We is sure married.

The best thing we do after that is raise us a family. One of them old-fashioned families. Big 'uns! Seventeen children does we have and twelve of them still living. Wants to know they names? I ain't never forgets a one! There was Lucy, Bill, Ebbie, Cora, Minnie, George, Frank, Kizzie, Kecie, Andrew, Joe, Sammie, David, Fannie, Jacob, Bob and Myrtle.

All good children. Just like their old pappy who's tried to care for 'em just like the old Master takes care of their old daddy when he was a boy on that plantation down Texas way.

When the age comes on a man I reckon religion gets kind of meanful. Thinks about it more'n when he's young and busy in the fields. I believes in the Bible and what it says to do. Some of the Colored folks takes to the voodoo. I don't believe in it. Neither does I believe in the fortune telling or charms. I aims to live by the Bible and leave the rabbit foots alone!

**Source:**

American Life Histories from the Library of Congress  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

[Back](#)

[Home](#) > [Floripedia](#) > [Florida Slave Narratives](#) > Andrew Simms

[Site Map](#)

[Exploring Florida: A Social Studies Resource for Students and Teachers](#)

Produced by the [Florida Center for Instructional Technology](#),  
College of Education, University of South Florida © 2005.