

CARRIE HUDSON
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CARRIE HUDSON
Ex-Slave—Age 75

Carrie was asked to relate her memories of childhood days on the old plantation. "I'se done most forgot 'bout dem days," she replied, "but if you ax me some questions hit mought come back to me. Hit's such a fur way back dat I don't never think 'bout dem times no more." After a few reminders, the old Negress began eagerly volunteering her recollections.

"Slave traders fatched my Pa, he was Phil Rucker, f'um Richmond, Virginny, and sold him to Marse Joe Squire Rucker. Ma, she was Frances Rucker, was borned on Marse Joe's place nigh Ruckersville, up in Elbert County, and all 10 of us chilluns was born on dat plantation too. Hester Ann, Loke Ann, Elizabeth, Mary, Minnie Bright, Dawson, Ant'ony, Squire and Philip was my sisters and brothers. Grandma Bessie done de cookin' at de big house. Grandpa Ant'ony had done died long 'fore I got big enough to know nothin' 'bout him.

"Miss, chilluns what was knee high to a duck had to wuk. 'Til dey was big and strong enough for field wuk, little Niggers done all sorts of piddlin' jobs. Dey toted water to

de big house and to de hands in de fields, fatched in chips and wood, and watched de cows. Me? I nussed most of de time. If dere was any money give out for slaves' wuk de grown folkses got it all, for I never seed none and I never heard 'bout no Niggers gittin' none in slavery times.

"Us lived in log cabins scattered 'round de plantation. De biggest of 'em had two rooms and evvy cabin had a chimbly made out of sticks and red mud. Most of de chillun slept on pallets on de[Pg 213] floor, but I slept wid my Pa and Ma 'cause I was so pettish. Most of de beds was made out of poles, dis a-way: Dey bored two holes in de wall, wide apart as dey wanted de bed, and in dese holes dey stuck one end of de poles what was de side pieces. Dey sharpened de ends of two more poles and driv' 'em in de floor for de foot pieces and fastened de side pieces to 'em. Planks was put acrost dis frame to hold a coarse cloth tick filled wid wheat straw. Ma had a ruffle, what was called a foot bouncer, 'round de foot of her bed. Beds up at de big house was a sight to see. Dey had high posties and curtains over de top and 'round de bottom of deir beds. Dem beds at de big house was so high dey had steps to walk up so dey could git in 'em. Oh, dey was pretty, all kivvered over wid bob' net to keep flies and skeeters off de white folkses whilst dey slept!

"Warn't nothin' short 'bout de eats. Our white folkses b'lieved in good eatin's. Dey give us bread and meat wid all de cabbage, colla'd and turnip greens us wanted, and us had 'matoes, 'tatoes, chickens and ducks. Yessum, and dere allus was plenty 'possums and rabbits cooked 'bout lak dey is now, only dere warn't no stoves in dem days. Pots for biling swung on racks dey called cranes, over de coals in big open fireplaces. Baking was done in ovens and skillets. Dere was allus lots of fishes in season, but I didn't do none of de fishin', 'cause I was too skeered of de water when I was a chap.

"All de cloth for our clothes was wove in de loom room up at de big house. Little gal's dresses was made just lak deir Ma's, wid full skirts gathered on to plain, close fittin' waisties. Little[Pg 214] boys just wore shirts. Didn't no chillun wear but one piece of clothes in summer. Winter time us wore de same only dey give us a warm underskirt, and rough red brogan shoes. Didn't no Niggers wear shoes in warm weather durin' slavery times.

"Marse Joe Squire Rucker was de fust Marster of our plantation. Atter him and Miss Peggy done died, his son, Marse Elbert Rucker tuk up where his Pa left off. I can't call to mind nothin' 'bout Marse Joe and Miss Peggy 'cept what old folkses told me long attar dey done died, but I does 'member Marse Elbert and Miss Sallie and dey was just as good to us as dey could be. De onliest ones of dier chilluns I ricollects now is Miss Bessie, Miss Cora and Marsters Joe, Guy, Marion and Early. Dey all lived in a big fine house sot back f'um de road a piece.

"Marse Elbert's overseer was a Mr. Alderman. He got de slaves up early in de mornin' and it was black night 'fore he fotched 'em in. Marse Elbert didn't 'low nobody to lay hands on his Niggers but his own self. If any whuppin' had to be done, he done it.

"My brother, Squire, was de carriage driver and he was all time a-drivin' our white folkse to Ruckersville, and sometimes he driv' 'em far as Anderson, South Callina.

"To tell de truth, Missy, I don't know how many acres was in dat big old plantation. Dere just ain't no tellin'. Niggers was scattered over dat great big place lak flies. When dey come in f'um de fields at night, dem slaves was glad to just go to sleep and rest.[Pg 215]

"Dey didn't do no field wuk atter dinner on Saddays. De 'omans washed, ironed and cleaned up deir cabins, while de mens piddled 'roun' and got de tools and harness and things lak dat ready for de next week's wuk.

"I heared 'em say dere was a jail at Ruckersville, but so far as I knows dere warn't no slaves ever put in jail. Niggers didn't have no chance to git in devilment, 'cause de overseers and patterollers kep' close atter 'em all de time, and slaves what stepped aside allus got a whuppin'. Dere warn't no time for to larn readin' and writin' on Marse Elbert's plantation. Dem slaves knowed what a Bible was but dey sho' couldn't read de fust line. Us went to white folkse church on Sundays, and while I never tuk in none of dem songs us sung, I sho'ly do ricollect moughty well how de Reverend Duncan would come down on dat preachin'.

"Lordy, Miss! Dere you is a-axing me 'bout folkse dyin', and I'se nigh dead myself! Brother 'lisha done prophesied you was a-comin' here for to write a jedgment, and hit makes me feel right creepy. Anyhow I seed a heaps of folkse died out and git put in dem home-made coffins what was black as sin. I sho' is glad dey done changed de color of coffins. I 'members how us used to holler and cry when dey come to de part of de fun'ral whar dey sung: 'Hark F'um De Tomb, A Doleful Sound.'

"Dere was a heap of baptizin's dem days and I went to most all of 'em, but I sho' warn't baptized 'til long atter I got grown, 'cause I was so skeered of de water. I kin see dem folkse now, a-marchin' down to de crick, back of de church, and all de can-i-dates[Pg 216] dressed in de whites' white clothes, what was de style den. Evvybody jined in de singin', and de words was lak dis:

'Marchin'		for		de		water
For		to		be		baptized.
De	Lord	done		lit	de	candle
On		de		other		side
For	to	see		his		chilluns

When dey gits baptized.'

"Niggers on Marse Elbert's place never knowed nothin' 'bout no North; if dey did dey wouldn't tell it to chilluns little as I was den. Dere was some sort of uprisin' a good piece f'um Ruckersville, but I can't tell you 'bout it 'cause I just heared de old folkses do a little talkin', what warn't enough to larn de whole tale. Chillun back dar didn't jine in de old folkses business lak dey does now.

"Sadday nights de young folkses picked de banjo, danced and cut de buck 'til long atter midnight, but Christmas times was when chilluns had deir bestes' good times. Marse Elbert 'ranged to have hog killin' close enough to Christmas so dere would be plenty of fresh meat, and dere was heaps of good chickens, tukkeys, cake, candies, and just evvything good. En durin' de Christmas, slaves visited 'roun' f'um house to house, but New Year's Day was wuk time again, and dere was allus plenty to do on dat plantation. Most all de Niggers loved to go to dem cornshuckin's, 'cause atter de corn was all shucked dey give 'em big suppers and let 'em dance. De cotton pickin's was on nights when de moon was extra bright 'cause dey couldn't do much lightin' up a big cotton field wid torches lak dey did de places where dey had de cornshuckin's. Atter cornshuckin's, dey mought be dancin'[Pg 217] by de light of torches, but us danced in de moonlight when de cotton was picked and de prize done been give out to de slave what picked de most. Logrollin's was de most fun of all. De men and 'omans would roll dem logs and sing and dey give 'em plenty of good eats, and whiskey by de kegs, at logrollin's. De Marsters, dey planned de cornshuckin's, and cotton pickin's, and logrollin's and pervided de eats and liquor, but de quiltin' parties b'longed to de slaves. Dey 'ranged 'em deir own selfs and done deir own 'vitin' and fixed up deir own eats, but most of de Marsters would let 'em have a little somepin' extra lak brown sugar or 'lasses and some liquor. De quiltin's was in de cabins, and dey allus had 'em in winter when dare warn't no field wuk. Dey would quilt a while and stop to eat apple pies, peach pies, and other good things and drink a little liquor.

"Us had to tote water and nuss chillun 'stid of playin' no games. Us didn't know nothin' 'bout ghosties, hants, and sich lak. Our white folkses would whup a Nigger for skeerin' us chillun quick as anything. Dey didn't 'low none of dat. De onliest ghost I'se ever seed was just t'other day. I seed somebody pass my door. I hollered out: 'Who dat?' Dey didn't say nothin'. Brother 'Lisha here said it was a sperrit passin' by. He must be right, 'cause whoever it was, dey didn't say nothin' 'tall.

"Marse Elbert and Miss Sallie was sho' moughty good when deir Niggers tuk sick. Castor oil and turpentine was what dey give 'em most of de time. Horehound tea was for colds, and elderberry tea was to help babies teethe easier. Yessum, us wore beads, but dey was just to look pretty.[Pg 218]

"All I knows 'bout how come us was sot free is dat folkses said Mr. Jefferson Davis and Mr. Abraham Lincoln got to fightin' 'bout us, and Mr. Lincoln's side got de best of Mr. Davis' side in de quarrel. De day dey told us dat us was free dere was a white man

named Mr. Bruce, what axed: 'What you say?' Dey told him 'gain dat all de Niggers was free. He bent hisself over, and never did straighten his body no more. When he died, he was still all bent over. Mr. Bruce done dis to sho' de world how he hated to give his Niggers up atter dey done been sot free.

"When dem Yankees come thoo' dey stole evvything dey could take off wid 'em. Dey tuk Sue, my brother's nice hoss, and left him a old poor bag-of-bones hoss. Us stayed on wid our white folkses a long time atter de War.

"Edwin Jones was my fust husband and I wore a pretty dove colored dress at our weddin'. Jenny Ann was our onliest child. All but one of our eight grandchillun is all livin' now, and I'se got 24 great grandchillun. Atter Edwin died, I married dis here Charlie Hudson what I'se livin' wid now. Us didn't have no big weddin' and tain't long since us got married. Me and Charlie ain't got no chillun.

"I jined de church 'cause I got 'ligion and I knows de good Lord done forgive my sins. Evvybody ought to git 'ligion and hold it and jine de church.

"De way us is a havin' to live now is pretty bad 'cause us is both too old to wuk. Don't give me dem slavery days no more 'cause I would have to wuk anyhow if I was a slave again! Us couldn't set 'roun' and smoke our pipes and do as us please. I'd ruther have it[Pg 219] lak it is now.

"I can't 'member no more to tell you, but I sho' has 'joyed dis talk. Yessum, dem days was a fur piece back."