

Interviewer: Unknown
Transcribed by Ann Allen Geoghegan

Mississippi Narratives
Prepared by
The Federal Writer's Project of
The Works Progress Administration
For the State of Mississippi

From the WPA Slave Narratives:
Hattie Sugg
Age 84

Foreword: Height 5 feet four inches, weight 96 pounds, general coloring black, present physical condition is bad, financial aid exhausted. Solely dependent upon children for support.

"I was born up Big Creek on de old Armstrong place here in Calhoun county. My Papy was Phil Armstrong an' my Mammy was Clarecy Armstrong, I had five brothers an' sisters but deys all dead 'cept one brother named Charlie an' he lives out on Schoona creek. My grandparents came from Tishimingo county."

"I's heard my Mammy say she was livin' with a preacher an de Armstrongs got her on a debt. My Pappy lived in Tishimingo county an his Marsa was Mr. Devenport 'till Marsa Armstrong bought him."

"My Marsa was Matt Armstrong an' Missus Mollie was his wife. Dey didn't have no chillun. Missus Mollie got in bad health pretty soon after they married an' she died. Marsa Matt's father owned my Mammy furst an' he died about two months befo' I was born, den when he married I belonged to him. Marsa Matt Armstrong was mighty good to us. He didn't want us to be imposed on or nothin' but his Mother wasn't so good to us."

"To my 'membrance we had poor eatin'. Ole Marsa Matt would give us good eatin' from de table when his mother, Miss Nancy, would 'low it but dat wasn't often. Most times Miss Nancy fed us old meal soup flavored with old rank meat. When Marsa Matt would give us niggers a piece o' bread an' butter old Miss Nancy would just rare."

"Missus Nancy's chillun was Susan, Liza, Matt, Ezekiel, Alex, Tom, Angeline an' George."

"I 'member goin' to church one time durin' slavery days. Dey didn't 'low us to read an' 'rite. I don't ever member wearin' shoes back then an' our clothes was scarce. Ma an' de other women had little old tight dresses that they would have to pull up 'bove their knees to get over de fences. Ma had to work in de field winter an' summer. In de winter time they would clear an' grub stumps an' such like. I wasn't a regular field hand but did pick cotton an' peas, toat water, card an' spin."

"We lived in little log houses what looked like sheep houses. De walls was plastered with mud an' dey didn't have no floors. Dese little old houses wasn't tall 'nuff for Pa an' de taller ones to stand up in. De mattresses we slept on was straw an' shucks, de steds was homemade with just one leg. My Ma did have one old mattress made out of chicken feathers."

"Old Marsa Armstrong (Marsa Matt's Daddy) owned 'bout four families o' slaves."

"De few Sunday clothes my Ma had we got from Pa splitin' rails on Sunday fo' another fellow. My Ma would make soap fo' Missus Nancy an' steal a gourd full of it an' bury it some place to wash our Sunday clothes with. She had to do all our washin on Sunday."

"One time Marsa Matt got wounded in de war an' I had to wait on him 'cause I belonged to him. Ole Missus Nancy would get so mad cause he'd be kinder good to me. I's heard her call him a Black-Hearted Son-Of-A-Bitch lots o' times. I's seen her spit in her own babies faces when dey would hold their breath. I ain't tellin' no tale on her cause I got to go to judgment just like her."

"I was at a quiltin' one night when de patrollers come. Niggers begin buckin' an' jumpin' out de windows. Dey whipped Aunt Jane. I 'member they made her pull her clothes down to her waist. Dey said when dey come up: "We come to whip you niggers pass or no pass."

"I never was cussed or damned by a white man in my life. I made it alright with all of 'em but old Lady Armstrong. My Ma was de furst slave Old Mr. Armstrong ever owned. Ma said old Mrs. Nancy Armstrong had raced to de field an' worked with her lots o' times. Law me, she sho got above that."

"De Yankees never come through where I was. Colored people come by in droves a quarter mile long an' said dey was goin' to de Mississippi bottom a runnin' from de Yankees. Old boss man an' his family would be ridin' in de wagon an' let de little nigger babies ride with them but de big ones had to walk."

"Marsa come one day after de crop was made an' told us we was free as he was. De furst thing I done was to run de cards an' comb my hair just like de white girls."

"I well 'member one night a calvary come through when it was rainin'. I could hear de bugle a long way off: toot--toot. De closer it come de louder it got: toot--Toot. I sho thought it was Gabriel a comin' blowin' his trumpet. It sounded like de prettiest music on earth. Finally I got up an' went out to see. My Ma was in de kitchen cookin' fo' 'em. She cooked from midnight 'till next evenin'. Some of 'em was crippled up an' some of 'em didn't have no clothes on--just wore off 'em. When dey left dey blowed de bugle fo' de signals just like dey did a comin' up."

"Me an' my sister used to slip in de dinin' room where de white folks was eatin an ask fo' biscuits. I 'member one time all de white folks went off an' I slipped in de kitchen an' was eatin me some biscuit, butter an' 'lasses when I thought I heard somebody comin'. I jumped to run an stepped on de cat an' killed him dead. I told my Mammy what I had done an she told me if I didn't take that cat to de woods an' chop his head off he'd sho' come back an' haunt me that night. I took dat cat an de ax an sho separated his head from his body."

"Befo' de war ended I had been loaned out to a white woman what lived way down de creek. Dis white woman brought me to Ma to see if she would give me to her. Ma told her No, as long as she have a crust o' bread, Hattie can have some of it too."

"My husband was Jacob Sugg an' we had ten chillun but only two livin now: Bishop an' Etta. I lives with Bishop an he farms. Etta's husband farms too."

"Young people now maybe move lively but they aint as religious as we was. I just thinks things is growin' worse all de time. I joined de C. M. E. church when I was fourteen years old an' has always tried to live right."