

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

82 years of age, 5 feet and 6 inches high, weight 160 pounds, color black and physical condition fair.

"I was born in Calhoun county at Pittsboro July 4, 1855. My papa was Nelson Woodward who was born in Richmond, Va., an' my Mama was Dolly Pruitt from Alabama. My brothers was Jeff, Sam, Ben an Jim an my sisters was Tilla, Lena an' Rosetta."

"My job durin' de war was to lead (blind) Bob Conner all through de war. You know Massa Conner was de papa of Mr. Fox Conner who is now such a big man in de' army."

"We belonged to de Wiley Woodward family but Mr. Wileys brother, Ike, was administrator for de estate after Mr. Wiley's brother killed him. He lent me out to take de job of leadin' Mr. Conner in de war."

"Course I didn' make no money workin for Mr. Conner. Money is one thing us niggers didn't see."

"My Missus, Massa Wileys wife had a son John Woodward."

"Dey was 690 acres on de Woodward plantation. I just don't know how many of us niggers he owned but he was said to be de biggest slave owner in dis part of de country."

"De white folks sho' didn't 'low us niggers to see a newspaper or nothin we might learn to read an 'rite from."

"We went to de white folks church to worship an' sometimes us niggers would hold meetings of our own at our quarters. White folks read 'de Bible to us at Massa Conner's on Sunday mornin'."

"One slave we called Alex Woodward ran away lots o' times an' de white folks would have to catch him with bull dogs. Dey always used de "Bull Whip" on him when dey caught him."

"Major Woodard was good 'nuff to give 'de slaves truck patches that dey could work Sunday, Sunday nights or any other moonlight nights but dey sho must be ready for their regular work on Monday

mornin an' work through Saturday evenin'."

"Lots o' times dey would scare us chillun with homemade ghosts."

"When slaves got sick a "Granny" would look after 'em. Us niggers sho' did get good treatment when we was sick. You know white folks sho didn't want a nigger o' theirs to die---they was worth somethin!"

"When dem Yankees come through from de north travelin'

south dey stole lots of de wealthy peoples good stock an' left their ole wore out plugs in their places."

"When de war was over didn't nobody at Massa Conners tell us niggers we was free. One mornin' several days after de 8th o' May de white folks sent me to de well down in de valley below de house to get a bucket o' water. When I started to draw de water I saw my brother comin through de woods ridin a blazed face mare. He never said a word but galloped to de well, picked me up an put me on de horse with him an' carried me from Massa Conners to de Woodward. Massa Woodward had told my papa he'd stay on with him an' work when crops was gathered he'd give him half we made, so we did."

"I has been married twice. My first wife was July Wade, we married when I was 17 years old and we had 10 chillun. Carrie Bell lives close to Calhoun City, Sammie Lee she lives there close by an de others are scattered about in other states. Most of 'em farms. My next wife was Lizzie Moore an' we ain't got no chillun." "Young people now have better times than we did when I was a boy."

"Back then if de white folks did let us niggers go anywhere they would write us a pass describin' who we belonged to, our name, description an' where we was goin', cause some white folks might take us up thinkin' we was a run-a-way slave."

Interviewer: Unknown

Transcribed by Ann Allen Geoghegan