

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
Oliver Jones

I was bawn in 1858 in Amite on de 4th day of July. Me an' my mammy belonged to Marse George H. Mortimer. I never was sol' cause I was bawn belongin' to Mr. Mortimer. My mammy's name was Anna Mortimer, an' I never did know nothin' 'bout my pappy.

We moved from Amite to Canton an' then to Crystal Springs. We lived in good clean houses; some wer' big wid' six rooms an' some wer' little. They wer' lined on bof' sides of de road on Mr. Mortimer's place. The houses wer' made outen' wood an' had brick chimneys.

We never got whippin's an' wer' happy. My mammy died of de typhoid when I was four an' lef' me an' my brothers, Spencer, Ellison, an' Sam with Aunt Celie Sims to raise.

When there was news to be carried to another plantation, one of de lil' ones generally carried it, but befo' we left we allus' had to have a pass from de overseer cause effen we was caught after dark, 'dout one, de 'patterrollers' would ketch us an' whip us.

I reckon dey was bettern' a hun'red head of us slaves countin' de little 'uns. Aunt Celie used to tie some kin' a root 'round our neck to keep off disease, but I forgit whut kin' it was.

All us lil' chillun wo' one piece suits made outten' lowell, with buttons down de back. One man on de plantation didn't do nothin' but make shoes for all de other cullured people on de plantation. Aunt Celie made us de clo's we wo'.

'Bout the most I had to do was to mind de other lil' darkie chillun younger'n me, an' play aroun'. We played marbles an' ball an' sech lak'.

One slave on de place was ejucated; he was frum up in New Jersey an' he'd kinder hep us some.

Mr. Mortimer was a Methodis' preacher, an' at times he'd come out to our quarters an' preach to us. One song I member he taught us: ---

'When my Lord calls me I mus go,

Meet me in de promised Land.

'Fus chu'ch I ever was in was de old Methodist Ch'ch here in Crystal Springs an' we sat up in de gall'ry. I can't 'member who the preacher was at dat time. But that was not twel after de surrender I went to chu'ch, but you see I lived on wid de Mortimers for a year or mo' workin' for him after we was freed.

Dr. Rawls an' Dr. Dodd was two Doctors I 'member dat served on lots of plantations 'round bout here an' would come to see us when we was sick.

I 'member de time of de Civil Wah' I was livin' near Brookhaven an' de Yankee sojers comes marchin' to town and smashed in sto' doahs' an' windows, an' all us lil' chillun' sho' did have a fine time 'cause we got pies an' candy an' sech lak--much as we could eat. We wished de Yankees would come every day! People lef' outten dat town den.

Den we come to Crystal Springs durin' de Wah an' when Gen'al Bullerton come raidin' through here, he burnt up de deppo.

Atter Shiloh was fought, some of de sojers was brought here to a kin' of hospital white fokes made out'n a two story sto' right yonder where Lotterhos and Huber's sto' is now. Once I 'member when me an' my brother come in to town to sell eggs we saw through de window a doctor puttin' a plaster or bandage on a sojer's back, an' fo' he was done wid it, de sojer fell over dead. I never forgot dat sight.

Yessum, us slaves had gardens an' chickens an' was lowed to keep de money we got for 'um. We nearly all'us bought pies an' sweet things wid de money.

I reckon' I was glad to get my freedom atter de surrender.

Well, once I sho thought I saw a ghos'. I was scared den. I was sent out to git some kinlin' wood, an' I saw something I thought was a ghos'. So I jes lay down by de fence, an' fus' thing I knowed, I was 'sleep. Overseer, he foun' I wasn't whar I belonged, so he axed wher I was an' dey tol' him I was sent out to fetch kinlin wood, so he come lookin' for me an' when he stepped over de fence he stepped right on me. Den I know dat ghos' had me. De overseer took hol' of my han' an' showed me twarn't nothin' but de choppin' block shinin' in de light of de moon. For a long time atter dat, Aunt Celie wouldn't sen' me out atter dark 'cause I been so scared dat time.