

Adeline Jackson

Interview with Adeline Jackson, 88 years old

—*W.W. Dixon, Winnsboro, S.C.*

"I was born four miles southwest of where I is now, on de other side of Woodward Station. I was a slave of old Marster John Mobley, de richest man, de larges' land owner, and wid more niggers than any other white man in de county. He was de seventh son of de seventh son, so he allowed, and you knows dat's a sign of a big family, lots of cows, mules, horses, money, chillun and everything dat's worth havin'. He had a good wife too; dis de way he got her, he say. She de daughter of old Maj. Andy McLean, who got a body full of bullets in de Revolution; he didn't want Katie to marry Marster John. Marster John git on a mule and ride up in de night. Miss Katie runned out, jump up behin' him, run away and marry Marster John. They had de same birthday, March 27th, but Marster John two years older than Miss Katie. Dat day was looked to, same as Christmas, every year dat come. Big times then, I tell you!

"My mistress had long hair, techin' de floor and could dance, so Marster John said, wid a glass of water on top of her head. Marster John got 'ligion and went all de way lak de jailer in de Bible. All de house jined wid him and mos' of de slaves. It was Baptist and he built a spankin' good church buildin' down de road, all out of his own money, and de cemetery dere yet. He called it 'Fellowship.' Some fine tombstones in dere yet. De finest cost two thousand dollars, dat's his daughter Nancy's tomb. Marster John and my old mistress buried in dere.

"When my younges' mistress, name Marion Rebecca, married her second cousin, Marster Edward P. Mobley, I was give to her and went wid them to de June place. It was called dat because old Doctor June built it and sold it to Marster Ed. I nussed her first chillun: Edward, Moses Hill, John and Katie. It was a large, two-story frame house, with chimneys at each gable end. Marster Edward got to be as rich as old marster; he owned de June place, de Rochelle plantation, de Peay place and de Roebuck place. Yes sir, course us had overseers for so many slaves and plantations. I 'member Mr. Oze Brown, Mr. Neely and Mr. Tim Gladney. In course of time I was took off de nussin' and put to de field. I drapped cotton seed, hoed some, and picked cotton.

"I don't 'member no poor buckra, outside de overeeers, 'cept a Mr. Reed dat lived down on wateroe, passin' our house sometime. He was a Godforsaken lookin' man dat marster or mistress always give somethin'.

"Our neighbors was de Pearys, de Durhams, de Picketts, de Barbers and Boulwares. Doctor Henry Gibson was our doctor. All dese folks kep' a pack of hounds to run deer and foxes. Yes, I has eat many pieces of deer. Good? I wouldn't fool you, taste it and you'll hunger for it ever afterward.

"Yes sir, at certain times we worked long and hard, and you had to be 'ticular. De only whipping I got was for chopping down a good corn stalk near a stump in a new ground. Marster never sold a slave but swaps were made wid kin people to advantage, slaves' wives and husbands sometimes. I never learned to read or write. I went to White Poplar Springs Church, de Baptist church my mistress 'tended. De preacher was Mr. Cartledge. He allowed Miss Marion was de flower of his flock.

"Slaves lived in quarters, a stretch of small houses off from de White House. Patrollers often come to search for stray slaves; wouldn't take your word for it. They would search de house. If they ketch one widout a pass, they whipped him. We got most our outside news Sunday at church. When farm work was not pressing, we got all of Saturday to clean up 'round de houses, and wash and iron our clothes.

"Everything lively at Christmas time, dances wid fiddles, pattin' and stick rattlin', but when I jined de church, I quit dancin'.

"After de war, a man came along on a red horse; he was dressed in a blue uniform and told us we was free. De Yankees dat I 'members was not gentlefolks. They stole everything they could take and de meanest thing I ever see was shoats they half killed, cut off de hams, and left de other parts quiverin' on de ground.

"I married Mose Jackson, after freedom, and had a boy, Henry. Last I heard, he was at Shelby, North Carolina. We had a daughter, Mary, she married Eph Brown. She had ten chillun, many gran' chillun, they's my great-gran' chillun. My mistress was a good Christian woman, she give me a big supper when I was married. Her house, durin' de war, always had some sick or wounded soldier. I 'member her brother, Zed, come home wid a leg gone. Her cousin, Theodore, was dere wid a part of his jaw gone. My mistress could play de piano and sing de old songs. I 'members Marster Theodore had trouble wid de words. Dere was a song called 'Jaunita', 'bout a fountain. Marster Theodore would try hard, but would say, everytime, 'Jawneeta', and de folks would laugh but mistress never would crack a smile but just go on wid another song. I thinks everybody should jine de church and then live right. Have prayers in de family befo' gitting in de bed. It would have good change, 'specially in de towns I thinks.

"Yes, women in family way worked up to near de time, but guess Doctor Gibson knowed his business. Just befo' de time, they was took out and put in de cardin' and spinnin' rooms.

"Yes, I see folks put irons in de fire and some throw a big chunk of fire into de yard to make de screech owl stop his scary sounds.

"Befo' I forgits, Marster Edward bought a slave in Tennessee just 'cause he could play de fiddle. Named him 'Tennessee Ike' and he played 'long wid Ben Murray, another fiddler. Sometime all of us would be called up into de front yard to play and dance and sing for Miss Marion, de chillun and visitors. I was much happier them days than now. Maybe it won't be so bad when I gits my old age pension."