

Albert Means

Interview with Albert Means (91)

Union, S.C.

—*Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C.*

OLD CUSTOMS

"Sho' wuz' born in '46, das' whut my white folks says. I calls myself 97, but dat' don't make no'diffunt, 'bout a few years. I lives near Monarch, on whut's still called the Ben Brandon place. Mr. Ben had a sister, Mis' Polly. Deys' de aunt and uncle to Mis' Emma Brandon. Mr. Ben had two overseers, Mr. Caleb and Mr. Neal Willard, deys' both Willards. Yes suh' dey' sho' wuz'. Bofe wuz very kind mens.

"Marse' Ben nebber' 'low' much whippin', and he wuz as good a man as anybody has ever seed'. But one day us nigger' boys hopped into a fight. Marse' Ben done his own whippin' den'. And dats' de onliest' time dat' I is ever knowed' of anybody on all dem' plantations to be whipped.

"Marse Ben had a small house. Didn't nobody live dar' but him and his sister. Den' she up and went to Kennedy's on de Meansville road. Dat' place wuz' called in Dem' days 'Cedar Grove'. T'ain't much dar' now.

"I'se named Albert, 'case my pa belong to Marse Albert Means. I wuz always a field-hand. Marse Ben let me eat from his table after his sister went to 'Cedar Grove', kaze' wad'n nobody dar' in the house wid' him. 'Cindy' Brandon wuz de woman dat' cooked for us. My mother always belonged to de' Brandons, and my pa never 'longed to nobody but Marse Albert Means. My Marster' had only one body slave whose name was Keith. He was born, lived and died and was buried on the plantation. Marse Ben also had a cousin whose name was Marse Keith. When he died he gave all his slaves to Marse' Ben, and this is how Keith became my Masters' body slave. All Marse Ben had he left to his young neice Miss Emma Brandon, and to his cousins Miss Hettie, and Miss Mary Emma Foster.

"On Sunday we get the best things to eat of any day in the week. Sometimes we were allowed to go to church with our white folks at old Brown's Creek. We sit in the gallery. Dey' don't have none at all now. 'Cindy' go to church too. When 'Cindy' go to church us never had much to eat. All de' slaves is buried in de' Brandon's Graveyard and dere's a place fer me beside my first wife. Oh! Lord yes I got my second wife and she's a young gal', but she doos' whut I wants her to. My furs' wife belonged to Marse Jim Ellis. De' preacher on the Ellis plantation married me to Jane Ellis. Dem' wuz good times, 'caze' Marse had us plenty to eat, good clothes to wear, and he gave us a new log house to live in.

"Captain Foster got de' two Brandon places. He owned the Will Beaty Place and 'Cedar Grove'. He never owned slaves.

"Me and Jane cooked in our fireplace. It had a big crane fer' de' pot to hang on. We had a covered skillet to bake in, and a frying skillet. Us never cooked on Sunday, but made pones on Saturday. We made our Yeast of meal and hop-vine."