

Mississippi Narratives

Prepared by

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For the State of Mississippi

Anda Woods

Anda Woods, ex-slave, lives near Raymond, Mississippi. He was born about 1841 in Perry County Alabama, was owned during slavery times by Dr. Foster. He is about five feet three inches in height and weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds, enjoying very good health and is still active. He tells his story.

"I is mos' certain I'se 'bout ninty years old, jedjing how big I was when de war broke out an' when hit ended up. My ma was Emma Graves, she was brung over hear frum Africa an' sol' in slavery 'fore she could recollect' much 'bout hit. Dat was a long time ago. You see I was de younges' one of her chillun. She died three days atter I was born. Ole Mistis was kin' an' good an' took right to me. She raised me, kep' a slave girl to take care o' me. I tottled 'round her room when I was a wee tot. I played in de flo' wid her chillun. At night I sleep on a trun'le bed by de side of her bed. I growed up to love her jus' lak her own chillun did. When I growed bigger and had to be 'mongst de other slaves, she tol' Marse to see dat all of 'em was kin' ter me an' when de times would come when dey would be a sellin' de slaves off she allus had hit understood dat dey keep "Andy."

"I played jus' lak any other chile an' when I was big 'nuf I helped do odd things 'round de place. When I was 'bout 10 years old I was put in de feil's. Marse growed wheat 'bout more 'en anything else, so de fust part I had in de feil's was, I guess you might say, I had to play de part of a scare crow 'long wid a heap of other little slaves. Us had to keep de birds scared off de wheat in de feil's. We could run an' shew 'em an shoot at 'em wid sling shots. Us would have laked hit iffen hit hadn't been wuk an' lasted so long. Later I was put to de regular fiel' wuk which was long an' hard, but fed an' clo'sed well. An' when a slave got sick de doctor was sont fer. Marse sho' would look out fer de slaves when dey was sick.

"Us warn't taught no schoolin', warn't 'lowed to read nothin' a-tall. De white chillun went to school a ways up de road. Dey would allus save me something good to eat from dere lunch. I knowed hit would be right dere.

"When I was 'bout sixteen an' seventeen I was still a slave. We was 'lowed to go to dances. If dey was on a 'nother plantation us had to git a pass to go from old Marse. A slave warn't 'lowed to leave wid-out one. Dem dances was grand. Ev'y body would be enjeyin' dey se'ves den. I can hear 'em yet hollerin', "swing yo' pardner", on over in a co'ner de fiddles a playin' de ole rag times an' dem singin' snotches of songs lak dis:

"You go down de new cut road I'll go down de lane,

If yo' git deir befo' I does

Kiss Miss Liza Jane."

an den snotches lak dis:

"Wuked all de year to make a bale o' cotton

Gib it all away to see Sally Goodun.

Looked down de road and seen Sall a commin'

Thought to my soul I'd kill mysef a runnin'."

an:

"O' she ruffled up her feathers an' she turnt up her toes

An' hopped right over in de coo-coo's nest." an' on an' on lak dat 'till de fus' thing us knowed us had done fer-got eve'y thing an' de patrole riders would be commin' fer to git us. Den us would git busy. Iffen us let 'em git too close on us de womens'ud fight 'em off wid fiah by throwin' hot to'ches an' red coals at 'em, an' by settin long sage brooms on fiah an' runnin into 'em. De women folks sho' did save us a heap o' times lak dat. Den some times us boys 'ud slip down de big road when de moon 'ud be shinin' an' stretch grape vine 'cross de road. De patrole riders 'ud come a ridin' mos' as fas' as lightenin' when sudden lak de ho'ses 'ud trip on de vines an throw 'em about ten miles.

Us would be hid out close by a watchin', an' how us 'ud laugh. Dey never could ketch up wid us an hit was a heap o' fun.

"Marse had one good p'int us all laked, he would give us a acre or two o' land to tend fer our se'ves, he'd buy what us raised on hit an' in dat way us could have a little spendin' money, or some to shoot craps wid. O! My -

"Once in a while a slave, mebbe two 'ud run away an' hide out in de woods. I hid out two or three times. I'd stay off in de woods fer days at de time. Den I'd git ter wanting to go back. Dey was kinda wil' goose chases wid us.

"I was twenty years old when de war broke out. I can recollect' all dat spinnin' an' knittin' fer de Army. Dem was turrible years, but us was freed at de end ob de war. I liked Marse an' stay on wid him thirty years longer and wuked fer wages. I married here in Mississippi when I was thirty six years old. My wife is been dead fer years now and I'se too old to hope to live much longer in dis fas' age. I'se too feeble to keep up.