

**Mississippi Narratives**  
**Prepared by**  
**The Federal Writer's Project of**  
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**Andrew Jackson Jarnigan, age 83**

"My mother came to Noxubee County with the Widow Ruff from Abbeville District, South Carolina. When she came through Macon, there wasn't no buildings except one log store. The Ruffs settled four miles from Mashulaville. They were as rich as cream and owned many blacks. My mother was Widow Ruff's cook, and I was born on the Ruff place February 7, 1853. When I was six weeks old, one of my young marsters went to California, and fo' he left, he named me Andrew Jackson Mobile New Orleans California Jarnagin, but I's only retained de Andrew Jackson Jarnagin.

"My father was owned by Mr. Tom Jarnagin and lived on his place. He was 'lowed to visit my mother on the Ruff place on Wednesday nights and Saturdays. The Negroes wern't 'lowed to get licenses to marry -- jes' so dey was somebody fer to perform de ceremony. My father was a parson, and they cum from far and near to have him marry dem, and he wuzn't nothin' but a sinner.

"My father was a first-class log hewer and helped hew logs to lay the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. In 1856 the railroad notified the planters to spare what slaves they could, so they could get the railroad to Macon built by the fourth of July. They got it finished and celebrated with a big picnic.

"When the war broke out, I was 'bout eight years old. Two of my father's young marsters joined the army. They were James and Frank Jarnagin.

"During the war the slaves wasn't 'lowed to leave the plantation without a written permit from the marster or mistiss. If we was caught off'n de place widout a permit, the patrolman (we called him 'patterole') would take us and whip us with a huge bull whip. Some could outrun the 'patterole'; and if they got back home, they wusn't bothered. Sometimes the 'niggers' would run away to the woods, and then marster would set 'nigger-dogs' on his trail. These dogs was trained fur dat purpose.

"Us slaves had to jine the church dat our marster and mistiss b'longed to, so I b'longed to t'he Methodist church, and here dere was a place portioned off for the 'niggers.'

When we went to the 'Batis' church, we set on de back pews; and when we had took up enough room, they would put a bench across the aisle. I can jes' remember one verse uv de songs my mother used to sing t'me:

'Saw my mother flying by de skies,

Saw my mother flying by de skies,

Saw my mother flying by de skies,

To ring Jerusalem.'

"Yes, Ma'am, our mistiss whupped us when it was necessary, but she was one good 'oman. I loves her in her grave. Dem was right jolly times. Us 'niggers' used to git together some nights, and we would clink our whiskey glasses together (dat meant friendship) and recite a toast:

'Come all of you Virginia boys

And listen to my song

And let us concern the young man that made no corn.

July's corn was knee high,

September laid it by.

And the weeds and grass grewed so high,

It caused the young man to cry

"Independent ticket?"

'James K. Polk of Tennessee,

Young Hickory, Ah they say;

They would bet old Fed, the nominee,

Upon the voting day.'

"Ma'am, what does I do? I preaches de gospel, young miss. I'se one uv sebenteen chillun, and out ob dat sebenteen dere come five preachers. I'se got a brother in Washington named William Henry Jarnagin who preaches to a congregation of three thousand. My son, Percy, is also a preacher in Washington. He went to de 'Babtis' Seminary 'fo' he becum a preacher, and now he is goin' to some university along with his daughter.

"Let me give y'all one more toast 'fo' I leaves:

'De big bee suck de blossom,

De little bee make de honey,

De black man makes de cotton and corn,

And de white man totes de money.'"

Interviewer's Note:

Andrew Jackson Jarnagin lives four miles west of Mashulaville and has a most unusual memory and talks well about olden times.

Interviewer: Unknown