

Mississippi Narratives
Prepared by
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For the State of Mississippi
Bell McChristian

Foreword: Age not known (approximately 90 years old), height five feet three inches, weight 125 pounds, color black, general physical condition bad, financial condition far above the average. Owns a large farm.

I was born in Montgomery county a long time ago. I just don't know when but I's heard de owls hollow heep o' times.

My pappy was Joe McChristian an my mammy was Mattie. My brothers an' sisters was Alex, Mary, Kit an' Nance but Alex is de only one livin' now.

Jeff LaDell was our Marsa an' Missus Sarah was his wife. Their only livin' daughter was named Minnie. I used to carry Minnie to de school house dat was 'bout three miles from where we lived. If it was muddy dey went after her in de buggy. My schoolin was up an' down de cotton row.

My grandmammy was Lucy. Old man Sam Campbell gave her to Marsa to wash dishes fo' Mistus. My granddaddy was named Alex an' he belonged to de Campbells. Dey never would talk much to us. Dey used to drive de chaps out to play an' say dey knew to much already.

Marsa owned heep O' slaves an' a big plantation. He had a overseer an' he come 'round every mornin' at gettin' up time an' husseled us out to work. He had several overseers durin' de time but Bole Cox is de only one I 'member by name.

We had good log houses to live in with floors. Dey gave us plenty clothes to wear an' plenty to eat. Had a big kitchen an a cook who cooked fo' de slaves. Dis cook was Eveline, My mammy's sister.

I's seen lots o' slaves run 'way. Dey would whip 'em most o' de time when dey could catch em. I's seen patrollers heep O' times. Dey cut my daddy's hair off one time. Dey jus' didn't want niggers to have long hair. My daddy went an' told Marsa 'bout it. It made him mad but he said it couldn't be hope. Dey said it was de law not to let colord folks have long hair.

I 'member one night de patrollers come an' ole marsa come out an' told 'em dey had to leave.

When slaves got sick dey allus sent fo' de doctor if he was needed.

One mornin' ole missus went in de smoke house to get some meat 'fore daylight. Marsa was goin' to court at Greensboro (Webster county) dat day. A snake bit her an'

she took lard an' rubbed on de bite an called de dog to lick it. She'd do dat every mornin' but pshaw! dat didn't do no good. Dat bite finally killed her. I call's her mistus but she was my real marsa's mother.

My ole mistus used to cook cakes by de basket full an' us little niggers sho' got our part.

Marsa Jeff drunk lots o' whisky. Miss Sarah read de Bible a heep to us at home but didn't try to teach us to read an' 'rite.

I looked out one day an' said: 'Miss Sarah de Yankees is comin''. I was allus watchin'. I'd heard 'em say Yankees went dressed in blue coats an dats how I knowed 'em. Marsa an' 'em had hid all our meat. Buried it in holes in de ground to keep dem Yankees from stealin it.

Mr. Frank Campbell was marsa's wifes brother. He went to do war an' I member he got his forefinger and thumb shot off in dat war.

When de war was over ole Marsa come told us we was free an' could leave if we wanted to; we could hire to him or anybody we wanted to. Me an' my sisters stayed on 'till de crops was gathered an' then we went to live with my mammy what had been sold to another fellow who lived close.

My husband was Anderson McChristian an' he belonged to our marsa befo' de surrender. Anderson, he been dead 'bout ten or twelve years. Our chillun is Cindy, Rose, Joe, Pallace, Simon an' Albert. Albert, he still single an' lives here with me.

I's never done much movin' 'round. After I married in de family we just stayed on there close. Twasn't many years 'fore we bought us a farm an hasn't ever done much movin round. Our house got burned not many years 'fore Anderson died an' we rebuilt in another place but on de same farm and I intends to live right here 'till I dies.