

Gable Locklier

Interview with Uncle Gable Locklier, age 86

Gourdin, S.C.

—*H. Grady Davis and Mrs. Lucile Young, Florence, S.C.*

"I born in Clarendon county, 50 yards of Davis Station. Massa Henry Bethune dat have big plantation dere was my first boss en after he died, Mrs. Bethune sold everything en moved to Summerton. Stayed dere till she married Mr. Thomas, de preacher, dat have big place in Summerton wid trees in long row right up to de door. He bought place three miles from Summerton called de Baset place. Mrs. Bethune was a sport lady en was good to me en Mr. Thomas good man too, but he was a Yankee. He come to Summerton to be a school teacher en won' long fore he commence to escort my Missus en dey made up in a year or two, I hear ma say. I was in de kitchen en I hear dem. She told ma, 'Eliza, I gwine marry Mr. Thomas.' Ma say, 'You is.' 'Yes, you reckon he gwine be all right?' 'I reckon he is, he looks all right.' 'Well, I gwine marry him en try him.' Mr. Thomas, he Yankee, but he fought for de Confederates.

"Massa Henry Bethune had big plantation en had a right sharp of slaves dere. De boss house was here en my house next en all de other slave house was string along in row dat way. My white folks, dey didn' exactly treat you as most of dem did. Dey come round en examine you house en see what you needed. All us live in two room pole house dat have a wood floor. Old people sleep on some kind of bed prop wid rope wind up like cow yoke en have quilts en mattresses taking white homespun. De others sleep on de floor. Dey give us good clothes made out of blue denim cloth en some had checked or stripe goods. Den dey give us heavy woolen clothes to wear in de winter time en had Sunday clothes too. My Massa was good to his slaves all de time. Have own garden dat my mother en sister would work en my mother done all de cookin for de slaves 'cause our folks all eat out de same pot. Cook rice en fat meat en dese collard greens en corn bread en cabbage. Make plenty of de cabbage en eat heap of dem.

"I didn' never have to work hard, but dey work dem till dark come on some places. Dey blow horn en us go to work after daylight en sometimes get off in time to eat supper by sundown. I was so slow dat when de rest knock off, dey make me work on. Mr. Thomas, he stand en look at me. My hands just look like dey put on wrong. When I quit off, I eat supper en den I go to bed.

"I ain' never see any slaves punished but I hear tell 'bout it. Some of dem run away 'cause dey get tired of workin en if dey catch em, dey sho whip em. Used to have to get ticket from boss or Missus to go any place off de plantation widout you get punish for it. I hear tell 'bout de overseer en de driver whip plenty of de slaves en some of de time, dey would put em in de screw box over night. Sell em if dey didn' do like dey tell em to do. Speculator come dere to buy slaves en dey sell em to de highest bidder. I hear em say a certain one bring \$1400 or \$1500. I know a man offered my boss \$1000 for my brother, Joe, but he wouldn' sell him.

"My Massa would give me money now en den. First money I remember he give me was 75¢ paper money. He tell me to check his horse en bring him up to de yard en give me 75¢ en said, 'I can' carry you wid me dis mornin.' I was 'bout 9 or 10 years old den. I stood up on de block en wondered why he couldn' carry me en when I go back to de house, I see my Missus cryin en she say, 'We won' see him no more.' When he come back, he shot through de foot. He tell me to go to de blacksmith shop en bring crutches. Den he went to de war again en when he come back, he was shot on de right side of de neck. Give me a quarter in silver money dat time. I ain' never been to de store fore den, but I go to de storekeeper en I say, 'Mr. King, half dis money mine en half Joes.' I thought it was his place to give me what I wanted en when I walk out, he say, 'Come back en get your money,' I carried it home en give it to brother Joe en he give it to pa en don' know what come of it after dat. Bought plug of tobacco for pa wid de other money I had.

"Our folks didn' get no learnin much nowhe' in dem days, but my Missus sister child learn me right sharp. Dey was boardin at our house en when I started to school, I didn' have no trouble. I remembers I found a little book one time en man say he pay me 10¢ for it. Ma give me a needle en thread en little sack en I sew my 10¢ in it. Put it in de rafter en it stay dere till next Christmas. Believe I took it down en tote it a long time fore man come by sellin tobacco en I bought piece en give it to pa. Man give my sister bigger piece for a dime den he give me.

"De slaves what belong to my white folks have frolicsome days all through de year. Go to frolic on Saturday en go to white folks church on Sunday en sit in portion of church in de gallery. Den on Christmas eat en drink de best liquor dere was en de Fourth of July de one day dat dey have to go to [HW: Eutaw] Springs. Dey go in buggies en wagons en have plenty of everything to eat dat day. I know dere was a battle up dere, although I didn' never go wid em. Cotton pickin en corn shuckin days won' no work times, dey was big frolics. De first one shuck red corn had to tell who his best girl was en all dem things. All dem come to cotton pickin dat want to en pick cotton en cook big dinner. Pick cotton till 'bout 5:30 in de evenin' en den knock off for de eats en de dancin. Go to all de slaves weddings too. Dey would mostly get married 'bout on a Sunday evenin'.

"I was 'bout 15 year old when freedom come, but I don' remember much 'bout dat day. I remembers de Yankees come to de house one day. De white folks had a bull dog tied in de smoke house en one Yankee hold de gun on de dog en another take de meat out de house. Den dey come out en set table en eat. Dog didn' try to bite em 'cause dog know when to bite. Somebody ask em to have some rice en dey say, 'I would cut my throat fore I eat dat thing.

"I tell you de truth wid de treatment I been gettin I don' see why I could fought slavery time. I lives here by myself en I used to get check but check don' come no more en I just lives on what people gets me. Government got woman bring me wood en bucket of water en niece give me dis house en acre of land to live on my lifetime. Cook only one meal a day 'cause I can' afford it. De water I got it ever since yesterday mornin. Sunday mornin I had hominy en salt water fish en dat de last time I had good meal. (Wednesday afternoon). Lady tell me dere ain' gwine be no more checks. It be two months since I get check en lady come en I tell her I hungry en she go to Gourdin en buy me two cans en loaf of bread. Had two big watermelons en was saving one for Miss Lanes. Girl come runnin in en say my niece house on fire en I go runnin to see 'bout fire en my biggest watermelon gone. Dat de one I been saving for Miss Lanes en den I wake up on Friday mornin en de other one gone. Next thing I know, dey started on my late ones. One night woman come in patch en thump en thump. I was standin at de peach tree in de

patch en she have one en when she get near me, she stoop down en pick another. I say, 'You reckon dat one ripe?' She sho drop em en run dat time.

"Thank you, sir, your kindness will not be forgotten. Dis here dozen matches last me till next week.

"Good-by. Yunnah come back."