

## George McAlilley

### Interview with George McAlilley, 84 years old

— *W.W. Dixon, Winnsboro, S.C.*

George McAlilley lives with his son-in-law, daughter, and small grandchildren, in a one-room frame house, with a lean-to shed room annex. The annex has no fireplace, no window, is ten feet by eight feet in dimension and it is in this pen that George and the two small children sleep. The house is three miles north of the town of Winnsboro, set back in a cotton field, 500 yards east of US #21.

George gathers the firewood from the neighboring woods, picks blackberries in summer, and assists in the harvesting of cotton from the fields in September.

"You think I feeble? Looks is 'ceivin' sometimes. Dere is some stren'th in me yet. Just set a nice dish of collards, fat back, corn bread, and buttermilk befo' dis old nigger and you can see what dese old gums can do wid them. 'Spects I can make 'way wid a plate of fried chicken, too, quick as de nex' one. If you don't believe it, try me dis day, at dinner time!

"I was born in slavery time, on Mr. Jno. S. Douglas's plantation, close to Little River. I b'long to him. He told me I was born in 1853. Had it wrote down in a book. When I was birthed, de master set de date down in a book, wid de name of my pappy, Joe and my mammy, Rachael. Bless de Lord! They b'long to de same master and live on de same place, in a teency log house. I 'members it. I sho' does. De roof leaked and us had a time when it rain.

"My mistress name Miss Maggie; she was a fine woman. Come from de Boyce stock, a buckra. I tells you dere was no finer mistress in de land, than she was. She was good to her little niggers; special, I 'low! I was one of them.

"Us had a white overseer, Mr. Erwin. If it hadn't been for my mistress, 'spect he'd a wore de hide off me one time when he ketched me in de watermelon patch.

"What kind of work I do? Hoe cotton, pick cotton, pick peas, mind de cows and keep de calf off at milkin' time. I plowed some de last year of de war, '65 it was.

"My marster and mistress was very 'ligious in deir 'suasions. They was Seceders and 'tended Hew Hope Church. When us went dere, us went up in de gallery. No piano nor organ was 'lowed in de church them days. I set up dere many a Sabbath and see Marse Robin Stinson knock his fork on de bench, hold it to his ear, and h'ist de tune. Then all jine in and let me tell you it had to be one of de Bible psalms, by de sweet singer of Israel, and no common glory hallelujah hymn. No sir, they didn't tolerate deir chillun engagin' in breakin' de Sabbath in dat way!

"It sorta comes to my mind dat in de summer time after crops was lay by, us went to hear one of our color expound de word in a brush harbor, nigh Feasterville. His name was Alfred Moore, de pappy of Isaiah and Phillip Moore. You sho' knows them two. 'Member us had to git a pass to go to dat meetin'.

Patarollers (patrollers) was dere, and if you didn't have a pass you got a whippin' and was sent home. Can I tell you some of de tales dat Isaiah and Phillip Moore used to tell? Yes sir! When you gits through wid me, I'll tell you one or two.

"No sir, I never marry durin' slavery time. I was just a boy; wasn't too young to like de gal's company, though. Marse John was a rich man; had two plantations. One was de home place and de other de river place, where de corn, oats, and hay was raised. He had a flock of sheep, too.

"All of our clothes was made from wool and cotton dat was made right dere on de plantation. Wool was sheared from de sheep. Cotton was picked from de field. De cotton was hand-carded, took to de spinnin' wheels, made into thread, loomed into cloth, sewed into clothes, or knitted into socks and stockin's.

"Marster had a hoss-gin and a screw-pit, to git de seed out de cotton and pack de lint into bales. My brothers was Vince, Bill, Sam, and John. My sisters was Mary and Liza.

"Does I recollect de Yankees? I sho' does. They burnt de gin-house and school house. Took de mules, hosses, chickens, and eggs. Marster was sharp 'nough to bury de meat in de woods, 'long wid other things they didn't git. They set de house afire at de last, and rode off. Us put de fire out and save de mansion for Marse John.

"I didn't jine de church in slavery time; lak to dance then. Our fiddler was Buck Manigo, de best fiddler, black or white, in de State, so white folks say.

"Ku Klux didn't come 'round our parts. My ma stay on as cook, after freedom. I stay for \$5.00 a month and eat at de kitchen. I was always a democrat and weared a red shirt in de Hampton parades.

"I marry Patsy Jenkins. She live twenty years and us had seven chillun. Did you know, boss, after Patsy dead and buried, I got to be a old fool 'bout women again? Dat I did. De devil put it into dis old gray head to marry a young gal; Mary Douglas was her name. Joy come dat fust night and misery popped in de door de very nex' mornin'. Us couldn't 'G' 'bout nothin'. She, at de last, left me for 'nother man over on de Broad River side. I's steered my course clear of de women's skirts ever since. I's now livin' wid my grand-daughter, Irene Wilson, 'bove town.

"'Bout de tale you want to hear. Well, Preacher Alfred Moore, a colored slave, search de scripture for names for his chillun. One boy him name Isaiah and one name Phillip. They both was mighty good slaves of Dr. Walter Brice, our doctor. My marster and Dr. Price's son, Marse Thomas, marry sisters and I see a heat of Isaiah and Phillip. Isaiah had a tale 'bout Niggerdemos (Nicodemus) and Phil had a tale 'bout a eunuch. Which one you want to hear? Both? I's gittin' tired. I'll just tell Isaiah's tale 'bout Niggerdemos. You has seen de blisters on sycamore trees? I knows you have. Well, Isaiah 'low they come 'bout in dis way: In de days of de disciples dere was a small colored man named Niggerdemos (Nicodemus), dat was a republican and run a eatin' house in Jerusalem. He done his own cookin' and servin' at de tables. He heard de tramp, tramp, tramp of de multitude a comin', and he asked: 'What dat goin' on outside?' They told him de disciples done borrowed a colt and was havin' a parade over de city. Niggerdemos thought de good Lord would cure him of de lumbago in his back. Hearin' folks a shoutin', he throwed down his dish rag, jerked off his apron, and run for to see all dat was gwine on, but havin' short legs he couldn't see nothing'. A big sycamore tree stood in de line of de parade, so Niggerdemos climbed up it, goin' high 'nough for to see all. De Savior tell him: 'Come down; we gwine to eat at your house,

Niggerdemos'. Niggerdemos come down so fast, when he hear dat, he scrape de bark off de tree in many places. Niggerdemos was sho' cured of de lumbago but sycamores been blistered ever since. Nex' time you pass a sycamore tree, look how it is blistered. Isaiah is asleep now, in de white folks graveyard at Concord Church. I's seen his tombstone. On it is wrote his age and day of his death. B'low dat, is just dis: 'As good as ever fluttered'. His young