

George Ward
Mississippi Narratives
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Foreword: George Ward, a former Methodist minister well past the century mark, is part Indian and part Negro and at one time lived with a tribe of Indians near Selma, Alabama. He is tall and slender and, until recent years, was straight and graceful. He has small, piercing black eyes and long, straight black hair, streaked with grey; his skin has a copperish cast, and his features are clear-cut and classic. George gives some facts about himself and his people:

I was born on the Ledbetter plantation, three miles west of Tupelo, the son of a Negro mother and a Chickasaw Indian. My mother, bright in color but with kinky hair, was stolen from Winchester, Tennessee, and brought to the Cotton Belt. She was sold six times, because no man could whip her. Her name, when she died at 96, was Amy Givhan. Her first two children were girls; the oldest one, Susan, lived to be 96.

My step-father helped to build Martha Washington School and Chickasaw College at Pontotoc. My wife, who died last April, was over 99 years old, being so old that she could not walk. We lived together 68 years and never had a cross word. I was a slave of the late Dr. Edward Givhan's father. The Givhan place is ten miles South of Pontotoc; I worked as a houseboy, cleaned up, and was a find cook.

Jesse Harris had sixteen hounds; he used these to catch Negroes when they ran away from their 'marster,' and for every Negro he caught he was paid ten dollars. The owners had about fifteen

'patterrolls' (patrols), for to catch the Negroes when they went off on Sundays without a pass. When this happened, the Negroes got thirty lashes.

When we wanted to marry, we couldn't marry girls off no other plantation, an' we had to ask 'marster' for the ones at home.

On Christmas, we got one pair of red low quarters and two suits of osnaburg. We got three pounds of meat for a week, and six of meal.

I knew the first settlers in this country. I heard the list of names read by Lawyer Jack McIntosh down in ole Dr. Turner's house, in what is now Lee County, one and one-half miles east of Pontotoc. At first the rich white folks sent 'chilluns' to the female college, an' the poor white people didn' go to school.

The morning after (Sunday) Forrest made his raid that went down by Okolona, through Pontotoc on to Harrisburg, 'marster' sent us niggers out to pick up the dead. We had about eighty of 'em that we put in trenches down there around Troy.