

Henry Pristell

Interview with Henry Pristell, 83 year old Estill, S.C.

—*Phoebe Faucette, Hampton County*

'Uncle Henry' Pristell and his wife, Lucina, live in the town of Estill in the usual type of small negro cabin. 'Uncle Henry' has a record of his age that shows that he is eighty-three years old but he is so well preserved that it is hard to believe. Although he is very bald, and his closely cut hair is nearly white, he gets about so easily and talks with such vigor he seems much younger.

"Oh, yes ma'am, I kin tell you 'bout de war times. I seen lots of dat, ma'am. I seen lots: I couldn't tell you all 'bout it—it been so distressful—but I kin tell some. When de Yankees come, at first sight of dem dey was string right 'long as far back as Luray. And string out crossways all over everywhere. Dey was jes' as thick together as de panels in dis fence. Dey was thousands of 'em! It was in de afternoon, an' dey was over everywhere—over de woods, over de fields, an' through de swamps, thick as dem weeds out dere! Dey didn't leave anything! Dey burn de fences down, shoot de cows, de hogs, de turkeys an' ducks an' geese, de chickens an' everything. Dey didn't stay no time—didn't spend de night—jes' pass through. I see some of 'em set a fence afire an' stop dere an' cook. Dere was rail fences of fat pinewood in dem days.

"For de plantation use, dey didn't burn none of de colored folks' houses nor de old boss' house. An' as for anybody being injured when dey pass through I didn't see none of dat. I must speak de truth, ma'am I didn't see anything out of the way. Jes' burn things an' take things to eat. Dere was Mr. Thomas' place, an' Mr. David Horton's place, den Mr. Wallace' place. Dey didn't burn any of 'em. I was on de Wallace place. My old boss been Mr. Sam Wallace. De house been up dere till 'bout thirty year ago. Dat been a fine place. Oh, yes ma'am. De house was built up high off de ground—as high as de top of dat room dere. I don't know why dey didn't burn de house. Now dat's all I kin tell you 'bout dat. In all other little doings, I didn't so much as realize it 'cause dey been little scattering doings. I do remember dat dere was a camp at Lawtonville for a while. Dey built a place for de prisoners, of mud. Dey dug a pit down in de ground 'bout three feet deep, den made de walls of mud. I'm satisfied 'bout dat. Dey didn't stay long. It was de Southern soldiers had de camp.

"After de war, we stay dere on de place. Stay dere for years. My father been Abram Pristell, my mother Lucy Pristell. 'Fore de war, I been jes' a little boy. Didn't have no special work to do. I penetrates 'round de yard dere by de kitchen. My mother would cook for de folks. Penetrate several days an' several night. De kitchen was off from de house. It had a big fireplace in it. Didn't have no stove. I'll be honest wid you. I'm satisfied 'bout dat! Had a loom in it an' a spinnin' wheel. I seen dem a many a time spinnin' an'

weavin'. Oh, yes ma'am, I'm satisfied 'bout dat! An' dey had plenty of good things to eat. Oh, dey was well secured. You'll never see dat no more—not on dis side! But dey had plenty of people to feed an' to take care of. 'Course we don't want dose times no more, 'cause while some of de boss been good to 'em some of 'em been bad. What little time we got here we wants to take it easy an' quiet."