

Lucinda Miller

Interview with "Aunt" Lucinda Miller

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—F.S. DuPre, Spartanburg, S.C.

Calling on an ex-slave who was visiting at a neighbor's house, the writer was surprised. She came out of the house briskly and jumped down the front steps and came to greet the writer with a smile on her face. "Aunt" Lucinda Miller stated she was between 10 and 11 years of age "when she was sot free". That would make her about 82 years old now. She was born in slavery, her mother being bought by Mat Alexander, who lived about five miles from Hill's factory on the Main Tyger River, for \$900. Her father, who was a Linder, was owned by Bob Alexander, a brother of Mat. He lived two or three plantations away. She stated that Bob Alexander was known as a good master, but Mat was mean and cruel. She has seen her mother "whooped" by the latter either with a buggy or wagon trace, a piece of leather or anything her master could get his hands upon. She said that she had never seen any slaves in chains, but her master would whip the grown slaves, but never the small children. Her work was light farm work, and working around the house. She would bring water, wash the dishes, help make up the beds and such other work she could required in the house. She says her master was a hard driver for work to his slaves; that she knew nothing but work. When her master thought that a slave was not working hard enough, he would whip him to make him work much harder. All he thought of was work—work in cotton, corn, peas, wheat, oats or whatever he raised. When asked about the games she and the other children played, she replied that she didn't have a chance to play, for there was something for her to do all the time. She also said that Mat Alexander used to make his slaves work at night and on Sundays. When the day's work was over, he would come to their one-room log house and lock them up until next morning. He would also lock up the well so they could have no drinking water during the night. She had plenty to eat, such as it was, but flour was given to them once a week, also a little meat, some molasses and corn meal. They never had any sugar, and only got coffee when her father would bring it to her mother. The white folks and the negroes ate from the same garden. The slaves could not have a garden of their own. They also went to the same church, but none of the white folks taught the slaves anything about reading. She said that she saw "a pair of niggers" get married on the plantation by a white preacher. There were no negro preachers. Patrollers did not bother any of the four or five slave families on the Alexander place, for Mat Alexander was his own patroller. Patrollers from one plantation had nothing to do with the negroes from another plantation, as they could not even come on the other plantation unless they had permission. When going to church, the slaves had to have passes to attend church services.

When asked how the Yankee soldiers behaved when they came by the farm, she said, "a whole pastle of them came by the house one day. They asked the Missus if she had any white bread and some honey." Upon being told that she didn't have any of either, they asked for water. Aunt Lucinda was told to bring them a bucket. She drew the water from the well and, after filling it, she placed it on her head to carry

it. The captain of the soldiers told her he could not drink the water from the bucket on her head, so made her place it on a stand. Then after the captain drank, the rest did also. They then came on into the yard and went to the stable, took a mule and rode it off, without saying anything. The missus had heard what the soldiers would do when they came to a farm, so all the valuables had been hidden. The horses were driven way back into the woods, the food stuff and clothing was hidden about the place. She said her mother was a good weaver and used to make lots of good clothes and quilts, but all this was put into a hole and covered up with dirt to keep the soldiers from taking it. Aunt Lucinda said the soldiers did not tarry there long after looking about for horses and such, and soon left. The only thing they got was the mule that was in the stable. When all the slaves were told by their master that they were free, they all wanted to get away from him, but stayed until the planted crops were harvested; then went to another place. Her father took her mother and his five children to live with him on another farm where they stayed for fourteen years. When they left, the Missus gave them 10 bushels of corn, 3 gallons of molasses etc. That was all her mother received for staying on after emancipation. Aunt Lucinda stated that she was known as Lucinda Alexander while a slave; then took her father's name until she was married, when she became a Miller. Her father used to hunt rabbits and opossums and bring them to his wife, her mother. She said that wild turkeys were plentiful, as she had often seen them flying around in the woods at the lower edge of the farm. She didn't know how many acres were in the farm, but the master worked 6 horses. She remembers that Mat Alexander was very mean, and would not get a doctor to a sick slave until he dropped in the fields. They had to work even if they were sick.