

## Mary Johnson

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### Interview with Mary Johnson (85)

#### Newberry, S.C.

—*G.L. Summer, Newberry, S.C.*

"I was born seven miles from Newberry, near Jalapa. I was a slave of John Johnson and his wife, Polly (Dorroh) Johnson. They was good to dere slaves. My daddy was Daniel and my mudder Elisa Johnson who was slaves of marster John Johnson. My mudder come from Georgia when she was 14 years old, bought by Marse Johnson. We lived in a little one-room house in dere yard. The mistress learned me to card and spin, and to weave when I was a child. When I was old enough, dey put me in de field to work, hoe and pick cotton. We got no money for working, but got our place to live, some victuals and a few clothes to wear. We had no garden, but helped de mistress in her garden and she give us something to eat from it. We had homespun dresses; we made not much underclothes, but sometimes in awful cold weather, we had red flannel undershirts.

"Nigger boys in slavery when dere work was done in evening, sometime went hunting and caught rabbits, squirrels or 'possums.

"We got up at sun-up in mornings and worked 'till sun-down. We had Saturday afternoon off to do anything we wanted to do. At Christmas time, we got dat day off, and de master would have a big dinner wid all kinds good things to eat, spread out in de yard.

"We never did learn to read and write—had no nigger school and had no nigger church, but sometimes de white folks would have us go to dere church and set in back seat or gallery.

"The white folks had cotton pickings and corn shuckings often and we helped. Dey had good dinners for them coming to it. De childrens, white and black played marbles sometimes, and played base. Us slave children played base and jumped from one base to another before could be caught; and we sing: 'Can I git to Molly's bright? Three course and ten. Can I get there by candle-light? yes, if your legs are long and light.'

"Marse John's youngest son got to be a doctor. He was a good man and helped us when we was sick. He did not gibe herbs much, but some of de ole folks used 'life everlasting', now called rabbit tobacco, for cure of bad colds or pneumonia. Dey boiled it and make a plaster and put it on sore places of chest. Dey used holly bush or spice bush bark, boiled to a tea and drunk for sickness.

"De padderrollers come in dat section, they rode at night and if caught, a nigger, when he was out of his place, would be took in and told dat he would get 25 lashes if he was caught again. When de war was over, de Yankees went through but didn't bother us; but dey stold horses, mules, cows and supplies.

When freedom come, we left the place, 'cause marse Johnson and some his folks went to Mississippi. We hired out to Kirk Richards nearby.

"De Ku Klux was not a bother. Dey jus marched sometimes at night, wid long white sheets over dem and all over de horses. Dere heads were covered with small holes for eyes, nose and mouth, and had long white ears like a horses ears.

"I think Abe Lincoln was a fine man, and Jeff Davis was good too. Slaver did good to nigger, made him careful and know how to work."