

Mississippi Narratives

Prepared by

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For the State of Mississippi

Nora Goodwin Age 73

"Come in dis house, Miss, can you find a chair? I'se sorry I can't see to help you but here I is as blind as a bat, can't tell daylight from dark now days. I has to let this little grandchild of mine lead me round when I goes anywhere."

Thus Nora Goodwin, a 73 year old negro woman welcomed her visitor into her spic and span little home. Nora is a quiet genteel type of negro, known in the homes of the old aristocratic southland. Her white hair has few "kinks" and together with her light yellow complexion and high forehead denote the mixture of other than negro blood in her veins. Both of her eyes are completely covered with cataracts, too far gone to ever be removed. She lives with her husband and daughter.

"I was born during de big war, child. My mammy carried me whilest all the men folks was gwine off to war and when I was born she didn't get to stay off from work but 'bout two weeks, then she had to go back to cookin' for the white folks, and Miss Maryann, dat was de Missus, she had to look after me so's my mammy could keep at work. Most all of de slaves had runned off and left them and poor Miss Maryann didn't know nothing 'bout cooking. Marse Bob Smith, her husband, say he never would know how to thank our folks for helping out like they did."

"My mammy's name was Sarah and my pappy's was John and dey took dey last name from de Smith's. Now cose I doan remember anything a 'tall 'bout slavery time but I do 'member what they useter tell me bout it all. Our family was house darkies and never knowed nothing 'bout living in de quarters. No, honey lamb, I ain't never heard 'bout any of dem gettin whipped. I don't think dey ever did for de white

folks treated dem kind as far as I knows. We all loved them. My pappy waited on de tables whilest my mammy cooked and I is heard him tell bout de many times he fanned de flies off de table with the bright peacock feathers. They raised the peacocks right on de place. It was right here in Aberdeen, dats where I spent most of my days."

"Bout de other things what happened during slavery times? No, miss, I couldn't tell you much. My folks never got into no devilment dat I is heard of and if de Ku Kluxers or patrollers ever got after dem I never knowed about it. Dey lived good Christian lives like dey was taught to do and I is tried to do dat too. I married George here a long time ago and we has been right lucky all de time. He is gettin old but still can work and I worked until year before last when my eyes went bad. I cooked for Judge Acker for nigh on to 30 years. They is powerful good folks and is sho' been good to me since my 'fliction. Dey is allus bringing somethin' good out here to me."

"No'm, I don't reckon George could tell you much more dan me cause he ain't no older, You'll have to go up de street dere and let old Frank and Leah tell you some more, or old Turner, or Jake. Dey is the oldest ones in our community, I thinks, and dey loves to talk."

"Good-bye, honey lamb, you comes back and see poor old Nora another time."