

**Mississippi Narratives**  
**Prepared by**  
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**Sam McAllum Age 95**

Foreword: To those familiar with the history of "Bloody Kemper" as recorded, the following narrative from the lips of an eyewitness will be heresy. But the subject of this autobiography, carrying his ninety-five years more trimly than many a man of sixty, is declared sound of mind as well as of body by the Hector Currie family, prominent in Mississippi, for whom he has worked in a position of great trust and responsibility for fifty years or more. While this old Negro may be mistaken at some points (the universal failing of witnesses), his impressions are certainly not more involved than the welter of local records. Mrs. Currie states that if Sam said he saw a thing happen thus, it may be depended upon that he is telling exactly what he really saw. Sam McAllum, ex-slave, lives in Meridian, Lauderdale County. Sam is five feet three inches tall and weighs 140 pounds.

"De firs' town I ever seen were DeKalb in Kemper County. De Stephenson Plantation where I were born warnt but 'bout thirteen miles north o' DeKalb. I were born de secon' o' September in 1842. My mammy b'longed to de Stephensons an' my pappy b'longed to Marster Lewis Barnes. His plantation wasn't so very far from Stephenson. De Stephensons an' Barneses were kin' white people. My pappy were a old man when I were born – I were de baby chil'. After he died, my mammy marry a McAllum Nigger."

"I don't recollect' any playthings us had 'cept a ball my young marster gimme. He were Sam Lewis Stephenson, 'bout my age. De little cullud chillum 'ud play "Blin' Man", "Hidin', an' jus' whatever come to han'."

“My young marster learned me out o’ his speller, but Mistis whupped me. She say I didn’ need to learn nothin’ ‘cept how to count so’s I could feed de mules widout colicin’ ‘em. You give ‘em ten years<sup>1</sup> o’ corn to de mule. If you give ‘em more, it ‘ud colic’ ‘em an’ dey’d die. Dey cos’ more’n a Nigger would. Dat were de firs’ whuppin’ I ever got – when me an’ my young marster were a-spellin’.”

“I stayed wid him special, but I waited on all de white folk’s chillum at Stephenson. I carried de foot tub in at night an’ washed dey foots, an’ I’d pull de trun’le bed out from under de other bed. All de boys slep’ in de same room.”

“Den I were a yard boy an’ waited on de young marster an’ mistis. Hadn’ been to de fiel’ den - hadn’ worked yet.”

“Mr. Stephenson were a surveyor an’ he fell out wid Mr. McAllum an’ had a lawsuit. He had to pay it in darkies. Mr. McAllum had de privilege o’ takin’ me an’ my mammy, or another woman an’ her two. He took us. So us come to de McAllum plantation to live. It were in Kemper too, ‘bout eight miles from Stephenson. Us come dere endurin’ of de war. Dat were when my mammy marry one o’ de McAllum Niggers. My new pappy went to de war wid Mr. McAllum an’ were wid ‘im when he were wounded at Manassas Gab Battle. He brung ‘im home to die - an’ he done it.”

“Den de Yankees come th’ough DeKalb huntin’ up cannons an’ guns an’ mules. Dey sho’ did eat a heap. Us hid all de bes’ things lak silver an’ driv de stock to de swamp. Dey didn’ burn nothin’ but us hear’d tell o’ burnin’s in Scooba an’ Meridian. I were a-plowin’ a mule an’ de Yankees made me take him out. De las’ I seen o’ dat mule, he were headed for Scooba wid three Yankees a-straddle of ‘im.”

“Times were tight – not a grain o’ coffee an’ not much else. When us clo’es were plumb wore out, de mistis an’ de Nigger wimmins made us some out o’ de cotton us had raised. My granny stayed de loom room all de time. De other wimmins done de spinnin’ an’ she done de weavin’. She were a ‘good’n.”

“De M & O (Mobile and Ohio Railroad) were a-burnin’ wood den. Dey couldn’ git coal. Dey used taller pots ‘stead o’ oil. De engineer had to climb out on de engine hisse’f an’ ‘tend to dem taller pots. Dey do diffe’nt now.”

“Dey were such a sca’city o’ men, dey were a-puttin’ ‘em in de war at sixty-five. But de war end ‘fore dey call dat list.”

“Mistis didn’ have nobody to he’p her endurin’ de war. She had to do de bes’ she could.” When she hear’d de Niggers talkin’ ‘bout bein’ free, she wore ‘em out wid a cowhide. She warnt a pow’ful built woman, neither. She had to do it herse’f ‘cause twant nobody to do it for ‘er. Dey warnt nothin’ a Nigger could do but stan’ up an’ take it.”

“Some folks treated dey slaves mighty bad – put Nigger dogs on ‘em. All my white folks were good to dey slaves, ‘cordin’ to how good de Niggers b’haved deyse’fs. Course, you couldn’ leave no plantation widout a pass, or de pateroller’d git you. I aint countin’ dat, ‘cause dat were othing’ every’body knowed ‘forehan’.”

“Dey were a heap o’ talk ‘bout de Yankees a-givin’ ever’ Nigger forty acres an’ a mule. I don’t know how us come to hear ‘bout it. It jus’ kinda got othin’. I picked out my mule. All o’ us did.”

“Times were mighty tough. Us thought us knowed trouble othing’ de war. Um-m-m! Us didn’ know othing’ ‘bout trouble.” Dey were so many slaves at McAllum’s dey had to thin ‘em out. Mistis put us out. She sent me to Mr. Scott close to Scooba. I were mos’ a grown boy by den a’ could plow pretty good. Come de surrender, Mr. Scott say, ‘Sambo, I don’t have to pay yo’ mistis for you no more. I have to pay you if you stay. Niggers is free. You is free.’ I didn’ b’lieve it. I worked dat crop out, but I didn’ ask for no pay. Dat didn’ seem right. I didn’t un’erstan’ ‘bout freedom, so I went home to my old mistis. She say, ‘Sambo, you don’t b’long to me now.’”

“Dey bound us young Niggers out. Dey sent me an’ my brother to a man dat were goin’ to give us some learnin’ ‘long wid farmin’. His name were Overstreet. Us worked dat crop out, but us aint never seen no speller, nor othing’.” Den us went back to Stephenson’s where us were born, to git us age. Old mistis say, ‘Sambo, you aint twenty-one yet.’ She cried ‘cause I had to go back to Mr. Overstreet. But I didn’. My mammy an’ me went back to McAllum’s an’ stayed until a man give us a patch in turn for us he’pin’ him on his farm.”

“I know ‘bout de Kloo Kluxes. I seen ‘em. “Bout de firs’ time I seen ‘em were de las’. Aint nobody know zackly ‘bout dem Kloo Kluxes. Some say it were a sperrit dat hadn’ had no water since de war. One rider would drink fo’ or five gallons at a time – kep’ us a-totin’ buckets fas’ as us could carry ‘em. It were a sperrit, a evil sperrit.”

“But folks dat aint acted right liable to be found mos’ anytime tied up some’r’s. De Niggers were a -havin’ a party one Satu’d’y night on Hampton’s plantation. Come some men on horses wid some kin’ o’ scare-face on ‘em. Dey were all wropped up, disguised. De horses were kivered up too. Dey call for Miler Hampton. He were one o’ de Hampton Niggers. He been up to somethin’. I don’t know what he done,

but dey say he done somethin' bad. Dey didn' have no trouble gittin' him 'cause us were all scared us'd git kilt too. Dey carried 'em off wid 'em an' kilt him dat very night."

"Us went to DeKalb nex' day in a drove an' ask de white folks to he'p us. Us buy all de ammunition us could git to take de sperrit 'cause us were a-havin' 'nother party de nex' week. Dey didn' come to dat party. I don't know why dey don't have no Kloo Kluxes now. De sperrit still have de same power."

"Den I go to work for Mr. Ed McAllum in DeKalb – when I aint workin' for de Gullies. Mr. Ed were my young marster, you know, an' now he were de jailer in DeKalb."

"I knowed de Chisolms too. Dat's how come I seen all I seen an' know what aint never been tol'. I couldn' tell you dat. Maybe I's de only one still livin' dat were grown an' right dere an' seen it happen. I aint scared now nothin' 'ud happen to me for tellin' – Mr. Currie'd see to dat – I jus' aint never tol'. Dem dat b'longed to my race were scared to tell. Maybe it were all for de bes'. Dat were a long time ago. Dey give out things den de way dey wanted 'em to soun' an' dat's de way dey done come down."

"It started wid Mr. John Gully gittin' shot. Now Mr. Gully were a leadin' man 'mong de white democratic people in Kemper, but dey aint had much chance for 'bout seven years (I disremember jus' how long) on 'count o' white folks lak de Chisolms runnin' ever'thing. Ever'body were sho' it were some' o' de Chisolm crowd, but some folks knowed it were dat Nigger, Walter Riley, dat shot Mr. Gully. (But aint nobody ever tol' de sho' 'nough reason why Walter shot Mr. John Gully.)"

"De Chisolms warnt Yankees but dey warnt white democratic people. Dey do say de Chisolms an' folks lak 'em used to run 'roun' wid de Yankees. Maybe dat's how come dey was diffe'nt. Even 'fore de Yankees come a-tall, when Mr. Chisolm were on us side, he were loud moufed 'bout it.

"Mr. John Gully he'p Mr. Chisolm git to be judge, but he turnt out to be worse dan dem he had to judge. Mr. Gully an' de others made 'im resign. I reckon maybe dat's why he quit bein' a Democratic an' started ructions wid Mr. Gully."

"Come de surrender, Mr. Chisolm, he got to be a big leader on de other side. An' he seen to it dat a lot o' de white democratic men got ke'p from votin' an' a lot o' Niggers step up an' vote lak he to' 'em (dey were scared not to). So de Chisolms kep' gittin' all de big places."

“A lot o’ widders an’ folks lak dat what couldn’ he’p deyse’fs los’ dey homes an’ ever’thing dey had. De papers de gran’ jury make out ‘bout it were stored in de sheriff’s office. De sheriff give out dat his office done been broke open an’ all dem papers stole.”

“Den Mr. Chisolm’s brother got hisse’f ‘pointed sheriff an’ make Mr. Chisolm deputy. Dat’s when he started runnin’ things sho’ ‘nough. Nex’ thing you know, Mr. Chisolm is de sho’ ‘nough sheriff hisse’f.”

“Den he gather all his kin’ o’ folks ‘roun’ ‘im an’ dey make out a black lis’. De folkses names dat were on it were de ones de Chisolms didn’ need. It were talked ‘roun’ dat de firs’ name on dat lis’ were Mr. John Gully’s name. A heap o’ Kloo Kluxes’ names were on it too. Mr. Chisolm send de Kloo Kluxes’ names to de Gov’ nor an’ spec’ him to do somethin’ ‘bout runnin’ ‘em out. But, course, he couldn’ do nothin’ ‘bout dat ‘cause it were a sperrit. But ever’ now an’ den somebody what’s name were on dat lis’ ‘ud git shot in de back.”

“Afore de ‘lection come in November (it mus’ a-been in 75), de Niggers had been a-votin’ an’ doin’ ever’thing de Chisolms say. Dey were still a-harpin’ back to dat forty acres an’ a mule ey were promised what dey aint never got. It were turnin’ out to be jus’ de same wid ever’thing else Mr. Chisolm had been a-promisin’ to give ‘em. Dey aint never got none of it. De white democratic folks won dat ‘lection.”

“Soon Mr. Chisolm run for somethin’ or ‘nother an’ got beat bad. Den he were mad sho’ ‘nough. He went to Jackson to see de Gov’ nor ‘bout it. Soon a heap o’ white democratic men in Kemper got arrested for somethin’ or ‘nother.”

“Den Mr. John Gully got shot an’ ever’body were sho’ de Chisolms done it. Ever’body were dat mad. Chisolm an’ dem had to go to court. But dey were slippery as eels an’ Walter Riley’s name come out. (He were a Nigger) Dey give out at de trial dat Walter were hired to shoot ‘im by de Chisolm folks. Dat were not de reason, but dey was blood ‘fore folks’ eyes by dat time.”

“It got worse dat Satu’d’y when Mr. Gully were buried. Folks all over Kemper done hear’d ‘bout it by now an’ by nine o’clock Sund’y mornin’, people were a-comin’ in over ever’ road dat led to DeKalb. Dey all had loaded guns. It were on a Sund’y when all de killin’ happened – I mean, de windin’-up killin’. I were dare ‘fore a gun were fired. I were dere when de firs’ man were wounded.”

“De cullud people had gathered in DeKalb at de Methodis’ Church. Dey hadn’ a gun fired yet. Mr. Henry Gully goes to de cullud people’s church. He walked in at de front door an’ took his hat off his head. Dey were a-paced in de house for preachin’. He walked down de aisle ‘til he got in front o’ de preacher an’ he turn sideways an’ speak: “I want to ask you to dismiss yo’ congregation. Dey is goin’ to be some

trouble take place right here in DeKalb an' I don't want any cullud person to git hurt." De preacher rise to his feet, ever' Nigger in de house were up an' he dismiss 'em. (Mr. Henry Gully were Mr. John Gully's brother an' a leadin' man o' de right.)

"De town were a-millin' wid folks from ever'where. Chisolm an' dem done got in de jail for safety an' Miss Cornelia Chisolm went back'ards an' for'ards to de jail. Dey thought she were a-carryin' ammunition in her clo'se to her father. Mr. McClendon – he were one of 'em – were wid her twist. He were on de right hand side. Some b'lieved he were de one dat killed Mr. John Gully. Dey tol' 'em dey'd burn his house down if he stay in it, but if he'd go on to jail, dey'd give 'im a fair trial."

"Well, Mr. McClendon were shot down 'side Miss Cornelia. I seen him when he fell on his face. De man dat fired de gun turn him over an' say, 'Well, us got 'im.' Miss Cornelia run on to de jail where de 'bounce o' de fam'ly were."

"Dem outside say, 'Boys, it'll never do. Dey aint all in dere yet. Let's sen' to Scooba an' git Charlie Rosenbaum an' John Gilmore to come help dey frien's. Dey b'longs to dat Chilsom crown an' we want dem too.'"

"So dey come. Somebody say, 'Let's commence right here.' I never seen a battle b'fore, but I sho' seen one den. It were lak dis: Mr. Cal Hull was de only democratic white frien' Mr. Rosenbaum Had. He stood 'twixt his white democratic frien's an' Mr. Rosenbaum. He put his arms over Mr. Rosenbaum an' say, 'Boys, he's a frien' o' mine. If you kill him, you kill me.' Mr. Rosenbaum crawled over to de courthouse wall an' squatted down, an' stayed dere. Mr. Hall stood over 'im, pertectin' 'im. But Mr. John Gilmore make for de jail an' when dey open de door for 'im, de shootin' start. Right den were when Mr. Gilmore got his. Miss Cornelia were struck in de wris'. It mortified an' after 'while she died from it."

"I know I aint tol' de sho' 'nough reason Mr. John Gully got killed. Maybe de time done come for de truf to be tol'. Hope won't nobody think hard o' me for tellin'."

"Mr. John Gully had a bar-room an' a clerk. A white man by de name o' Bob Dabbs walked b'hin' dat counter. Dis Nigger, Walter Riley, I was a-tellin' you 'bout awhile ago, were a-courtin' a yeller woman. (Dey warnt so many of 'em in dem days.) Mr. Dabbs say, 'Walter, if I ever ketch you walkin' wid (he called dat yeller woman's name) I'll give you de worst beatin' ever was.' Walter were kotch wid 'er ag'in. Dat Frid'y night he come a-struttin' into de barroom. Mr. Dabbs say, 'Come he'p move dese boxes here in de nex' room.' Walter walked in lak a Nigger will when you ask 'im to do somethin' an' Mr. Dabbs turnt de key. 'Git 'crost dat goods box' he say. 'I'll give you what I promised you.' Mr. Dabbs got 'im a piece o' plank an' burnt Walter up."

“All dis here were a-goin’ on ‘bout de time Niggers were a-votin’ an’ doin’ things ‘roun’ white folks. Dey thought dey were pertected by de Chisolm crowd.”

“De nex’ Frid’y night Walter walked right into dat barroom ag’in. Mr. Dabbs say ‘What you doin’ here, Nigger?’ Walter say, ‘You ‘member what you done to me tonight one week?’ An’ he say, ‘Well, what’s to it?’ Den Walter say, ‘Well, I come to settle wid you.’ Mr. Dabbs say, ‘Let me see if I can’t hurry you up some’ an’ he retch his han’ backhis ha’ to his hip. But ‘fore he could draw out, Walter done run back to de door. Dey were a chinaberry tree close to de door an’ Walter got b’hin’ it an’ fired a pistol. Mr. Dabbs were hit wid his arm a-layin’ ‘crost de counter wid his pistol in his han’.”

“Me an’ Mr. Ed (‘cause he were de jailor) we, put him on a mattress in de room back o’ de bar. An’ he died dat night. De word ju’ kinda got ‘roun’ dat some o’ de Chisolm crowd done killed Mr. Gully’s clerk.”

“Walter run off to Memphis. Mr. Gully were pursuin’ after ‘im to ketch ‘im. Walter sho’ got tired o’ him pursuin’ after ‘im. Dat were de evidence Walter give out ‘fore dey put de rope on his neck an’ start him on his way to de gallows, but twant nobody dere to put it down ju’s lak it were.”

“Mr. Sinclair were sheriff by dis time an’ my young marster an’ me went wid ‘im to git Walter to take ‘im to de gallows. Mr. Sinclair say, ‘Ed, you goin’ to de jail-house now. Here’s a ha’f pint o’ whiskey. Give it to Walter, mak ‘im happy, den if he talk too much, nobody will b’lieve it.’ Mr. Ed say, ‘Come on, Sambo, go wid me.’ He retched down an’ got a han’ful o’ goobers an’ put ‘em in his pocket. We were eatin’ ‘em on de way down to de jail-house. He say, ‘Walter, Mr. Sinclair done sent you a dram.’ Walter say, ‘Mr. McAllum, I see you an’ Sam eatin’ peanuts comin’ along. Jus’ you give me a han’ful an’ I’ll eat dem on de way to de gallows. I don’t want no whiskey.’”

“Den us got on de wagon. (I can see Walter now, standin’ dere wid his cap on de back o’ his head ready to pull down over his eyes after he get dere.) Dey were a pow’ful crowd ‘roun’ dat wagon.”

“Den come a rider from Scooba, pull a paper from his pocket an’ han’ it to Mr. Sinclair. He read it an’ say, ‘Let de people go on to de gallows. De wagon turn ‘roun’ an’ go back to de jail.’ De Gov’ nor had stopped de hangin’ ‘til de case were ‘vestigated. (De people standin’ dere a-waitin’ for Walter to be hund didn’ know what were de matter.)”

“Dey placed Walter back in jail an’ his coffin ‘long wid ‘im. De lawyers would visit ‘im to git his testimony. Dey’d show ‘im his coffin all ready an’ ask him did he do dis killin’ or not. Dey want ‘im to say he were hired to do it. Dey fixed it all up. Twant nobody to tell ju’s how it were.”

“I were married by dis time to Laura. She were de nurse maid to Mr. J. H. Currie. She’s been dead twenty years now. When de Curries come to Meridian to live, dey give me charge o’ dey plantation. I were de leader an’ stayed an’ worked de plantation for ‘em. Dey been livin’ in Meridian twelve years. I’s married now to dey cook.”

“Mr. Hector tol’ me if I’d come an’ live wid ‘em here, he’d gimme dis house here in de back yard an’ paint it an’ fix it all up lak you see it. It’s might pleasant in de shade. Folks used to always set dey houses in a grove, but now dey cuts down more trees dan dey keeps. Us don’t cut no trees. Us porches is always nice an’ shady.”

“I’s got fo’ boys livin’. One son were in de big strike in de automobile plant in Detroit an’ couldn’ come to see me las’ Chris’mas. He’ll come to see me nex’ year if I’s still here.”

“Maybe folks goin’ a-think hard o’ me for tellin’ what aint never been tol’ b’fore. I been asked to tell what I seen an’ I done it.”

“Dat’s tellin’ what I never thought to tell.”