

Sam Mitchell

Interview with Sam Mitchell, age 87

—*Mrs. Chlotilde R. Martin, Beaufort County*

"W'en war come, I been minding cow for my master. My father been Moses Mitchell and my mother been Tyra Mitchell. We belong to John Chaplin and lib on Woodlawn plantation on Ladies Island. Mr. Chaplin had seven plantation. He lib at Brickyaad plantation in winter and in Beaufort in summer. He hab many slave, but I don't know how many. As near as I can remember, dey been fifteen slave on Woodlawn plantation.

"De slave lib on de Street, each cabin had two room. De Master don't gib you nutting for yo' house—you hab to git dat de best way you can. In our house was bed, table and bench to sit on. My father mek dem. My mother had fourteen chillen—us sleep on floor.

"Eb'ry Chuesday, de Master gib each slave a peck ob corn. W'en potato dug, we git potato. Two time in de year we git six yaa'd ob cloth, calico in spring and homespun in de winter. Once a year we git shoe. De slave had 'bout two task ob land to cultivate for se'f in w'at call Nigger field. Could raise one pig.

"All my mother chillen dead 'cept me and one sister Rhina, who lib wid me. She 80 year old.

"My father hab a boat and he gone fishing at night and sell fish. Master let him cut post and wood at night and sell, too. He had to do dis work at night 'cause in daytime he have to do his task. He was carpenter, but w'en dey was no carpentry work to do on de plantation, he plow. My mudder hoe. Little boy and old man mind cow. Little girl and old 'ooman mind baby.

"On Woodlawn dey was no overseer. We had nigger driver. Maussa didn't 'low mucher whipping, but slave had to do task. If didn't, den he git whipping. Driver do whipping, but if he whip too sewerely, Maussa would sometime tek field hand and mek him driver and put driver in field.

"If a slave was sick, Maussa would come and see w'at was de matter. Sometimes he would give de slave jollip to mek him womit (vomit), sometimes if he had fever, he would gib him hippo. If he was sick, the Master would tek him to Beaufort to de doctor. If a 'ooman slave sick, Big Missis would go and see dem.

"Slave had only one holiday in de year. Dat Christmas day. Maussa would kill a cow on every plantation on Christmas and gib all de slave some.

"On Maussa John Chaplin plantation slave have to tell him soon as dey begin to co't. If Maussa say 'No, you can't marry dat gal', den dat settle it, you can't marry um. He don't lak his slave to marry slave on nodder pusion plantation, but if you do den you hab pass to wisit yo' wife. W'en slave marry, w'ite preacher marry um in de Maussa house, but Maussa don't gib you anyt'ing.

"Slave had dey own chu'ch on plantation wid nigger preacher, but on 'munion Sunday, you had to go to w'ite folks chu'ch in Beaufort and sit up stair.

"Dey wasn't no jailhouse on de plantation, but dey was a barn w'ere sometimes Maussa put slave w'en dey been bad. I never saw any slaves sold, but I hear tell of de banjo table.

"W'en slave die, Maussa let me berry um in de daytime, 'do some Maussa mek dem wait 'till night time. Nigger preacher preach funeral.

"I staa't for mind cow w'en I been nine year old. W'en I been twelve, I have for staa't wuk in field or cutting maash (marsh) or splitting rail. Slave chillen play mud-pie, mek house out ob sand and secher t'ing.

"Slave on Maussa plantation could come to Beaufort on Sattidy night, but dey have to be back by 9 o'clock or patrol would get um.

"Maussa had nine chillen, six boy been in Rebel army. Dat Wednesday in November w'en gun fust shoot to Bay Pint (Point) I t'ought it been t'under rolling, but dey ain't no cloud. My mother say, 'son, dat ain't no t'under, dat Yankee come to gib you Freedom.' I been so glad, I jump up and down and run. My father been splitting rail and Maussa come from Beaufort in de carriage and tear by him yelling for de driver. He told de driver to git his eight-oar boat name Tarrify and carry him to Charleston. My father he run to his house and tell my mother w'at Maussa say. My mother say, 'You ain't gonna row no boat to Charleston, you go out dat back door and keep a-going. So my father he did so and w'en dey git 'nuf nigger to row boat and Maussa and his family go right away to Charleston.

"After Freedom come everybody do as he please. De Yankee open school for nigger and teacher lib in Maussa house to Brickyaad. My father git job as carpenter wid Yankee and buy ten acre ob land on Ladies Island.

"I been married two time. My last wife, Florence, living right here in Beaufort, but she left me long time ago. I hab two chillen, one daughter live to Philadelphy and de odder lib on Ladies Island. I got four grand-chillen, all ob dem grown.

"Did I ebber hear ob Abraham Lincoln? I got his history right here in my house. He was de president of de United States that freed four million slave. He come to Beaufort befo' de war and et dinner to Col. Paul Hamilton house at de Oaks. He left his gold-headed walking cane dere and ain't nobody know de president of de United States been to Beaufort 'till he write back and tell um to look behind de door and send um his gold-headed walking cane.

"Jefferson Davis? He been de Democrack president.

"Booker T. Washington? He wasn't no president, but he was a great man. I hear him speak once in de cemetery in Beaufort.

"What do I t'ink ob slavery? I t'ink slavery is jest a murdering of de people. I t'ink Freedom been a great gift. I lak my Maussa and I guess he was as good to his slave as he could be, but I ruther (rather) be free.