

Sena Moore

Interview with Sena Moore, 83 years old

—*W.W. Dixon, Winnsboro, S.C.*

Sena Moore lives alone, in a one-room frame house about five miles northeast of Winnsboro, S.C. She does seasonal work, such as hoeing and picking cotton, of which she is still fully capable. She pays \$2.00 per month rent, for the house and vegetable garden spot.

"Sumpin' tell me to make haste and come here for to see you. How's you dis mornin'? Mustn't forgit my manners, though I's wantin' to tell you de ifs and hows and de ups and downs of dese many years dat I's been in dis land of sorrow and tribulation.

"I was born in 1854, on de Gladney plantation. Was a pretty smart gal, twelve years old, when de Yankees come through. Marse Riley have a Bible out yonder at Jackson Creek dat show's I's eighty-three years old. His aunty is a sister to my old marster, Jim Gladney. Miss Margaret married a Paul but Miss Nancy and Miss Mary Ann, them two never marry, bless God! De house out dere in Jackson Creek neighborhood.

"My pappy was George Stitt. My mammy was Phillis Gladney. My pappy was a slave of de Stitt family; had to git a pass to come to see mammy. He slipped in and out 'nough of times to have four chillun. Then de Stitts took a notion to sell him to Arkansas. My mammy weep 'bout dat but what could her do? Just nothin'. Old marster 'low: 'Plenty more good fish in de sea, Phillis. Look 'round, set your cap, and maybe you'll 'tract one dat'll give your heart comfort, bye and bye'. My full brudders was Luther Stitt, Bill Stitt, and Levi Stitt. My mammy then take up wid a no 'count nigger name Bill James and had one child, a boy, name Jim. He died long time ago.

"Us live in a log house wid a dirt floor and de cracks stop up wid mud. It had a wooden chimney. De beds was saplin' pole beds. De ticks was wheat straw, though most of de time us chillun sleep on de floor. My marster not a big buckra; he just had a handful of slaves. Us had to fight chinchies, fleas, and skeeters (mosquitoes) 'most all night or 'til they fill theyselves wid our blood. Then they take a rest and us git a rest and slept. My grandpappy was one of de free niggers. Him was a Stitt family nigger, a blue-eyed nigger.

"Money? Lord help me, no! As I 'member, us had plenty to eat, sich as peas, beans, greens, lye hominy, and 'lasses but no flour bread.

"My young marster, Sam, was kilt in de war but Marse Tom went off and settle in Arkansas.

"What clothes us have? Just 'nough to hide our secret parts in summer. A shirt for de boys and a slip-over for de gals. They was made out of weave cloth, dat us spin of de cotton dat us picked out of de field. Wid all de drawbacks, us was happy more then than now.

"Us raise our own chickens and sing while us workin'. I never mind white chillun callin' me 'nigger'. Dat was a nickname they call me.

"Us was Presbyterians and b'long to de Jackson Creek Church, Lebanon. Gallery was all 'round de upstairs. Got a whippin' for goin' to sleep up dere, one Sunday, and snorin'. In them days de preacher was powerful. De folks mighty 'ticular when him come 'round and fill de back of his buggy wid sumpin' of everything on de place, lak ham, chickens, eggs, butter, marmalade, jelly, 'lasses, sugar, vegetables and fruit. Him put in full time on Sunday though, preach 'bout two hours befo' he put on de benediction.

"What 'bout my courtin' days? Well, I had them, too. A Yankee want me to go off wid him but I tell him no! Then when I 'fuse him, him 'suade another gal to love him and leave wid him. Her come back to de place six months later and had a baby by dat scamp man.

"When I was fifteen, I marry Bill Moore. Stood up wid him, dat day, in a blue worsted dress and a red balmoral over a white tuck petticoat, and under dat, a soft pique chemise wid no sleeves. Had on white stockin's and low quarter shoes. I had sweet shrubs all through my hair and it held them all night and de nex' night, too. Sill make a big laugh 'bout it, while nosin' in my hair and smellin' them sweet shrubs.

"Dr. Turner was de doctor dat 'tended de Gladney's and de slaves on de place.

"How us git fire? Us git two flint rocks, hold lint cotton under them, strike a spark, it drop down, set de cotton afire and then us fan it to a blaze.

"Yes sir, I see many good white men, more than I got fingers and toes, but a low down white man can git low downer than a nigger man. A good white lady telled me one time, dat a bad white woman is a sight worser and more low downer than a bad nigger woman can ever git to be in dis world. Now what you gonna day to dat, Mister? Well, if you have dat notion too, us won't argue 'bout it.

"Does I believe de Savior has a remedy for de laks of sich women? Let me think 'bout dat a little bit. De Savior has a cure for things, all things. How come he ain't? Didn't he give a woman de livin' water at de well and make her white as snow? Then he run seven devils out another woman, for just sich sins as us is talkin' 'bout, Mister!

"Ku Klux? Does I 'member them? Dis left knee 'members them! One night de big road full of us niggers was comin' from church. Just as us git to de top of de hill us see, comin' up de hill, a long line of hosses, wid riders dressed in pure white, hoods on deir heads, and painted false faces. They busted into a gallop for us. I was wid my brudders, Luther and Bill; they jump de side gully and got 'way in de woods. I jump but de jump was poor as a cow, I reckon, and dis very leg crumple up. I lay dere in my misery 'til daylight, and my brudder, Luther, come back and carry me home. Dat word 'home' 'minds me I ought to be goin' dere now. De Lord take a lakin' to you, and you to me! May you git to heaven when you die and I git dat pension befo' I die. Amen!"