

Amanda Tellis

Personal interview with Amanda Tellis and her daughter Sarah Chastan in Allenville, Mobile County, Alabama

—*Written by Ila B. Prine*

Amanda Tellis, a tall, thin, light skinned woman, who was born a slave November 30, 1854, lives in Allenville, a negro settlement about four miles north of Mobile, Alabama.

Amanda's father was a Spaniard, whose name was John Quick, and her mother's name was Sallie Pugh, her mother having the same name as the people who owned her. Sallie, Amanda's mother, was born a slave in Charleston South Carolina, and she and her mother were brought to Alabama and sold when Sallie was twelve years old. The mother was sold to someone in Demopolis, Alabama, while Sallie was sold to the Pugh family in Grove Hill, Alabama.

Amanda was born in Grove Hill, Alabama and Mr. Meredith Pugh was her master, and Mrs. Fannie Pugh was her mistress. Her young "Missus" was Miss Maria Pugh, a daughter, one of seven children in the Pugh family. Amanda said she would to "Miss Maria" and she nursed and took care of her until the surrender. Many times when Amanda would be promised a whipping for not doing things as she should have, Miss Maria would save her from the whipping, by throwing herself back from the table and screaming for them not to touch Amanda, her nurse.

Aside from caring for "Miss Maria", Amanda said she spun three cuts of thread a day, and when the writer asked what a cut was, she said: "A cut was a broach full." During the war, (meaning the Civil War,) Amanda said she and her sister Nancy spun 160 yards of cloth, and they finished the last on the day of the Surrender, when the Cannons were fired at Fort Morgan, and they were mustering the men out.

Amanda's life was a very easy one in comparison to some of the other slaves. She said she had seen many of the slaves cruelly mistreated, but her people were fortunate in having a good master and mistress.

However, at the close of the war, Amanda was told to pretend she had a chill, and go to her mother's cabin, so she did as she was told. When she reached the cabin, her mother, brothers and sisters each had a pillow slip, filled with clothes and she was given hers and they ran away, and came to Mt. Vernon, Alabama. Amanda was only eleven years old then.

Her life has been varied since, having married three times. Her first husband was Scott Johnson, and was the father of all of her children, seven boys and one girl. Amanda lives with this girl now. Her second

husband was Vance Stokes, and her third was S.T. Tellis, a negro Methodist preacher. Amanda said he was "no count and I did not stay with him long."

Amanda is now confined to her bed and has been for the past seven weeks, her body has wasted away, until she is skin and bones. Her eyes however are still bright and keen, her hair snow white and she still has a few teeth. Her mind seems to be clear, and her memory good, in fact the past is now a part of her, and she told the writer she was so happy because she had come to ask her about it, before it was too late.