

## Angie Garrett

### Interview with Angie Garrett

—*Ruby Pickens Tartt, Livingston, Alabama*

#### *MULES BE EATIN' AND NIGGERS BE EATIN'*

She sat in the door of her small cabin, a short distance from Livingston, Alabama, in philosophical reflection. Time has not softened her memories. As she told these facts an occasional expression of bitterness passed over her face.

"I's Angie Garrett," she said. I was about sixteen years at beginning uv de Wa'. I was born in De Kalb, Mississippi. My mother was Betty Scott, an' I didn't know my father's name. I had four brothers, Ember, Johnny, Jimmie, and Henry; and three sisters, Delphie, Lizzie Sue, and Frankie, and my grandmother was Sukie Scott. She lived five miles from Gainesville across Noxubee Creek (in full, Oka Noxubee) an' I lived wid her. Never axed 'bout my grand-daddy, 'caze wa'n't no tellin'. My mammy lived right here in Gainesville an' belong to Mr. Sam Harwood.

"I b'longed to de Moorings and Cap'n Mooring run on a boat to Mobile from Aberdeen, Mississippi, 'twus on de 'Bigbee river, an' 'twus called de *Cremonia*. I was de house gal an' nuss an' I slep' on a pallet in old Miss's room. I had plenty to eat long as us was on dat boat, and dat sho' was good. But when us was in De Kalb, vittles was giv' out at de smoke house, a slice o' meat and piece of bread and peas, and 'twus sarnt out ter de fiel'. Mules be eatin' and niggers be eatin'.

"I nussed de Moorings little boy Johnny. De little gal had died. Mr. Scott in De Kalb had 'bout fifty slaves and a big plantation and a overseer name' Barnes. He was a haughty man, and niggers was skeered to death 'caze he would come in a-cussin'.

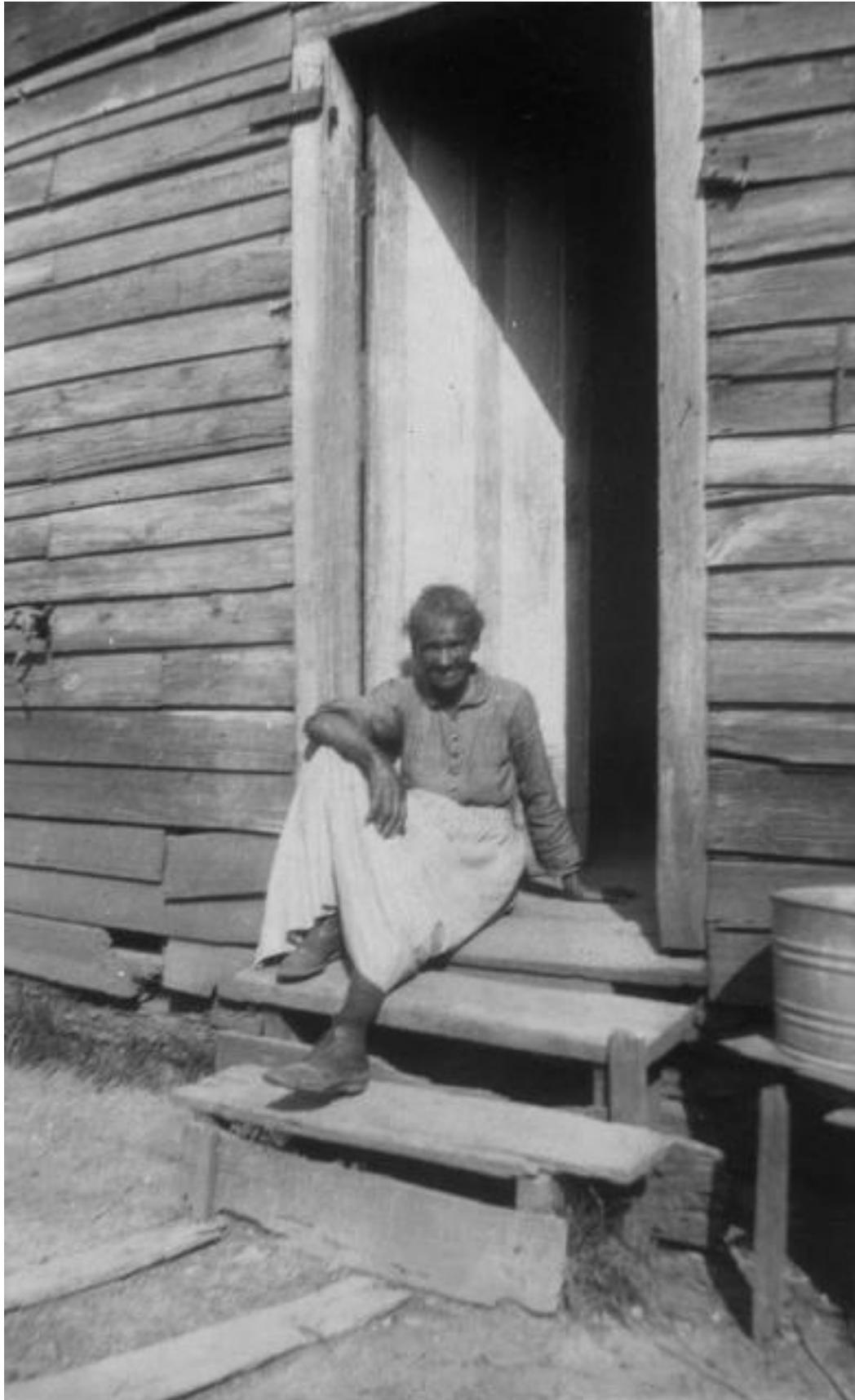
"Us would git up 'fo' daylight. 'Twus dark when go out, dark when come in. Us make a little fire in de fiel' some mawnin's, hit beeze so cold; dan us let it go out 'fo' de overseer come. Ef he seed you he'd make yer lay down flat on yo' belly, foots tied out and han's tied out and whoop yer wid slapper leather strap wid a handle. But I was laid 'cross a cheer. I been whooped 'tel I tell lies on myself to make 'em quit. Say dey whoop 'till I'd tell de troof, so I had ter lie 'bout myse'f keep 'em from killin' me. Dis here race is mo' lac de chillun uv Isreal, 'cept dey didn't have ter shoot no gun ter set um free.

"I was sole ter Mr. Johnny Mooring, 'caze de property was in debt. And den fuss I b'longed ter Mrs. Scott at De Kalb, and her sole me, an' I sho' was glad. I walked here to Gainesville frum De Kalb, Mississippi. Us wa'n't 'lowed to learn nothin'. Sometimes us sing and have a little prayer meetin', but 'twus mighty easy and quiet like. Gran'ma Sukey use' to sing, "Travel on, travel on, Soon be Over."

"Ef any us died in dem days, buried us quick as dey could and got out of dere and got to work. At night dey blow'd de horn for 'em to bring in de cotton w'ut de women spinned. Dey made all de clof. Us worked nights too, but us rested Sundays. Us didn't git no presents at Christmas. Sometimes us had a

corn shuckin', and no celebration for no marriage. Dat was called "jumpin' de broom," jes' taken up wid 'em. Dey all want you to have plenty of chillun, though.

"Us wo' asafetida 'roun' us neck keep off de small pox and measles. Us didn't have much medicine and some of um was always full of bad complaints lac' Carrie, my neighbor, whut you axed about. I bees a-hurtin', but I can't never git in edgeways for her. Always got a lot excuses; doan' never 'spects to die 'thout folks knows whut ails her. But she brought me some black-eyed peas today, and I lac's um 'caze dey biles sof', and I say 'ef de devil brought hit, God sarnt hit.' Sometimes I bees hongry, an' I say, 'Whut is I'm gwinter eat?', and along come somebody wid sumpin'.



*Angie Garrett, Livingston, Alabama*

"Wish you could of heered dat calliope on de *Cremonia*. Dey dance some time 'mos' all night, but dey didn't act lac' dey do now. 'Twus nice behavior. Look lac' ev'ything goin' back ter heathenism, and hits on de way now. But de good Lord he'ps me. He hol's my han'. I ain't got nothin' 'gin nobody. I doan' see no need of fussin' and fightin' an' a-drinkin' whiskey. Us livin' in a new worl' and I go on makin' de bes' I kin of hit. Some I lac, some I doan'.

"I got one daughter, Fannie Watson, a good washer and ironer right here in Gainesville, and I got a son, too, say he ain't gonna marry 'tel he kin treat de 'oman good as she kin treat herse'f. I makes him wait on me, and he gits mighty raw sometimes, but I tells him I'm jes' much older den he is now as I was when he was bawn. Den he gives me a old dirty dime, but now wid dese here tokens, you gotter pay some of hit fer spendin'. Dey tells me hit's de Governor, and I say 'let him carry 'em; he kin tote 'em, I ain't able.' Well, once ain't always, and twice ain't forever.

"No'm, I doan' never go ter church no mo'. De preachers here is goin' bline about money. Dey ain't interested in dey soul. Some folks b'longs ter de church an' ain't been changed. De church ain't all of hit. I 'members day uv 'manicipation. Yankees tole us we was free, and dey call us up frum de fiel' to sign up an' see ef us wanted to stay on wid 'em. I stayed dat year wid de Moorings, den I bargain for lan', but couldn't never pay fer hit. Turned loose 'thout nothin'.

"But dey was a coal black free born nigger name George Wright, had a floatin' mill right here on de 'Bigbee River, stayed at de p'int of de woods jes' 'bove de spring branch, and hit did a good service. But he got in debt and he sole his five boys. Dey was his own chillun, and he could sell 'em under de law. De names was Eber, Eli, Ezekiel, Enoch, and Ezra, an' he sole 'em ter de highes' bidder right yonder 'front of de Pos' Office for cash. And Jack Tom was another free nigger here and he bought some of 'em, and dey others de white folks bought, and I never heerd no complaint and I seed 'em long as dey lived. Dey was a heap of things went on. Some I lac's to remember, some I doan'. But I'd rather be free now. I never seed Mr. Lincoln, but when dey tole me 'bout him, I thought he was partly God.

"But Mr. John Rogers right here, (he's dead an' gone now), he was whut he was and wasn't 'ceitful. Go to him ef you got into anything, and he more'n apt to tell you whut to do. He was wile when he was young, but he settle down and was de bes' white man to de niggers I ever know'd. He'd he'p me right now ef he was livin' and seen me wearin' dis here rag nasty, he sho' would."