

Eliza White

Interview with Eliza White, age around 80

Opelika, Alabama

—*Preston Klein, Opelika, Alabama*

SHE SEED A HA'NT

Eliza White lives by the Central of Georgia Railroad tracks in Opelika. The passing of many years has not dulled her mind, and so she was able to tell of many things which happened "befo' de wah."

"Yas, suh, I was a slave. Ole Massa was name' Billy Jones, and Ole Mistis was name' Angeline. Dey lived in Harris County, Georgia, close to Columbus. My pappy and mammy was Peter and Frances Jones, and I had a brother, Dennis, and a sister, Georgianne.

"Massa was a good man, and I did love Ole Mistis. Dey was mighty good to us niggers; fed us out dey own garden. We had checked homespun clothes foh eve'yday, and purty calico and dyed osnaburg ones foh Sunday. I went to church wid de white folks, settin' in de foot of de carriage. I 'members well de Sunday I fust seen a shoutin'. It was two white ladies.

"Massa and Mistis had four chillun. Two of dem, Dave and Quit, was bad fighting kids. I seen Massa make dem strip to dey waist, and whip 'em, den make dem go in and bathe.

"Massa lived in a big, fine white house. He had two or three hundred slaves, and de quarters was in two long rows, runnin' up near 'bout to de big house on de hill. Dey even raised deer on de place. De houses in de quarters was two-room log houses wid a shed room to cook in. My mammy was de cook at de big house, and granny was de weaver. Pappy was de bedmaker; he made most of de beds outen poplar. I had a little chair in de corner where I sot and kept de flies offen Mistis wid a green twig brush.

"Whenever Massa sont any de slaves offen de place he had to gib 'em passes so de patterollers wouldn't ketch 'em and whip 'em foh runnin' away. De patterollers was a good thing foh de lazy ones. When daylight come we had to get up, else we'd be whipped. Massa didn't have his slaves whipped much; just when dey was lazy and wouldn't work.

"Ev'ey now and den we would have some good frolics, mostly on Sattiday nights. Somebody would play de fiddle and we all danced to de music. De folks sure had some big times at de cornshuckin's, too. De men would work two or three days, haulin' de corn and pilin' it near de crib. Den dey would invite folks from other quarters to come and help wid de shuckin'. While dey shucked dey would holler and sing:

You jumped and I jumped;

Swear, by God you out jumped me.

Huh! Huh! Round de corn, Sally.

"Granny used to give us tea made outen sage roots, mullen, pine, hoarhound—dat sho' was bitter stuff. We had purty beads made wid corn. And I still 'members de Christmas I got my fust shoes. I just hugged dem tight and went to sleep holdin' 'em. Dey was button shoes.

"When we heard de Yankees was comin' we hid all de meat and rations and de silver in de big swamp, and turned de horses loose, and all us kids hid in de bedticks (mattresses). De Yankees stayed around two or three days and would pull de hands out of dere beds by dey toes.

"But I really seed a ha'nt one time. I knowed it was. De was one old man been havin' de toothache all de time; he used to keep he jaw tied up. I was gwine over to see him day time. Well, 'fore I got dere I seen what look like him comin'. When I got nearer he turned to a man riding a mule and wearing a big hat. Den, 'fore he got to de house he was plum gone. Dat's how I knowed it was a ha'nt."