

George Dillard

Interview with George Dillard

—*Alice L. Barton*

I LOVED TO PICK DAT BOX

George Dillard, born in Richmond, Va., in 1852, now idles about his little home at Eutaw and recalls days when he was a slave. The memories bring smiles to his wrinkled, black face.

"Honey, dar was a dance every Sattidy night," he chuckled, "an' all de niggers nigh 'bout broke dey legs adancin'."

"And didn't you dance just as hard as the others, Uncle George?"

"Well, Mistus, I was right spry; but I was at my best in de job of pickin' de banjer. I shorely did love to pick dat box while de other niggers danced away."

George said his family came from Virginia to Mississippi, and that he came to Greene County about 60 years ago. His two masters were a Mr. Dillard and Bob Steele.

George explained that he was a field hand and had to work hard most of the time.

"But us had plenty to eat," he said. "De food was cooked in Ol' Mistus' kitchen an' sont to de fiel' on a big cart. I 'member dat a bell would ring for us to git up, an' we would work as long as it was daylight."

George said that Mr. Steele owned about 200 slaves and that he always had plenty of everything. The plantation, he said, consisted of about 2,000 acres.

"Ol' Massa had a church right on de plantation for us niggers," he continued. "Many's de time I danced late in de night an' den had to git up an' go to church wid de rest. All of us had to go. A white man would preach, but I allus enjoyed de singin' most of all."

George believes earnestly that ghosts exist, but admits they have never bothered him.



George Dillard, Eutaw, Alabama

"Dey is all aroun'," he maintains, "but dey don't follow me. No'm, I's not 'fraid of 'em; but I knows plenty of niggers dat'll run if a ghost so much as brushes by 'em."

The old darkey said that "atter freedom come to de worl'" he continued to live with his master and worked a share crop. He said that Mr. Steele was always fair and good to him; always giving him the best of everything.

George married Celia Shelton, and to them were born twenty-four children.

"It was a bunch of dem," he said, "but I loved ebry one. I had a nice weddin' an' de white folks helped me to git myself a 'oman an' then to git married to her.