

Roxy Pitts

Interview with Roxy Pitts

—*Preston Klein, Opelika, Alabama*

ROXY PITTS RECALLS CHILDHOOD

"I don't know 'zackly whar I was born," said Aunt Roxy Pitts, "but it was summuz 'roun Youngsboro, Alabama, en it was in 1855, fo' de wah started, dat Ole Marster said I was born. How ole dat make me? Eighty-two, gwine on eighty-t'ree? Dat's right, en I be eighty-t'ree year ole dis time nex' year, iffen I lives.

"Yassum, I goes to church putty reg'lar, iffen it don't rain; coz de rain makes de mizry in my hip en lays me up. I belongs to de Baptis' church en was baptize wid Jesus when I was twelve year ole. I'se a foot-washin' Baptis', I is, but dey ain't none of dem kind er Baptis' 'roun' here, en I jes goes wid de udder Baptis' en sets in de amen corner, en iffen I wants to shout, I shouts, en nobody ain't gonner stop me, bless the Lord!

"My fu'st marster was name Sam Jones, but I don't 'member him. My udder marster, de one what I 'members, was name Sam Peg, en us lived clost to a little town name Limekiln. My mammy was part Injun, en Ole marster cudden' keep her home ner workin' needer; she alluz runnin' off an stay out in de woods all night long. When I was a little gal, she runned off ag'in en lef' a teeny little baby, en nebber did come back no mo'. Dey said she gone whar de Injuns is. Dat was atter de wah, en pappy had to raise dat little bitsy baby hisse'f. He tuk it en me to de fiel' whar he workin', en kep' a bottle of sweeten water in he shirt to keep warm to gib de baby when it cry. Den Pappy he mai'ed Aunt Josie en dey had er whole passeler chilluns, en dey was my brudders en sisters.

"'Member 'bout de wah? Sho', I 'members 'bout de wah; but us don't hab no wah whar us was. Ole Marster got kilt in Virginny, dey said, en he didn't nebber come back home, en dem what did come back was all crippled up an hurt. Us didn't see no Yankees 'twel dey come along atter de wah was gone, en dey tuk Ole Mistis' good hosses en lef' some po' ole mules, en dey tuk all us's co'n en didn't lef' us nuddin' to eat in de smokehouse. Dey runned off all de chickens dey cudden ketch, en jes' fo' dey lef', de ole rooster flewed up on de fence 'hine de orchard en crow: 'IS-DE-YANKEES-G-O-N-E-E'? En de guinea settin' on de lot fence, say: 'Not Yit, Not Yit,' en de ole drake what was hid under de house, he say: 'Hush-h-h, Hush-h-h.'

"Us chilluns sho was misch'us. One time, atter a big rain, us foun' two hens swimmin' aroun' in de tater house, en us tuk en helt em under de water twel' dey's done drowned dead, en we tuk 'em to Mammy en she cooked 'em in a pot en shot de kitchen do'. When dem chickens got done, us went under de flo' en riz up a plank en got in de kitchen en stole one ob dem chickens outen de pot en et it smack up. When Mammy foun' dat chicken gone, she tuk er brush broom an wo' us plum out. But us didn't keer; de brush broom didn't hurt nigh lak de chickens taste good." Aunt Roxy nodded her head and rocked back and forth, as if she enjoyed recalling those youthful escapades.

"Yassum, I kin see plenty good enough to sew, cep'n' I can't tread de needle, en I has to keep atter dese triflin' chilluns to he'p me. You see dis quilt I'se piecin! Miss Lucy gwine gib me tree dollars fer it, coz she say it be made right, en dat's de way I makes em. Miss Lucy know she got er good quilt, when I gits t'ru wid it."

"Is yer got enny snuff, Missy? You don't dip snuff! No'me, I didn't tink you did."