

Sara Colquitt

Interview with Sara Colquitt

—*Preston Klein, Opelika, Alabama*

SHE JUST CAN REMEMBER HER HUSBAND'S NAME

Sara Colquitt, who used to till the fields in slavery days, now has a handmaiden of her own. Sara does not know the date of her birth in Richmond, Virginia, but she says it was more than a century ago. (1937). The "girl," whom her daughter has employed to take care of the nearly blind and helpless centenarian, is well past eighty herself, yet she keeps her charge neat and clean and the cabin in which they live tidy. Sara's daughter works in the fields nearby at Opelika, Ala. to keep the family going.

"Mr. Bill Slaughter and Miss Mary Slaughter was our marster and mistess and dey had two chilluns, Marsa Robert and Marsa Brat," Sara

said. "I had four brothers and sisters, Tate, Sam, Jennie, and Tenner. Us lived in log cabins wid dirt floors and dey was built in two long rows. Us beds was nailed to de wall at one end and us used corn shucks and pine straw for mattresses.

"Miss Mary was good to us, but us had to work hard and late. I worked in de fields every day from 'fore daylight to almost plumb dark. I usta take my littlest baby wid me. I had two chilluns, and I'd tie hit up to a tree limb to keep off de ants and bugs whilst I hoed and worked de furrow. All us niggers was fed from de big kitchen and wasn't hongry, but sometimes us would steal more food dan was give us anyhow.



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"I was one of de spinners, too, and had to do six cuts to de reel at de time and do hit at night plenty times. Us clothes was homespun osnaburg, what us would dye, sometimes solid and sometimes checked.

"Sides working de fields and spinning, sometimes I'd ho'p wid de cooking up at de Big House when de real cook was sick or us had a passel of company. Us cooked on a great, big fireplace what had arms hanging out over de coals to hang pots on to bile. Den us had three-legged skilletts what set right over de coals for frying and sech like. Us cooked sho' 'nuff bread in dem days, ash cakes, de best thing you ever et. Dey ain't nothing like dat dese days.

"I was sold oncet before I left Virginia. Den I was brung down to Alabama and sold from de block for \$1,000 to Mr. Sam Rainey, at Camp Hill, Ala. I still worked in de fields, but I would cook for de white folks and hope around de Big House on special 'casions. Our overseer was Mr. Green Ross, and he was a bad one, too. Mean, my goodness! He'd whup you in a minute. He'd put you in de buck, tie your feet and den set out to whup you right.

"He would get us slaves up 'fore day, blowing on his big horn, and us would work 'twell plumb dark. All de little niggers'd get up, too, and go up to de Big House to be fed from wooden bowls. Den dey'd be called ag'in 'fore us come from de fields and put to bed by dark. I useta stop by de spring house to get de milk, it was good cold too, and tote it up to de Big House for dinner.

"I had two chilluns. Dey was named Lou and Eli, and dey was took care of like de rest. Us useta have some good times. Us could have all de fun us wanted on Sa'dday nights, and us sho' had it, cutting monkeyshines and dancing all night long sometimes. Some would pat and sing, 'Keys not arunning, Keys not arunning,' and us sho' did more'n dance, I'm telling you. Sometimes our Mistess would come down early to watch us dance.

"Next to our dances, de most fun was corn-shucking. Marsa would have de corn hauled up to de cribs and piled as a house. Den he would invite de hands 'round to come and ho'p shuck it. Us had two leaders or generals and choose up two sides. Den us see which side would win first and holler and sing. I disremembers the hollers jest now. My mind is sorter missing. Marsa would pass de jug 'round, too. Den dey sho' could work and dat pile'd just vanish.

"Us used de white folks' church in de morning. I j'ined de church den, 'cause I always tried to live right and wid de Lord.

"When de Yankees come through Dadeville, Ala., us heard 'bout hit and Marsa hid his money and lots of his fine things in de colored folks's houses. Dey never found 'em neither.

"Lemme see who I married? I mighty nigh forgot who it was I did marry. Now, I knows. Hit was Prince Hodnett.

"No'm, I don't want no more slavery. I hope dey don't have no more such, 'cause hit was terrible.

"Yes'm, I'd be proud to have my picture took."

So pridefully Sara's chair was dragged out on the porch by her maid, and the "picture was took."

