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C.R. McLean, Supervisor
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Topic: Folkways
Medina County, District #5

JULIA WILLIAMS, ex-slave

Julia Williams, born in Winepark, Chesterfield County near Richmond, Virginia. Her age is estimated close to 100 years. A little more or a little less, it is not known for sure.

Her memory is becoming faded. She could remember her mothers name was Katharine but her father died when she was very small and she remembers not his name.

Julia had three sisters, Charlotte, Rose and Emoline Mack. The last names of the first two, Charlotte and Rose she could not recall.

As her memory is becoming faded, her thoughts wander from one thing to another and her speech is not very plain, the following is what I heard and understood during the interview.

"All de slaves work with neighbors; or like neighbors now-adays. I no work in de fiel, I slave in de house, maid to de mistress."

"After Yankees come, one sister came to Ohio with me."

"The slaves get a whippin if they run away."

"After Yankees come, my ole mother come home and all chillun together. I live with gramma and go home after work each day. Hired out doin maid work. All dis after Yankees come dat I live with gramma."

"Someone yell, 'Yankees are comin',' and de mistress tell me, she say 'You mus learn to be good and hones'. I tole her, 'I am now'."

"No I nevah get no money foh work."

"I allways had good meals and was well taken care of. De Mrs. she nevah let me be sold."

"Sho we had a cook in de kichen and she was a slave too."

"Plantashun slaves had gahdens but not de house slaves. I allus had da bes clothes and bes meals, anyting I want to eat. De Mrs. like me and she like me and she say effen you want sompin ask foh it, anytime you want sompin or haff to have, get it. I didn suffer for enythin befoh dim Yankees come."

"After de Yankees come even de house people, de white people didn get shoes. But I hab some, I save. I have some othah shoes I didn dare go in de house with. Da had wood soles. Oh Lawde how da hurt mah feet. One day I come down stair too fas and slip an fall. Right den I tile de Mrs. I couldn wear dem big heavy shoes and besides da makes mah feet so sore."

"Bof de Mrs. and de Master sickly. An their chillun died. Da live in a big manshun house. Sho we had an overseer on de plantashun. De poor white people da live purty good, all dat I seed. It was a big plantashun. I can't remember how big but I know dat it was sho big. Da had lots an lots of slaves but I doan no zackly how many. Da scattered around de plantashun in diffren settlements. De horn blew every mohnin to wake up de fiel hans. Da gone to fiel long time foh I get up. De fiel hans work from dawn till dark, but evabody had good eats on holidays. No work jus eat and have good time."

"Da whipp dem slaves what run away."

"One day after de war was over and I come to Ohio, a man stop at mah house. I seem him and I know him too but I preten like I didn, so I say, 'I doan want ter buy nothin today' and he says 'Doan you know me?' Den I laugh an say sho I remember the day you wuz goin to whip me, you run affer me and I run to de Mrs. and she wouldn let you whip me. Now you bettah be careful or I get you."

"Sho I saw slaves sole. Da come from all ovah to buy an sell de slaves, chillun to ole men and women."

"De slaves walk and travel with carts and mules."

"De slaves on aukshun block dey went to highes bidder. One colored woman, all de men want her. She sold to de master who was de highes bidder, and den I saw her comin down de road singin 'I done got a home at las!'. She was half crazy. De maste he sole her and den Mrs. buy her back. They lef her work around de house. I used to make her work and make her shine things. She say I make her shine too much, but she haff crazy, an run away."

"No dey didn't help colored folks read and write. Effen dey saw you wif a book dey knock it down on de floor. Dey wouldn't let dem learn."

"De aukshun allus held at Richmond. Plantashun owners come from all states to buy slaves and sell them."

"We had church an had to be dere every single Sunday. We read de Bible. De preacher did de readin. I can't read or write. We sho had good prayer meetins. Show nuf it was a Baptis church. I like any spiritual, all of dem."

"Dey batize all de young men and women, colored folks. Dey sing mos any spiritual, none in paticular. A bell toll foh a funeral. At de baptizen de pracher leads dem into de rivah, way in, den each one he stick dem clear under. I waz gonna be batize and couldn't. Eva time sompin happen an I couldn't. My ole mothah tole me I gotta be but I never did be baptize when Ise young in de south. De othah people befoh me all batized."

"A lot of de slaves come north. Dey run away cause dey didn't want to be slaves, like I didn't like what you do and I get mad, den you get mad an I run away."

"De pattyroller was a man who watched foh de slaves what try to run away. I see dem sneakin in an out dem bushes. When dey fine im de give im a good whippin."

"I nevah seed mush trouble between de whites and blacks when I live dare. Effen dey didn't want you to get married, they wouldn't let you. Dey had to ask de mastah and if he say no he mean it."

"When de Yankees were a comin through dem fiels, dey sho was awful. Dey take everythin and destroy what ever they could not take. De othah house slave bury de valables in de groun so de soldiers couldn't fine em."

"One of de house slaves was allus havin her man comin to see her, so one day affer he lef, when I was makin fun and laughin at her de mistress she say, 'Why you picken on her?' I say, dat man comin here all de time hangin round, why doan he marry her."

"I was nevah lowed to go out an soshiate with de othah slaves much. I was in de house all time."

"I went to prayer meetins every Sunday monin and evenin."

"Sometimes dey could have a good time in de evenin and sometimes day couldn."

"Christmas was a big time for everyone. In the manshun we allus had roast pig and a big feed. I could have anythin I want. New Years was the big aukshun day. All day hollerin on de block. Dey come from all ovah to Richmond to buy and sell de slaves."

"Butchern day sho was a big time. A big long table with de pigs laid out ready to be cut up."

"Lots of big parties an dances in de manshun. I nevah have time foh play. Mrs, she keep me busy and I work when I jus little girl and all mah life."

"Effen any slaves were sick dey come to de house for splies and medsin. De Mrs. and Master had de doctor if things were very bad."

"I'll nevah forget de soldiers comin. An old woman tole me de war done broke up, and I was settin on de porch. De Mrs. she say, 'Julia you ant stayin eneymore'. She tole me if I keep my money and save it she would give me some. An she done gave me a gold breast pin too. She was rich and had lots of money. After the war I wen home to my mother. She was half sick and she work too hard. On de way I met one slave woman who didn know she was even free."

"The Yankees were bad!"

"I didn get married right away. I worked out foh diffren famlies."

"After de war dare was good schools in de south. De free slaves had land effen dey knowed what to do with. I got married in the south to Richar Williams but I didn have no big weddin. I had an old preacher what knowed all bout de Bible, who married me. He was a good preacher. I was de mothah of eight chillun."

"Lincoln? Well I tell you I doan know. I didn have no thought about him but I seed him. I work in de house all de time and didn hear much about people outside."

"I doan believe in ghosts or hants. As foh dancin I enjoy it when I was young."

"I cant read and I thought to myself I thought there was a change comin. I sense that. I think de Lawd he does everythin right. De Lawd open my way. I think all people should be religious and know about de Lawd and his ways."

Her husband came to Wadsworth with the first group that came from Doylestown. The men came first then they sent for their families. Her husband came first them sent for her and the children. They settled in Wadsworth and built small shacks then later as times got better they bought properties.

This year is the 57th Anniversary of the Wadsworth Colored Baptist Church of which Julia Williams was a charter member. She is very close to 100 years old if not that now and lives at 160 Kyle Street, Wadsworth, Ohio