

Susie Johnson—Ex-slave

Susie was only four years old when The War Between the States began, but recalls a great deal about the old days, and remembers a great deal that her mother told her. Susie's parents were Jim and Dinah Freeman who belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Freeman.

The Freemans lived on a large plantation near The Rock, Georgia, and had so many slaves "they could not be counted".

The old Freeman home is still standing, but is occupied now by negroes and is in a bad state of repair.

Susie is around seventy-five or seventy-seven years old, as nearly as she can "figger it out". A good many years ago when she first came over here from Upson County, she found "Mr. Frank Freeman, her young marster, away back yonder", and he told her lots and lots about her mother and father and gave her her correct age—July 4th.

Susie says that Mr. and Mrs. Freeman were "sho" good to their slaves but they surely did control them. For instance, if any of them had the stomach ache "Ole Miss" would make them take some "Jerusalem Oak tea" and if they had a bad cold it was "hoar hound tea". If you did not take the medicine "Ole Miss" would reach up and get the leather "strop" and (Susie chuckled) "then you'd take it".

When asked if Mr. Freeman whipped the slaves very much, Susie said he did not and that if he had been a mean master that[Pg 344] "all the niggers wouldn't a wanted to stay on with him after freedom".

When asked about the negro marriage customs of slavery days, Susie stated that her mother said that "she and Jim (Susie's daddy) when they got in love and wanted to marry, jest held each others hands and jumped over the broom and they was married".

"Yes, I believe in lots o' signs", Susie replied on being asked about that. For instance, the "scritch' owl is a sho' sign o' death. And the reason I knows that is cause my papa's death was fo' told by an owl. Papa was took sick like this morning at nine o'clock and about eleven o'clock a little scritch' owl come and set right on the corner of the roof right above the head o' papa's bed and scritch'd and scritch'd—and by two o'clock that day papa was a corpse!"

Susie remembers one day when she and her mother were picking cotton when all of a sudden her mother began to sing "Glory to the Dying Land" and sang so much that

"atter a while she got so happy she couldn't be still and she danced all over Masta's cotton patch and tromped down so much cotton I jest knowed Masta was gwina whup her. Den I laffed at her so hard 'Ole Miss whupped me wid dat strop! Law! Law!"

Susie Johnson—232 East Tinsley Street, Griffin, Georgia
September 4, 1936