

Mississippi Narratives

Prepared by

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ForeWord: Age 76 years, height 5 feet 6 inches, weight 150 lbs., color black and present physical condition fair; financial condition good. Owns an excellent farm that is worked by renters and share croppers. He is different to the average person of his age in that he doesn't believe there is a God and says there will be no hereafter for the dead. His neighbors say a white man, who is an infidel and with whom he has been associated since early childhood has instilled this belief in him. He has a fair knowledge of history as well as most current events.

I was born here in Montgomery county just two and one-half miles from where I live now. I's lived here in de county all my life 'cept 'bout two years of my life I spent trying to find a big Buck.

My papa was Stephen McCinney an' my mamma was Sylvia. My brothers an' sisters was Myles, George, Mack, Alfred, Willis, Mary, Sarah, Emily, Susan, Anselary an me. Dey's all dead 'cept two sisters an' one brother. Sister Susan lives near Duck Hill an' sister Anselary lives near Sweatman. Don't know where my brother is.

Our Marsa was Bill (William) Kent an' a mean old man he was. Mistus name was Ann. I never will forget her cause she called me an another little fellow up once an' bumped our heads together where we didn't have no sense fo' a week. My mammy was down at de spring washin' when ole missus' little girl come got de shop hammer out de shop. My mammy made me an' dis kid take de hammer way from her so she wouldn't loose it an' dats what Missus bumped our heads together 'bout.

Marsa an' missus chillun was July, Tommy, Lizzie, Parthenia, Bird, an' had one mo' baby girl born after de' surrender.

My folks didn't take de name of de Kents when dey was freed, 'cause dem Kents was so bad. My papa took his papa's name. His papa was a white man named Kent who lived in Alabama. My papa married or rather took-up-with my mamma in Alabama. My mamma was a native of Virginia. She was sold from Virginia when she was seven or eight years old an' her an' my papa was sold an' brought to dis country from Alabama.

In slavery days dey was allus whippin' us niggers 'bout stealin'. Marsa jus' didn't give us nuff to eat. Dey said my daddy was de only slave he had who wouldn't steal, he'd go hungry first.

We didn't have no beds to sleep on. My mammy an' daddy had an old scaffold of a bed he mad fo' them to sleep on. My brother's got a scar on his leg now when we was lyin' down on de floo' like pigs sleepin'. I waked up an called my mammy who was at de white folks house cookin' an' told her: Buddie was burnin' up. God! I heard vessels fall an' here she come.

My mammy was a field hand an' cooked. De cookin' fo de white folks was mostly in Mamma's hands 'cause she wouldn't steal. Some o' de colord women was allus gettin' whippins 'bout stealin'.

I recollect seein' one biscuit crust one mornin'. Dey throwed it out to de dogs an' I beat de dog to it. They fed us chillun on pot liquer an' bread in a big tray 'bout like we feed de dogs in now. I has seen de field hands with pones of ash cake in their hands an' sometimes gnawing a bone on de way to de field 'cause dey didn't have time to eat in de kitchen. Dey went to de field befo' daylight an quit work after dark.

I 'member toatin' plows to de shop on my head befo' de war ended. You know I was just a small boy den. My mammy said I was born on March 21, 1861.

Marsa didn't have but 'bout three or four families o' slaves.

When de war was a goin' on a nigger named Jack run way from Marsa. He went an got what dey called de Nigger dogs to catch him but they ain't never seen Jack yet. Dey said he went to de Yankees.

I's heard old Jack heep o' mornins 'fo day when Marsa would be whippin him he'd say: Oh! pray Marsa, Oh! pray Marsa. Oh how he did beg an' plead fo' mercy. My! I can hear dat voice now.

We wasn't lowed to read nothin'. Is heard ole Marsa tell 'em if dey was caught with any books it was a hundred licks. My sisters Mary an' Sarah went with missus to church just fo' her waitin' gals but de rest o' us never did go.

My mammy was with some good folks befo' she was sold in Virginia an' one de girls taught her to read an' write. She didn't have nothin but a little old leather backed Testament to read from--de very worse thing she could o' had.

They had us niggers hid out in de woods an' had de stock hid an everything there cause de Yankees was comin'

through. They didn't even stop at out house---just kept on by.

My folks believed they was free just from current news, just what they heard talked. Ole Marsa come told us we was free soon after de surrender but he whipped every one us from the biggest to de least. He didn't do nothin' wrong if de Bible be true.

My first wife was Bell Spencer an' our chillun was: Sojourner, Lannice, Baron, Barnivillian. One lives in Arkansas an' the others close around here. Some do public work and others farm. My second wife was Meelie Ann Crowder an' we don't have any chillun.

We stayed on with Marsa the year after the war ended an' possibly another. Marsa agreed to give us half what we made after de surrender but if we got half, sho didn't make much. He didn't give us nothin when we left him. We carried everything we had on one wagon load. Didn't have nothin' but a little house plunder. We moved with a widow woman, Betsy Bennett, an' stayed there two years. My daddy bought a 160 acre place in 1870 an he died in 1871; befo' it was paid out. After his death my oldest brother managed it an' in 1878 was about to loose it. I took charge in 1879 an' made a good crop. Soon I bought a place of my own an' have lived close around in this community ever since.

In 1896 I voted for President McKinley an' once I voted in a stock-law election is the only two times I've ever voted.