

Mississippi Narratives
Prepared by
The Federal Writer's Project of
The Works Progress Administration
For the State of Mississippi
Frances Cobb

Yes, I can remember my Ma's name, It was Louisiana Horton. Dat was her second name, case she was married twice, Her old Marster was George Harris of Columbus. She first married Jerry Cleveland - He named hesself this since he got freed. He belonged to Geo. Harris when he was her husband. Dey didn't buy no license, but married out of a book. Dey called it the matrimony in slavery time.

De only place I know dey come from was Green County, Alabama when dey belonged to Elijah Harris. He was killed in a duel and all of his property was taken over by his brother, George, who was the "guardean".

Yes'm I had brothers and Sisters but all dead but me. Dey died since de srender. I was de oldest one.

Geo. Harris had a big plantation out from Columbus that was cared for by a overseer. His name was William Steverson. All us had a good time case Geo. Harris was good to his own, and didn't allow his overseer to be mean to us. I nursed for Steverson a while. I never hit a lick in the field til after de srender. I slept at the house on a pallet. The overseer lived in a log house, daubed. My Ma and Pa lived in a pretty good house too, down in de quarters.

De white folks had a big garden for de hands and a cook. Even had a cook for us chillerns what was in the quarter.

Our clothes were made of ozenburg. We wore it all the time, summer and winter. You know de stuff what cotton sacks are made out of.

When de war was on dey was wearing dat stuff. Long towards de last my ma was spinning as many cuts a day. Dar was a reel that the hanks of thread were reeled on. After dey reeled it, dey put in the loom. My dady could make shoes for us chillerns, and Mas Geo. bought trogans for the grown folks.

Yes m Mars Geo Harris was good to us, He would come to the quarter every week and bring us chillern candy and cake. You know he lived in Columbus, His children were Cid, Sam, and James, the boys. Jest one girl, Lula, and she married Dr. Lipscomb, what stayed in Columbus. I reckon dey did work hard, case dey made a sight of cotton and corn "gubbers" potatoes and pumpkins. Jerry, my daddy was a field hand.

Nom, not on dat plantation was any slave punished. I heard it said, dat some was.

Aint teached me none. We didn't go to no church until July come, when we'd have a bit meeting on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and dar would be plenty to eat. Preacher Howard, a white man would preach for us. I had to like him case he hadn't done nothing to me. I didn't pay much tention, and was chillern and didn't take it in much. I likes to hear des old spiritual hymns sung now. One I liked de best was sung when I was converted. "You can't live in Sin and feel the Saviors Love". I was baptized in a pool at Pilgrims Rest in Noxubee County. Dar was plenty of shoutin and singing.

My Ma and Pa didn't do any work at night in slaverytime.

I never knowed of no trouble betwin whites and blacks, cept the patarollers.

If dey caught hands off de place dey would whip em. Dey couldn't go no where without a pass.

De chillern didn't go no where cept to the Chandler place, joining de Harris place.

Yes man, we sho did work on Saturday afternoons. Sometimes on Saturday nights dar would be quarter meetings where dey would sing and pray.

I ain't been to no cornshucking but I seen em down on de place on moon shining nights. De would holler and sing. Seen cotton picking on moonlight nights too. Nearly every thing done left me, now.

Yes, I heard about hants, but I ain't seen but one. My Mother came back once when she had been dead a year. I was laying across de bed one day at twelve o'clock, and she come stood by me and said, "Don't let my son-in-law, Sam have one thing of mine." You know he was mean as a dog to her.

Dey treated the slaves good when sick. De Dr. would come. Dey give up epicach and oil, as I members.

Seen plenty charms, but it done lef me, why dey wore em.

I was in de quarter when de sojers come. I remembers we was hid out in de bottoms to keep de "blue coats" from stealing us. Dey hide de meat too. Dey didn't hide me case I was nursing in de house.

When de srender come in May we jest stayed the year out til Christmas. Then we moved into Lowndes County. De called demselves getting 1/3 or 1/4 of de crop. We moved on Joe Sykes place, where we worked for part of crop. Dats de first year I worked in field in my life.

Yes, I kin member de Ku Klux riders. De come to our house one night since I married. I thought I'd shoot em, if de broke in. My husband and a po white man had had some trouble. Old Joe Holbert a po white man shot at my husband down on de Nashville road in Noxubee County.

Dey sent my husband to de pen for 12 months. Judge Orr said he didn't have no business dar, but dey couldn't get anoder hearing. We moved out of dat house into de white folks house (used to be) and we didn't hear no more of Ku Klux.

De Sykes' were allright folks.

I married Turner Cobb on de Billups place in Noxubee County. De preacher was named Beve Sharp. I has only had one chile, dat gal in dere ironing, and she ain't had but one.

I don't know nuffin about Abraham Lincoln nor Jefferson Davis either. I jis heard talk about Booker T. Washington.

I'd ratter live des days, I don't know nuffin about dem days much.

I jined de church case I had religion. The Lord had converted my soul. Dat was a happy time wid one. I felt like I was made over. I ain't felt dat good no more.

Yes, Mam, everybody ought to be religious for dey will have a resting place. Dem what has heart felt religion. Of course dey will. If I didn't have it I'd try to get it now.

Old as I is, who's taking care of me? De good Lord! Now he tole you to come and give me dis money dis morning and I wasn't thinking about it.

Interviewer's note: She lives with her only daughter in a comfortable cabin, which is unusually clean. The Cabin is owned by white people, for whom they wash and iron. They have been in this same cabin for thirty years. The daughter is thrifty and well thought of. She grows beautiful flowers and has a garden and chickens