

Govan Littlejohn

I

Interview with Govan Littlejohn

Park Ave. and Liberty St., Spartanburg, S.C.

—Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C.

"Capt. Sam Littlejohn whipped Miss Sallie H.'s slave. His name was Ambus H. Cap' tied him to a tree. Never had no corn-shuckings, us shucked de corn quick as us hauled it from de field.

"My marse kilt as many as twenty hogs every time he butchered, which be about fo' times every winter. Marse Richard Littlejohn never married. He lived wid his mother and seven brothers.

"Marse was one good man and he love his darkies. He never had no overseer, because he had only 'bout 80 slaves as I remembers. I de onliest chile dat my ma had and I be 88 if I live to see dis coming December. My ma teach me to fight nothing in dis world but de devil.

"My father was Peter Littlejohn. Lawyer Tommie Dawkins was his marster. I never was sold. I married, but never had no chilluns. My old lady been gone over de river dese many years, so many dat I cannot recall how many. Yes Sir, I used to light my ma's pipe and wear home-made clothes. Ole lady Rhoda was de seamstress. She died not long atter we was liberated.

"I lives in de Woods Funeral Home which is on de corner of Park Ave. and Liberty Street. Once I befriend a man in distress. He now own interest in de undertaking 'stablishment and dat is why I has a room dar in my old age."

II

Interview with Govan Littlejohn

387 S. Liberty St., Spartanburg, S.C.

—F.S. DuPre, Spartanburg, S.C.

Govan Littlejohn, of Spartanburg, told the writer he was 87 years old and that he remembered slavery times. He said he was born on the farm of Dicky Littlejohn, located near Grindal Shoals. He said Richard Littlejohn owned a mill on Pacolet River, though his brother, Jim Littlejohn, owned the land. This was a grist mill. Govan Littlejohn's father was a colored man from another farm and his name was Hawkins, but he took the name of Littlejohn. He remembers the Yankee Soldiers passing in the public road, but

they did not bother any one there; didn't take or steal anything, and just passed on quietly. He says his master did not know how to whip anybody, though he remembers him catching hold of him one day and switching him with a small twig, saying "You little rascal, you." His master whipped some of the grown negroes but not hard enough to hurt them, though once or twice he saw a grown negro with bare back feel the switch. "But he did not know how to whip anybody."

"Yes, I been conjured," he said. "You see that left foot? Well, once when I was a young 'buck', I was setting up to a gal and there was another fellow setting up to her, too. I held a little bit the upper hand with the gal. But when my left foot began to swell up and pain me, I had to go to bed. I stayed there three months. Dr. Nott came to see me and treated me with corn poultices, but they would dry up and fall off and I didn't get any better. He lanced my foot three times, but nothing but blood would come. One day a herb doctor came to see me and said he could cure my foot. He took corn meal poultices, rhubarb roots and some other things, and it wasn't long before my foot got well. About that time, my mother found the 'conjunction' right in the front yard at the door-steps. I must have stepped over it, or got my foot caught in it some way. The 'conjunction' was, pins, feathers and something else all tied up in a bag. My mother heard that if it was put in running water, the conjurer would leave the country. So pretty soon after she put the stuff in running water, that fellow left the country. He got his arm caught in a cotton gin not long after he left, and got it chewed off right to his shoulder.

"Vegetables should be planted during the dark of the moon. One day, the man I was working for told me he wanted his Irish potatoes planted. I told him that wasn't the time to plant potatoes. He told me to plant some in one particular place that day and call them his potatoes, then when I thought the time was right, to plant the rest in another place. His potatoes came up and made prettier vines than mine, had pretty blooms on them and the vines grew very high. He ragged me about how fine his potatoes were. He told me to gather the potatoes under my vines for the house, but not to disturb his potatoes. For several days, the family ate potatoes from my vines, then I gathered up the potatoes left. I got five or six wheelbarrows full. I then dug his potatoes and got a little more than one wheelbarrow full. He told me to plant the garden when I thought the time was right, and not to say anything to him about when and what to plant. I always had plenty of vegetables for his family."