

Martha Kelly

Interview with Martha Kelly (age between 70 and 75)

Marion, S.C.

—*Annie Ruth Davis*

"All I can tell you, I come here de second year of freedom. Cose I had a lot of trouble en I can' hardly imagine how long it be dat I de age I is. My mother, she know my age good, but she been dead for de years come en gone from here. Ain' much I can remember to tell you 'cause I was small den. No, my mammy didn' tell we chillun nothin. Didn' have no time to tell we chillun nothin. She had to go out en work in de field in de day en she would be tired when night come.

"My mammy white people was name Charlie Law en his family en dey lived in Britton's Neck till dey come up here to Marion. We lived in a rice country down in dat place call Britton's Neck. Ain' you hear talk of it? My mammy en her chillun stayed right dere on old man Law's place till long time after dey tell dem dey was free to leave dere. Stayed to de nigger quarter in my mammy house 'cause we was learn to be field hands.—Harold, I told you hold off me 'cause I don' feel like you layin on me dis mornin.— (Harold—small grandson). Didn' know 'bout nothin much to eat in dat day en time, but bread en meat en rice en all such as dat. Oh, de peoples in dat country made plenty rice. Dey would plant it on dis here black lookin dirt en when dey would see dat it was right ripe, dey would cut it en thrash it out. Den dey would have one of dem pestle en mortar to beat it wid. My blessed, child, dat been turn out de nicest kind of rice. No, mam, don' see no such rice dese days dat been eat like dat rice eat.

"I recollects I used to be right much of a hand to pull fodder en pick cotton en all such like dat 'cause all my work was in de field mostly till I got to de place dat I couldn' work no longer. You see, when I was married, I moved out dere on Dr. Miles' place over next Pee Dee en 'bout all my days was spent in de country. Lived out dere on Dr. Miles' place till I come here to town to live 'bout seven or eight years ago. You is hear talk of Dr. Miles, ain' you? I used to do what you might say a right good size washin, but I ain' able to get 'bout to do nothin dese days much. Just washes out a piece or two like a apron every now en den.

"Some of de peoples used to sing dere, but I wouldn' never bear much along dat line. Didn' have no voice much to sing. Is you got dis one?

Lord, I wonder,

Lord, I wonder,

Lord, I wonder,

(Repeat 3 Times)

When de lighthouse

Gwine shine on me.

"Dat all dere be to dat one. I don' know whe' if I could remember dat other one or no. Seem like it go somethin like dis:

Oh, didn' it rain?

It rain 40 days,

En it rain 40 nights,

It ain' never stop a droppin yet,

En I heard de angel in de mornin sing,

Oh, didn' it rain?

But down by de graveyard,

Me en my Lord gwine stand en talk.

Up on de mountain fire en smoke,

I wouldn' be so busy 'bout de fire en smoke.

I heard de angel in de mornin sing,

Oh, didn' it rain?

Oh, didn' it rain?

It rain 40 days,

En it rain 40 nights,

Widout still a droppin yet,

I heard de voice of de angel in de mornin sing,

Oh, didn' it rain?

Oh, didn' it rain?

Down by de graveyard,
Me en my Lord gwine stand en talk.
Chillun, my good Lord,
I heard de voice of de moanin angel,
Oh, didn' it rain?

Oh, didn' it rain?
It rain 40 days,
En it rain 40 nights,
Widout still a droppin yet,
En I heard de voice of de angel in de mornin,
Oh, didn' it rain?

"Well, dere ain' been so much dat I remember dat happen when I come along but what been happen in a way dis day en time. Cose dere been a difference 'cause de people ain' used to live fast like dey do dese days. Dere been de shake dat come here in '86 dat I ain' never see de like since en ain' want to see nothin like dat no more neither. I remember it come here on a night en when I get in bed dat night, I ain' been expectin nothin had been de matter. Den dere somethin been rouse me up en all de dishes was a rattlin'. When I get up en go out in de yard, de house en all de elements was a rockin'. Yes, mam, I was scared. Didn' know what was de matter. Thought it was de Judgment comin when I wake up en hear all de people round 'bout dere screamin en a hollerin, Judgment! Oh, Judgment! Say dem what ain' right better get right. I tell de people dat dere won' no need to run to de church den 'cause we was all gwine be destroyed dere together. Child, I give myself up den en I get just as happy as I could be.

"Oh, dey had slavery time doctors to tend de people when dey was sick in dat day en time. Yes, mam, had dey plantation doctor right dere dat would go from one plantation to de other en doctor dem what was ailin. De doctor would come dere to my white folks plantation en tell my grandmother what to feed dem on en she would give dem de remedy dey tell her. Dey would use all kind of different herbs in dat day en time dat dey would get out de old fields en de woods for dey cures. Honey, dey was good too en dey good yet. I couldn' tell you half de herbs dey use, but I recollects dere was boneset dat was good for fever, sage for de baby, pennyroyal dat was good for girls dat catch cold, mint for sick stomach, catnip to hope a cold, horehound to strike a fever en dat 'bout all I recollect. No, mam, I can' remember half de herbs dere was in de field, but I know we got some of dat sage growin dere in de garden now.

"I hear talk of dem Yankees plenty times, but I don' know much to speak 'bout dem. Couldn' tell de first word 'bout dem. I dis kind of person, I don' pay much mind to nothin like dat. Dey was white people, I think.

"Seems like it was better livin long time ago den dere be now. Seems like times so tight dese days. Reckon it 'cause I ain' able to work, but dey tell me de people don' get nothin much to speak 'bout for dey work dis day en time. Seems like I got along good when I was able to whip round en 'bout.

"I hear de people say dere such a thing as ghost, but I don' know en I ain' de kind to speak 'bout de devil business. I hear talk dey could be walkin right along wid you en dere some people could see dem en den dere others could look wid all de eyes dey got en couldn' see dem. No, I ain' never see dem. I has seen people wear one of dese dime round dey ankle, but I never didn' ax dem nothin 'bout what dey wear it for 'cause some people is curious en don' like for you to be axin dem 'bout things. I did always keep out of fuss en I still keepin out it. Never did bother none wid it. When I see anybody fussin, I shuns dem. My mammy didn' raise me to do dat.