

Tom Johnson

Interview with Tom Johnson (83)

Newberry, S.C.

—*G. Leland Summer, Newberry, S.C.*

"I was born on the Gilliam place, I reckon about 1854. My father died when I was little; I don't remember him. My mother was Lucy Gilliam who belonged to Reuben Gilliam. Reuben Gilliam was a big farmer and slave-owner. He was good to de nigger chaps but whipped de big ones every day or two. I was too little to learn to read and write, but dey never learned any slaved to do dat. Dey never paid us any money wages, just give us eats and a place to sleep, and a little clothes. I worked in de field when I got bigger. Never had school in de place, and never had a church, either.

"Us children played lots of games, like roly-hole. There are two holes and you try to roll a ball in one hole. The white folks had corn-shuckings, lots of them, as they raised lots of corn on de farms. Dey had cotton pickings, too, and carding and spinning bees, quilting bees. I used to feed de shippers when women folks spin de yarn, when I was a small boy. We raised plenty corn, cotton, and other things. We had a big garden, too.

"When freedom come all of us left and went off. I went back to get something to eat. I married Mattie Kinard who belonged to old Maj. John Kinard. We had nine children.

"I 'member de red shirts when dey come through our place. I like it better now dan in slavery times.