

**Mississippi Narratives**  
**Prepared by**  
**The Federal Writer's Project of**  
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**Turner Jacobs age 82 years**

"I was born on July de nineth, eighteen hundered and fifty five. My paw and maw was name Jacob and Rebecca Ward. You say why was I called Turner Jacobs instead of Turner Ward? Well, I'll tell you, it was lak dis, de marster allus called me dat air Jacob's boy and I reckon de name jest stuck. I was raised up 'bout a mile and a half east of Gibson, dat was whar I was born, too. Doctor Amos Ward was our marster and he brung my folks up here from Georgia. De doc, he woulden low us to call him marster case hs said woan nobody nobody else's real marster cepten the Lawd in Haben, he lived in Aberdeen wid de Mistress and dey chillen. We all stayed out at de quarters and had a overseer to see dat everybody kept busy. De doc and Miss Annie and Miss Mary, dat was dey gal, dey would all come out to see how us was makin' out. Cos, I woan nothin' but a little fellow den but I members it jest lak it was yestiddy."

"Dey was fo' boys and one gal in our fam'ly and we allus wukked hard, even as chillen. We followed right along wid de old folks and hepped hoe and chop. We never minded dat tho' case when we'd get home dere would allus be somethin' good to eat. Why, Lawzee, we had a field full of greens as big as dat field in front of us right now. And we killed plenty of hogs every year too, cose de white folks would take most of de hams in ter town but dey allus left a few in case of sickness ter make ham broth. When anybody got sick de doc would come and 'scribe for them and if dey was real sick dere was a woman what come to wait on 'em."

Turner paused in his conversation to get up and go into the house after a piece of cane to complete the chair bottom which he was working on while he remembered the days of his youth. A tall stout body even today gives hint that in his better years he could have boasted of a perfectly developed physique. His back and side were injured in an automobile accident a few years ago and since that time he has walked with a slight limp. One would say that he is about 6 feet tall and weighs about 165 pounds. As he came back to the porch he resumed his story:

"Miss Mary was de doc's oldest gal and she useter be powerful good to us. She'd come out to de quarters and see 'bout de chillen and she'd allus bring us somethin', mo' lakly a basket of apples dat she'd roll on de ground for us to catch. She was one pusson dat I couldn't help but shed tears over when she died."

"De overseer was a right mean man. He really meant business too, and whipped niggers comin' and goin'. I member dem tellin' bout him whippin' my maw when she was in a weakly condition. Dey was diggin' a canal thru de quarters and all de niggers was a wukin'. My maw woan throwin' her dirt as high as de rest and de overseer knock her down and start lashin' her wid de whip. Hit made my paw so mad dat he started after him wid de shovel and I reckon he'd killed him but some of de other darkies stop him. Dey knew what would happen if a nigger jump on a white man. Paw got scared den case de overseer had seen him so he runned off to town and told Miss Annie, de doc woan at home. She got in her surrey and come out to de plantation in a hurry and ast de overseer if what my paw had told her was de truf. When he said it was she tol' him to pack his things and leave. Us chillen sorter hated dat, case his wife, Miss Ca'line was allus makin' us molasses cakes and we played wid dey chillen. Sides, we didden know nothin' bout de whippin'."

"We had big church meetin's den, fact was dat bout all de fun we had in dem days, we didden have no dances nor nothin' lak dat cept on de sly. We'd have all day meetin's and den stay till late at night. Our best meetin' place was in de old church dat de white folks useter meet in. We allus used it after dey had built dey new one. We had preachin' and den singin' and we'd have to be some careful at night for if we'd sing loud de paterollers would come and get us. If a nigger on one plantation would slip off to another one and dey cotch him, dey would whip him and give him a note to his marster and send him home. Everybody was sho' scared of dem."

"De doc would allus let us have plenty of good stuff to eat when dere was a funeral or a weddin', specially a funeral. We'd kill a shoat, a lamb, a heifer, and one of every kind of animal or fowl on de place. Folks would come from miles 'round. I members one song dey would allus sing at de funerals it went lak dis:

"Dark was de night and col' was de ground,

On which de Lawd was laid.

Infinick day excludes de night,

And pleasures banishes away."

"At christmas Miss Mary and de other chillens of Miss Annie and de doc, dey had six chillen, would come out and bring us presents. Dey never did forget. They'd bring us chillen dey old balls and dolls and mostly apples and sugar candy. Dey'd give de old folks somethin' too. Most lakly some kinda clothes."

"De doc told de old folks dat he was gwineter send us all to de Delta to make him a lot of money farmin' down dere, but de war broke out 'fore he had a chance to do dat."

"When de war broke out I member one day de Federate soldeirs passed by de quarters, and dey was a whole day a passin'. Dey would stop and catch our turkeys and pigs and chickens and kill em and hang 'em on dey backs, but when de quartermasters saw dem he whipped dem jest lak de overseer useter whip de niggers. Dat was de only white mens I ever saw whipped. I heard de fust shot and de last one dat was fired at Egypt. I members de last one 'specially. We was up on a high scaffold at de gin lookin' down whar dey was fightin' way off. Paw called us and told us to get down dem Yankees mought think us was spies. We jumped down and bout dat time a shot hit whar I had been and knocked a piece off de top of de scaffold. We was some scared den but after dat we didden hear no more shots, and one day soon de Yankees come thru and tole us we's free. I didden care much tho' cause dey never had whupped me and I was jest a happy kid. I'm glad now tho' case I'se a Christian and it ain't in de good book for us to be slaves."

"Abraham Lincoln? Why we all thought he was a young Christ come to save us, case he promise every nigger forty acres and a mule. We never did get dat mule or dose forty acres either, cepten by hard work but we all lakked him and thought he was a great man."

"We stayed on wid de doc and his family but a year later our paw died and den after dat our maw died too, she jest grieve herself to death. Dey was still good to us at de place but we cided to leave and try somewheres else. We went to Loohatten and worked for Doc Tindall. We made \$3.00 a month and got two suits of clothes, two pairs of shoes, and our food for a years' wages. We did right well on that. But we came back to de old doc's after a year."

"I married Florence Holliday in 1876 and we lived together for 43 years til she died. We got three boys livin'. They's all up north and I doan guess I is heard from them in ten years."

"After de war was over I went to school for 'bout four years and den started teachin'. I taugt de fust grade for twelve sessions and made \$40.00 a month. We lived good den. I got runned over bout four years ago but fore dat time I farmed. I can't do much now tho case I ain't strong and I has dizzy spells. I

get's by tho what with de 'leif and what I makes bottomin' chairs and makin' baskets. My memory ain't so good since I got run over either. I reckon fore then I could have wrote a book on de histry of slavery times case I membered a lot of things folks had told me."

"Miss Mary was allus specially fond of me and until de day she died she membered my birthday and sont me a box. She'd allus put in a 'lasses cake 'case she knowed dat was my fav'rite. De last one she sont, she wrote me a letter sayin', "Turner, dis de last cake I can bake for you, I'se afeared." And sho nuff 'fore de year was out dey brung her body back home to bury. I went to de funeral and I cried mo' dan when my own maw died. Dat sho was one mo' good white woman dat looked after her niggers, and I sho loved her."

Interviewer's note:

Turner Jacobs, 82 years old, is about 6 feet tall and weighs near 165 pounds. His carriage gives appearance that he was once very erect. During the last few years, however, since an accident in which his side and back were injured, he has been compelled to walk with a slight limp. He is of a chocolate brown color and has nappy gray hair. In his prime he must have been an example of bodily perfection, for even in his old age the perfect symmetry of a well developed physique is in evidence.

Interviewer: Unknown

Transcribed by Ann Allen Geoghegan