

## Victoria Perry

### Interview with Victoria Perry

167 Golding St., Spartanburg, S.C.

—*F.S. DuPre, Spartanburg, S.C.*

Victoria Perry, who lives in Spartanburg, says that she was just a small child when slavery times were "in vogue," being eight years old when the "negroes were set free in 1865." Her mother, she said, was Rosanna Kelly, and had lived in Virginia before she was bought by Bert Mabin, who owned a farm near Newberry. She says that she was often awakened at night by her mother who would be crying and praying. When she would ask her why she was crying, her mother would tell her that her back was sore from the beating that her master had given her that day. She would often be told by her mother: "Some day we are going to be free; the Good Lord won't let this thing go on all the time." Victoria said she was as scared of her master as she was of a mad dog. She said her master used to tie her mother to a post, strip the clothes from her back, and whip her until the blood came. She said that her mother's clothes would stick to her back after she had been whipped because she "bleed" so much. She said that she wanted to cry while her mother was being whipped, but that she was afraid that she would get whipped if she cried.

"Whenever my master got mad at any of the niggers on the place, he would whip them all. He would tie them to a post or to a tree, strip off their clothes to the waist, and whip them till he got tired. He was a mean master, and I was scared of him. I got out of his sight when he came along.

"My father was a white man, one of the overseers on the farm. I don't know anything about him or who he was. I never saw him that I knowed of. But the way Bert Mabin beat my mother was cruel.

"One day a Yankee come by the house and told my master to get all the colored people together; that a certain Yankee general would come by and would tell them that they were free. So one day the niggers gathered together at the house, and the Yankee general was there with some soldiers. They formed a circle around the niggers and the general stood in the middle and told us all we were free. My mother shouted, 'The Lord be praised.' There was a general rejoicing among the niggers and then we backed away and went home. My mother told me she knew the Lord would answer her prayers to set her free.

"I went hungry many days, even when I was a slave. Sometimes I would have to pick up discarded corn on the cob, wipe the dirt off and eat it. Sometimes during slavery, though, we had plenty to eat, but my master would give us just anything to eat. He didn't care what we got to eat.

"After we were set free, I went with my mother to the Gist plantation down in Union. My mother always wanted to go back to her home at Bradford, Virginia, but she had no way to go back except to walk. Work was mighty scarce after slavery was over, and we had to pick up just what we could get. My mother got a job on the Gist plantation, and somehow I got up here to Spartanburg.

"I married Tom Perry, and I have been here ever since, although he is dead now. He was a brick-mason.

"I sure was scared of my master, he treated us niggers just like we was dogs. He had all our ages in a big Bible at the house, but I never went there to see my age. My mother told me always to say I was eight years old when I was set free. I am eighty now, according to that.