

Emma Jones

Interview with Emma Jones

—*Mrs. Preston Klein, Opelika*

EMMA TELLS HOW TO MAKE THEM "TEETHE EASY"

Emma Jones, eighty-three years old, was born in the Chattahoochee Valley between West Point and Columbus Georgia. She is very alert though quite deaf.

"White folks," she began, "I belonged to Marse Wiley Jones and his wife, Mistis Melba.

"I lived in a little two-room log cabin with high tester beds and mattresses filled with cawn shucks. Our food den was away better dan de stuff we eats today. It was cooked on a fireplace made outen rocks wid big hooks fastened into de side to swing de pots aroun' on. Us cooked hoe-cakes on a three-legged skillet dat sot ober hot coals an' us had a big oven for to bake meat an' cawn bread in. Dere ain't nothin' lak it nowadays, no'm.

"Ole Massa had a big garden an' we useta git de vega 'bles we et f'um his garden. De folks was plenty good to us. Sometimes de mens would hunt 'possums an' rabbits an' wild turkeys. We sho' loved dem 'possums smothered in 'taters.

"An' talkin' 'bout medicines. Let me tell you a sho' 'nough cure for a baby dat's havin' a hard time teethin'. Jus' putt a string of coppers roun' he neck an' he won't have no trouble at all. Us useta do dat to de little white chilluns an' de black uns too; 'specially in hot weather when dey jus' seem to have de misery.

"Atter us got to be big gals, us wo' cotton dresses an' drawses in hot weather, an' when it git col' we had to wear long drawses an' homespun wool dresses an' home-knitted socks and shoes dat de cobbler made in his shop. You know, white folks, we useta make near 'bout eve'ything dat wes needed to run a body raght on our plantation. Us had eve'ything. On Sunday us wo' gingham an' calico dresses an' I ma'ied in a Swiss dress.

"I worked as a house gal an' when Miss Sarah ma'ied I went with her to nuss her chilluns. Besides Miss Sarah dere was Mista Billy, Mista Crick, Miss Lucy and Miss Emma. Dey had two uncles an' a Aunt of deres lived dere too.

"We had a happy fambly. At night some of de house niggers would gather 'roun' de fire, an' mistis would read us de scriptures, an' de white chilluns git tired an' slip out de do' but us little niggers couldn't 'ford to do dat; us hadda stay dere whether us liked it or not. Sometimes de massa let de niggers dance an' frolic on Saturday nights, but we warn't 'lowed to go offen de plantation, none ceptin' de ones dat had a wife or husban' on anudder plantation; den dey could only stay for a short time. Sometimes us could go off to church, an' I remembers a babtizin' in de creek. Some of dem niggers 'most got demselves drowned. Dey warn't used to so much water an' dey would come up outen de creek a spittin' an' a-

coughin' lak de debil had a holt of 'em. Dere was so much shoutin' I 'spose ever'body fo' ten miles aroun' could hear dem niggers a-carrin' on in de creek.

"Durin' de war, my mammy helped spin cotton for de soldiers' clothes, an' when de Yankees come through, us hid all de valuables in de woods. Us had to feed dem an' dere hosses too. Dey et up near 'bout everything we had on de place.

"Dere warn't no schools in dem days for us colored folks. Us learned f'um de scriptures, an' by listenin' to de white folks talk."