

Gus Askew

Interview with Gus Askew

—*Gertha Couric*

"Dat was one time when de ban' was playin' and flags was flyin' dat us lil' niggers didn't get no joy outen it." Gus Askew smiled at the thought of the occasion as he sat on the sunny steps of his comfortable house in Eufaula. Gus was telling about the investment of Eufaula during the War between the States.

"Gen'l Grierson and his men marched right through town," Gus went on with his story of his boyhood. "Mr. Lincoln done said we was free, but us lil' niggers was too skeered to lissen to any ban' music, even iffen the so'jers had come to set us free. 'Pears like us was allus gittin' in somebody's way in dem days and gittin' skeered of somepin'. But we went on away from the so'jers and had a good time 'mongst ourselves like we always done when there wasn't any cotton pickin'. Cotton pickin' time was when we didn't have any chance to do any playin'.

"After the surrender I didn't have to do any more cotton pickin' and I went blacksmithin' for Joe Sturgis. He was

the first blacksmith in dis here town. I was the second. Now my son done took on de work. They ain't so much sence all dese here automobiles done got so plentiful and might 'nigh ruint de business. But for seventy years I riz wid de sun and went to dat blacksmith shop. I's enjoying a little misery now; so I's takin' my rest."



Gus Askew, Eufaula, Alabama

Gus Askew was born a slave of the Edwards family in Henry County in 1853. He was brought to Eufaula just before the close of the war and stayed on as a blacksmith after he was freed. In his seventy years of hard work he saved enough to buy his home and some property which maintains him and his wife since age and infirmity forced him to turn over the work to his son. He has been married 54 years, numbers his white friends by the hundreds and is held in great respect by his own race