

Martha Bradley

Interview with Martha Bradley

—*Mabel Farrior, Montgomery, Alabama*

IN SLAVERY TIME

Aunt Martha—as she is known to all her "white folks"—claims to be 100 years old. She was a slave to Dr. Lucas of Mt. Meigs neighborhood long before the War between the States. Dr. Lucas is one of the well known Lucas family, with whom General LaFayette spent some time while touring the United States in 1824.

"Our Marster wuz sho good to all his 'niggers'," she said. "Us allus had plenty to eat and plenty to wear, but de days now is hard, if white folks gin you a nickel or dime to git you sumpin' t' eat you has to write everything down in a book before you can git it. I allus worked in the field, had to carry big logs, had strops on my arms and them logs was put in de strop and hauled to a pile where they all was. One morning hit was rainin' ad I didn' wanna go to the field, but de overseer he come and got me and started whooping me. I jumped on him and bit and kicked him 'til he lemme go. I didn't know no better then. I didn't know he was de one to do dat.

"But Marster Lucas gin us big times on Christmas and July. Us 'ud have big dinners and all the lemonade us could drink. The dinner'd be spread out on de ground an' all the niggers would stand roun' and eat all dey wanted. What was lef' us'd take it to our cabins. Nancy Lucas was de cook fer eber' body. Well, she'd sho cook good cake and had plenty of 'em but she wouldn't lak to cut dem cakes often. She keep 'em in a safe. One day I go to dat safe and I seed some and I wanted it so bad till I jes' had to have some. Nancy say to me, 'Martha, did you cut dat cake?' I say, 'No sir! dat knife just flew 'roun by itself and cut dat cake.'

"One day I was workin' in de field and de overseer he come 'roun and saysumpin' to me he had no bizness say. I took my hoe and knocked him plum down. I knowed I'se done sumpin' bad so I run to de bushes. Marster Lucas come and got me and started whoopin' me. I say to Marster Lucas whut dat overseer sez to me and Marster Lucas didn' hit me no more. Marse Lucas was allus good to us and he wouldn' let nobody run over his niggers.

"There was plenty white folks dat was sho bad to de niggers, and specially dem overseers. A nigger whut lived on the plantation jinin' ours shot and killed an overseer; den he run 'way. He come to de river and seed a white man on udder side and say, 'Come and git me.' Well, when dey got him dey found out whut he'd done, and was gwine to burn him 'live. Jedge Clements, the man dat keep law and order, say he

wouldn't burn a dog 'live, so he lef'. But dey sho burn dat nigger 'live for I seed him atter he was burned up.



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"Us'd go to meetin' to de Antioch Church some Sundays. Us'd go to de house and git a pass. When us'd pass by the patterole, us jes' hold up our pass and den us'd go on. Dar was a 'vidin' 'twixt de niggers and de white folks. De white preacher'd preach; den de colored man. Us'd stay at church most all day. When we didn' go to church, us'd git together in the quarters and have preachin' and singin' amongst ourselves.

"In cotton pickin' time us'd stay in de field till way atter dark and us'd pick by candle light and den carry hit and put hit on de scaffold. In de winter time us'd quilt; jes' go from one house to anudder in de quarter. Us'd weave all our ever' day clothes but Marster Lucas'd go to Mobile ever' July and Christmas and git our Sunday clothes, git us dresses and shoes and we'd sho be proud of 'em.

"In slavery time dey doctored de sick folks dif'funt frum what dey does now. I seed a man so sick dey had to put medicine down his tho'at lak he was a horse. Dat man got well and sho lived to turn a key in de jail. Ef it was in dese days dat man would be cay'd to de hospital and cut open lak a hawg.

"Dere was a slave whut lived in Macon county. He run 'way and when he was catched dey dug a hole in de ground and put him crost it and beat him nigh to death.