

SALENA TASWELL:

Salena Taswell, 364 NW 8th St. Miami, Florida, is one of the oldest ex-slave women in Miami. Like most ex-slaves she is very courteous; she will talk about the "old times", if she has once gained confidence in you, but her answers will be so laconic that two or three visits are necessary in order for an interviewer to gain tangible information without appearing too proddish.

With short, measured step, bent form, unsteady head, wearing a beaming smile, Salena takes the floor.

"Ole Dr. Jameson, he wuz my Massy. He had a plantation three mile from Perry, Georgia. I can 'member whole lots about working for them. Y' see I was growned up when peace came.

"My mother used to be a seamstress and sewed with her fingers all the time. She made the finest kind of stitches while I worked around de table or did any other kind of house work.

"I knowed de time when Ab'ram Linkum come to de plantation. He come through there on the train and stopped over night oncet. He was known by Dr. Jameson and he came to Perry to see about the food for the soldiers.

"We all had part in intertainin' him. Some shined his shoes, some cooked for him, an' I waited on de table, I can't forget that. We had chicken hash and batter cakes and dried venison that day. You be sure we knowed he was our friend and we catched what he had t' say. Now, he said this: (I never forget that 'slong as I live) 'If they free de people, I'll bring you back into the Union' (To Dr. Jameson) 'If you don't free your slaves, I'll "whip" you back into the Union. Before I'd allow my wife an' children to be sold as slaves, I'll wade in blood and water up to my neck'.

"Now he said all that, if my mother and father were living, they'd tell y' the same thing. That's what Linkum said.

"He came through after Freedom and went to the 'Sheds' first. I couldn't 'magine what was going on, but they came runnin' to tell me and what a time we had.

"Linkum went to the smoke house and opened the door and said 'Help yourselves; take what you need; cook yourselves a good meall and we sho' had a celebration!'"

"The Dr. didn't care; he was lib'ral. After Freedom, when any of us got married he'd give us money and send a servant along for us. Sometimes even he'd carry us himself to our new home."