

## **SLAVE NARRATIVES (PART 2)**

### **OVERSEER AND SLAVE DRIVER (SEE: "HARSH WHIPPINGS, TORTURE, ETC.")**

Field workers were managed by a white overseer and/or a trusted black "driver," either of whom could be cruel to the workers. Most seemed to be hated by the slaves they punished.

\*\* To see that everyone continued working an overseer rode over the plantation keeping check on the workers. If any person was caught resting he was given a sound whipping. . . .

The whipping was done by a "Nigger Driver," who followed the overseer around with a bull whip especially for this purpose.

– Charlie Pye, ex-slave from Columbus, Georgia (GA3, p.105)

Dem po' white trash overseers an' agents. Dey was mean; dey was meaner dan bulldogs. – James Lucus, ex-slave from Wilkinson County, Mississippi (became Jefferson Davis' slave before the war) (MS, p.93)

Lots of overseers was mean. Sometimes dey'd whip a nigger wid a leather strap 'bout a foot wide and long as your arm and wid a wooden handle at de end. – William M. Adams, ex-slave from Hollis Springs, Mississippi (TX1, p.16)

## **SLAVE WORK**

The general experience of slaves was that they were considerably overworked. Most of the following entries pertain to field workers. In many cases house slaves, who were sometimes resented by field slaves, were better treated than the others. House slaves cooked, served meals, cleaned, cared for children, spun thread for weaving, and so on. Some slave children were assigned to fan their masters or use a fan to blow flies away from the masters' food. (References: My reading of the narratives; Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 38 [re: slaves overworked])

Chilluns did have de bestes' good times on our plantation, 'cause Old Marster didn't 'low 'em to do no wuk 'till dey wuz 12 years old. – Willis Cofer, ex-slave from Washington, Georgia (GA1, p.119)

Marster was mighty good to slave chillun. He never sent us out to wuk in de fields 'till us was 'most growed-up, say 12 or 14 years old. . . . When slave chillun get to be 'bout 9 or 10 years old, dey started 'em to fetchin' in wood and water, cleanin' de yards, and drivin' up de cows at night. De bigges' boys was 'lowed to measure out and fix de stock feed, but de most of us chillum jus' played in de cricks and woods all de time. – Jasper Battle, ex-slave from Tallaferro County, Georgia (GA1, pp.40-41)

Work began at sun rise and last 'till sun down. When I wuz eight years old, I started working in de field wif two paddles to keep de crows

from eatin' de crops. We had a half day off on Sunday. – Georgina Giwbs, ex-slave from Virginia (?) (VA, p.17)

(Interviewer:) Mr. Eason was about 7 or 8 years of age when he was first sent to work in the field. – George Eason, ex-slave from Forsyth, GA (GA1, p.167)

(Interviewer:) Charles played around the plantation ‘big house’ doing small errands until he reached the age of five, then his play days ended. While playing on the wood pile one morning, his master called him, “boy do you see this grass growing along the side of the fence? Well pull it all up.” When his first task was finished, he was carried to the field to pull the grass from the young cotton and other growing crops. This work was done by hand. . . . Now he went to his task daily. . . . – Charles Grandy, ex-slave from Virginia (VA, p.22)

(Interviewer:) When 9 years old he was sent to the field as a plow boy. – Henry Bland, ex-slave from near Edenton, GA (GA1, p.49)

Ders was a bell ringin’ every mornin’ ‘bout fo’ ‘clock fer to call de slaves ter git up an’ go to de fiel’s. Day wuked ‘til sundown. – James Singleton, ex-slave from Simpson County, Mississippi (MS, p.126)

We had to get up every morning before sun-up and when it was good and light we were in the field. A bugle was blown to wake us. (Interviewer:) All the slaves stayed in the field until dark. After leaving the field they were never required to do any work but could spend their time as they saw fit to. No work was required on Saturday or Sunday with the exception that the stock had to be cared for. – Henry Bland, ex-slave from near Edenton, Georgia (GA1, p.50)

De overseer, he had a bugle what he blowed to wake up de slaves. He blowed it long ‘fore day so dat dey could eat breakfast and be out dere in de fields waitin’ for de sun to rise so dey could see how to wuk, and dey stayed out dar and wukked ‘till black dark. When a rainy spell come and de grass got to growin’ fast, dey wukked dem slaves at night, even when de moon warn’t shinin’. On dem dark nights one set of slaves helt lanterns for de others to see how to chop de weeds out of de cotton and corn. Wuk was sho’ tight [i.e. constant] dem days. Evvy slave had a task to do after dey got back to dem cabins at night. Dey each one [male slaves] had to spin deir stint [yarn for weaving] same as de ‘omans, evvy night. – Rachel Adams, ex-slave from Putman County, Georgia (GA1, p.9)

De overseer blowed a horn to wake ‘em up just ‘fore day, so as everybody could cook, eat, and git out to de fields by sunrise. Dey quit nigh sundown, in time for ‘em to feed de stock, do de milkin’, tend to

bringin' in de wood, and all sorts of other little jobs dat had to be done 'fore it got too dark to see. Dey never wuz no work done at night on our plantation. – Martha Colquitt, ex-slave from near Lexington, Georgia (GA1, p.139)

(Interviewer:) Some nights after he and the other slaves had left the field they were required to do extra work such as ginning cotton and shelling peas and corn, etc. . . .

During the months when there was little field work to do they were kept busy repairing fences, etc., on the farm. Every day was considered a working day except Sunday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

– George Eason, ex-slave from Forsyth, Georgia (GA1, pp.167-168)

Those slaves who were field hands were in the field and at work by the time it was light enough to see. They plowed, hoed, and then later in the season gathered the crops. After the harvesting was over the fences were repaired and rails were split. In rainy weather nobody had to work out of doors, instead they shelled peas and corn and sometimes ginned the cotton. At night the women were required to spin and to weave. In the winter season no work was required at night unless they had not spun as much thread as was required. – Lewis Favor, ex-slave from Merriweather County, Georgia (GA1, p.177)

Dere warn't never no let-up when it come to wuk. When slaves come in from de fields after sundown and tended de stock and et supper, de mens still had to shuck corn, mend hoss collars, cut wood, and sich lak; de 'omans mended clothes, spun thread, wove cloth, and some of 'em had to go up to de big house and nuss de white folks' babies. – William McWhorter, ex-slave from Greene County, Georgia (GA3, p.56)

Dey got us by daylight an' 'fo'. Blowed a cockle shell to get us niggers up. Iffen you didn't wuk, dey 'tended to you [punished you]. Dey slashed one nigger 'an he died nex' week. Us plowed 'twell dark an' lots an' lots of times all night long wid a lantern tied to front an' back of de plows. We was picking cotton all night long too, be ready to take dat wagon to de gin by three or four o'clock in de morning. Sometimes dey would put de slaves in chains. When dey wuk clearing up new groun' dey had chains put 'roun' de ankles. – Frank Menefee, ex-slave from Loachapoka, Alabama (AL, p.215)

\*\* I nebbah knowed whut it wah t' rest. I just work all de time f'om mawnin' till late at night. I had t' do ebbathin' dey wah t' do on de outside. Wok in de field, chop wood, hoe cawn, till sometimes I feels lak mah back sholy break. . . .

Law, chile, nobuddy knows how mean da'kies wah treated. Wy,  
dey wah bettah t' de animals den t' us'ns.

– Sarah Gudger, ex-slave from Oteen, North Carolina (NC1,  
p.168-169)

Miss Mary was good to us, but us had to work hard and late. I  
worked in de fields every day from 'fore daylight to almost plumb dark. I  
usta take my littlest baby wid me. I had two chilluns, and I'd tie hit up to a  
tree limb to keep off de ants and bugs whilst I hoed and worked de furrow.  
– Sara Colquitt, ex-slave from near Richmond, Virginia (AL, p.70)

Thank de Lawd, I had good white folks and dey sho' did trus' me  
too. I had charge of all de keys to de house, and I waited on de Missis' and  
de chillun. I laid out all de clo'se on Sat'dy night, and den Sunday  
mawnin's I'd pick up all de dirty things. Dey [the owners] did'n' have a  
thing to do. Us house servants had a hahd job keepin' de pickaninnies  
[slave children] out'er de dinin' room whar ole Massa et, cause w'en dey  
would slip in and stan' by his cheer, w'en he finished eatin' he would fix a  
plate for 'em and let 'em set on the hearth.

... I ain't neber worked in de fields. Ole Massa he neber planted  
no cotton, and I ain't seen none planted 'tell after I was free. But, honey, I  
could sho 'nuff wash, iron and knit and weave. Sometimes I weaved six or  
seven yahds of cloth, and do my house work too. I lernt the chillun how to  
weave, and wash, and iron, and knit too, and I's waited on de fo'th  
generation of our fambly.

– Charity Anderson, 101-year-old ex-slave from Bell's Landing,  
Alabama (AL, pp.14-15)

I acted as nuss for massa's three chilluns. . . ." – Jennie Bowen, ex-  
slave from near Camden, Alabama (AL, p.34)

My mother being one of the household slaves, enjoyed certain  
privileges that the farm slaves did not. She was the head cook of Mr.  
Davidson's household. . . All of the cooking was supervised by mother,  
and the table was waited on by Uncle Billie, dressed in a uniform,  
decorated with brass buttons, braid and a fancy vest, his hands incased in  
white gloves. . . When the family and guests came in he took his position  
behind Mr. Davidson ready to serve or pass the plates. . . . – Caroline  
Hammond, ex-slave from Anne Arundel County, Marlyand, her master  
was of high social standing and entertained officers of the U. S. Naval  
Academy and others. (MD, p.19)

I was brung up right in de house wid my white folks. Yessum, I  
slep' on de little trundler bed what pushed up under de big bed, in durinst  
de day. I watched over dem chillun day and 'night. I washed 'em an' fed

‘em an’ played wid’em. – Cheney Cross, ex-slave from Alabama (AL, p.78)

### SLAVE PURCHASES AND SALES

This was a source of considerable pain for the slaves, both in terms of the general experience of being bought and sold and in terms of the separation of families. Sometimes slave children were bought to be playmates, and later servants, for the master’s children. A slave child might be given as a present to a master’s child or to the master’s wife.

Slaves were treated in most cases lak cattle. A man went about the country buyin’ up slaves lak buyin’ up cattle and the like, and he wuz called a ‘speculator’, then he’d sell ‘em to the highest bidder. Oh! It wuz pitiful to see chil’en taken from their mothers’ breast, mothers sold, husbands sold frum wives. One ‘oman [that a slave owner] wuz to buy [was pregnant] . . . and . . . the baby came befo’ he bought her and he wouldn’t buy the baby; said he hadn’t bargained to buy the baby too, and he just wouldn’t. My uncle wuz married but he wuz owned by one master and his wife wuz owned by another. He wuz ‘lowed to visit his wife on Wednesday and Saturday. . . . He went on Wednesday and when he went back on Saturday his wife had been bought by the speculator and he never did know where she wuz. – Julia Brown, ex-slave from Commerce, Georgia (GA1, p.85)

\*\* The speculators stayed in the hotel and put the niggers in the quarters jus like droves of hogs. All through the night I could hear them mournin’ and prayin’. I didn’t know the Lord would let people live who were so cruel. The gates were always locked and they was a guard on the outside to shoot anyone who tried to run away. Lord miss, them slaves look just like droves of turkeys runnin’ along in front of them horses.

I remember when they put ‘em on the block to sell ‘em. The ones ‘tween 18 and 30 always bring the most money. The auctioneer he stand off at a distance and cry ‘em off as they stand on the block. I can hear his voice as long as I live.

If the one they going to sell was a young Negro man this is what he say: “Now gentlemen and fellow-citizens here is a big black buck Negro. He’s stout as a mule. Good for any kin’ o’ work an’ he never gives any trouble. How much am I offered for him?” . . .

If they put a young nigger woman the auctioneer cry out: “Here’s a young nigger wench, how much am I offered for her?” The pore thing stand on the block a shiverin’ an’ a shakin’ nearly froze to death. When they sold, many of the pore mothers beg the speculators to sell ‘em with their husbands, but the speculator only take what he want. So maybe the pore thing never see her husban’ agin.

– W. L. Bost, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC1, pp.68-69)

Yo' know dat dar wuz a big slave market in Smithfield [North Carolina] dem days, dar wuz also a jail, an' a whippin' post. I 'members a man named Rough somethin' or other, what bought forty or fifty slaves at de time an' carried 'em ter Richmond to re-sell. He had four big black horses hooked ter a cart, an' behind dis card he chained de slaves, an' dey had ter walk, or trot all de way ter Richmond. De little ones Mr. Rough would throw up in de cart an' off dey'd go no'th. Dey said dat der wuz one day at Smithfield dat three hundred slaves wuz sold on de block. Dey said dat peoples came from far an' near, eben from New Orleans ter dem slave sales. . . . Dey uster strip dem niggers start naked an' gallop' em ober de square so dat de buyers could see dat dey warn't scarred [from being whipped, which indicate indicate disobedience] nor deformed. – Cornelia Andrews, ex-slave from North Carolina (NC1, p.20)

\*\* I never knewed my mother. I was a slave an' my mother was sol' from me an' her other chilluns. Dey tol' me when dey sol' 'er my sister was a-holdin' me in her arms. She was standin' behin' de Big House peekin' 'roun' de corner an' seen de las' o' her mother. I seen her go, too. Dey tell me I used to go to de gate a-huntin' for my mammy. – Henri Necaise, ex-slave in Mississippi (MS, p.119)

\*\* (Interviewer:) During the Civil War when supplies were scarce, especially salt, Marster John rode off taking her mother's sister Ca'line [Janie's aunt] with him, and when he returned alone his wife, Mrs. Meyers, wanted to know where was Ca'line, and Master John replied: "I sold her for a sack of salt." . . . Sarah [Janie's mother] never saw her sister anymore. – Janie Scott, ex-slave in Alabama (AL, p.260)

Slaves were bought up and sent there in chains. Some were chained to each other by the legs, some by the arms. . . . I have lived a hard life. I have seen mothers sold away from their babies and other children, and they cryin' when she left. I have seen husbands sold from their wives, and wives sold from their husbands. – Charity Austin, ex-slave from Georgia (NC1, p.33)

When [slaves] got so bad ol' marster did'nt bother 'bout whuppin' 'em – he jes' put 'em on de block an' en' sold 'em like he would a chicken or somethin'. – Richard Orford, ex-slave from Pike County, Georgia (GA3, p.85)

Mist' McCullough, he raised niggahs to sell – an' the little black chillen play aroun' until 'bout sundown, dey is give dey supper. A long trough out in a cool place in the bak yard is filled wif good, cold buttermilk an' cornbread crumbed in, an' dey each is give a spoon, an' dey eats dey fill. Den dey is ready fo' bed. Some of dem jes' fall ovah on de groun', asleep, and is picked up, and put on dey pallet in de big chillens

room. Dey was old woman called de nurse, look after ‘em. Dey git good care fo’ de master expects dey will bring good money. – Mandy McCullough Cosby, ex-slave from Chambers County, Alabama (AL, p.72)

One time a slave at a neighbor farm was workin’ in de feel’ and when he comes in, in de ebenin’s he’s wife wuz gone an’ de cradle wuz emty. He’s Massa done sold ‘em. – Emily Camster Green, ex-slave from Bollinger County, Missouri (MO, p.140)

It wuz durin’ cotton chopping time dat year (1860), a day I’ll never fergit, when de spekulataws bought me. We come home from the fiel’ ‘bout half after ‘leven dat day an cooked a good dinner. . . O, I never has forgot dat last dinner wid my fokes! But, some-ow, I had felt, all de mawning, lak sumpin was gwineter hapin’. I could jes feel it in my bones! An’ sho nough, bout de middle of the even’, up rid my young Master on his hoss, an’ up driv two strange white mens in a buggy. Dey hitch dere hosses an’ cum in de house, which skeered me. Den one o’ de strangers said, “git you clothers, Mary; we has bought you frum Mr. Shorter.” I c’menced cryin’ an’ beggin’ Mr. Shorter to not let ‘em take me away. But he say, “yes, Mary, I has sole yer, an’ you must go wid em.”

Den dese strange mens, whose names I ain’t never knowed, tuk me an’ put me in de buggy an’ driv off wid me, me hollerin’ at de top o’ my voice an’ callin’ my Ma! Den dem spekulataws begin to sing loud – jes to drown out my hollerin’.

Us passed de very fiel whar paw an’ all my fokes wuz wuckin, an’ I calt out as loud as I could an’, as long as I could see ‘em, “good-buy, Ma!” “good-bye Ma!” But she never heard me. Naw, nah, daz white mens wuz singin’ so loud Ma could’n hear me! An’ she could’n see me, caze dey had me pushed down out o’ sight on de floe o’ de buggy.

I ain’t never seed nor heared tell o’ my Ma an’ Paw, an’ bruthers, an’ susters from dat day to dis.

– Mary Ferguson, ex-slave from Maryland (GA1, p.182)

### FREE BLACKS SOMETIMES CAPTURED AND SOLD INTO SLAVERY

(Interviewer:) The father, Peter Wych, was born in West Virginia. A free man, he was part Indian and when driving a team of oxen into Virginia for lime, got into the slave territory, was overtaken by a ‘speculator’ and brought to Georgia where he was sold to the Wyches of Macon. – Emily Mays, ex-slave from Upson County, Georgia (GA3, p.67)

### SLAVE MARRIAGES

Slave marriages were never legal and could be terminated or disregarded by the owner at any time.

When a couple wished to marry the man secured the permission of the intended wife's owner and if he consented, a broom was placed on the floor and the couple jumped over it and were then pronounced man and wife. - George Lewis, ex-slave from Troup County, Georgia (GA3, pp.28-29)

On the Heard plantation as on a number of others, marriages were made by the masters of the parties concerned. . . . If both masters mutually consented [in the case of slaves living on different plantations], the marriage ceremony was considered over with. After that, the husband was given a pass to visit his wife once a week. – Celestia Avery, ex-slave from Troup County, Georgia (GA1, p.21)

When a slave man wanted to git married up wid a gal he axed his marster, and if it was all right wid de marster den him and de gal come up to de big house to jump de broomstick 'fore deir white folkses. De gal jumped one way [over the broom] and de man de other. Most times dere was a big dance de night dey got married.

If a slave wanted to git married up wid a gal what didn't live on dat same plantation he told his marster, den his marster went and talked to de gal's marster. If bofe deir marsters 'greed den dey jumped de broomstick; if neither one of de marsters wouldn't sell to de other one, de wife jus stayed on her marster's place and de husband was 'lowed a pass what let him visit her twict a week on Wednesday and Sadday nights.

- Paul Smith, ex-slave from Oglethorpe County, Georgia (GA3, p.180)

When a slave married someone from another plantation, the master of the wife owned all the children. – James V. Deane, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.7)

### NAMING BABIES

This was generally done by the owner. Slaves were generally only given first names. In at least some cases, slaves had secret names that supported a sense of lineage or community. (References: Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 50; Berlin, Faureau, Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, xl-xli.)

In the event children were born the naming of them was left entirely to the master. Parents were not allowed to name them. – Celestia Avery, ex-slave from Troup County, Georgia (GA1, p.21)

"Sometimes the mothers named the babies but most of the time the masters did." – Shade Richards, ex-slave from Pike County, Georgia (GA3, p.111)

My mammy was name Lucy Berry. She always go' by de white folks name what she live wid. – Jane Sutton, ex-slave from Simpson County, Mississippi (MS, p.151)

The Master and Mistress always named the negro babies and usually gave them Bible names. – Charlie King, ex-slave from Meriwether County, Georgia (GA3, p.13)

#### SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: BREEDING

This practice was widespread.

\*\* One day Marse George an' his uncle, Mr. John Davenport . . . dey rid over to Grand Gulf whar dey was a sellin' slabes offen de block an' Mr. John tol' Marse George to pick hisself out a pair of darkies to mate so's he could get hisself a start of darkies fer to chop his cotton an' like. So Marse George pick out my pappy fust. My pappy come from North Ca'lina. Den he seen my mammy an' she was big an' strengthly an' he wanted her pow'ful bad. But . . . he didn' have 'nough money to buy 'em both, so his Uncle John say he'd buy mammy an' den he would loan her over to Marse George fer pappy. An' de fust chile would be Mr. John's, an' de secon' Marse George's, and likewise. – Mollie Williams, ex-slave in Mississippi (MS, pp.157-158)

Gettin married an' having a family was a joke in the days of slavery, as the main thing in allowing any form of matrimony among the slaves was to raise more slaves in the same sense and for the same purpose as stock raisers raise horses and mules, that is for work. - Thomas Hall, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1, p.172)

If a hand were noted for raisin up strong black bucks . . . he would be sent out . . . to the other plantations. . . . There he would be "married off" again – time and again. This was thrifty and saved any actual purchase of new stock. - John Cole, ex-slave from Athens, Georgia (GA1, pp.131-132)

Wunner dese here 'omans was my Antie and she say dat she skacely call to min' [the master] e'r whoppin' her, 'cause she was a breeder woman, and brought in chilun ev'y twelve mont's jes' lack a cow bringin' in a calf. And she say, dat whut make her mo' val'ble to her Ole Marster. He orders she can't be put to no strain 'casen uv dat. . . . But dem others he worked 'em day en night, Sad'dy en Sunday too. – Martha Jackson, ex-slave from Alabama (?) (AL, p.171)

#### SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: RAPE

It was not unusual for slave women to be raped by the overseer, their master, or the master's friends.

\*\* On the plantations not every one, but some of the slave holders would have some certain slave women reserved for their own use. Sometimes children almost white would be born to them. I have seen many of these children. Sometimes the child would be said to belong to the overseer, and sometimes it would be said to belong to the master. – John Bectom, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC1, p.49)

My daddy was my young Marster. His name was Marster George Brewer an' my mammy always tol' me dat I was his'n. I know dat dare was some diff'ence 'tween me an' de res' o' her chillun, 'cause dey was all coal black, an' I was even lighter dan I is now. Lawd, it's been to my sorrow many a time, 'cause de chillun used to chase me 'round an' holler at me, "Old yellow Nigger." - Dora Franks, ex-slave from Choctaw County, Mississippi (MS, p.49)

My master was my father; he was kind to me but hard on the field hands who worked in the rice fields. . . . There were three girls and one boy [in master's family], they treated me fairly good - at first or when I was small, or until they realized their father was my father, then they hated me. – James Calhart James, an ex-slave from South Carolina (MD, p.34)

Plenty of the colored women have children by the white man. She know better than to not do what he say. . . . Then they take them very same children what have they own blood and make slaves out of them. - W. L. Bost, ex-slave from Newton, North Carolina (NC1, p.69)

"My uncle's father was his master and de master sold my uncle who wus his own son. - Harriet Casey, ex-slave from Farmington, Missouri (MO, p.74)

I jus' 'member my first marster and missus, 'cause she don't want me there. I'se a child of the marster. . . . My Missus sold me to Boles. . . .

Iffen dey had a pretty girl dey would take 'em, and I'se one of 'em, and my oldest child, he boy by Boles, almost white.

– Elvira Boles, ex-slave from near Lexington, Mississippi (TX1, p.79)

[When her mother refused her overseer's sexual advances, the overseer had my mother tied] up in de barn with a rope aroun' her arms up over her head, while she stood on a block. Soon as dey got her tied, dis block was moved an' her feet dangled, yo' know – couldn't tech de flo'.

Dis ol' man, now, would start beatin' her nekkid 'till the blood run down her back to her heels. . . . [After he beat her another overseer would] bathe her in salt and water [to increase the pain]. Don't you kno' dem places was a hurtin'.

– Minnie Fulkes, ex-slave from Virginia (VA, p.13)

### WHITE FOLKS GET SLAVE CHILDREN TO EAT FROM TROUGH LIKE ANIMALS FOR AMUSEMENT

I ‘member Mis Nancy an’ white folks ‘ud set out thar of an evenin’ an’ mak us lil’l cullud chillun dance an’ sing an’ cut capers fer to ‘muse ‘em. Den dey had a trough, built ‘bout lak a pig trough, an’ dey would make de cook bake a gre’t big slab er co’n bread an’ put hit in de trough an’ po’ milk or lasses over hit, an’ tu’n us lil’l cullud chullun loose on it. . . As much of hit went in our hair an’ eyes an’ years as went in our moufs.

– Tom Wilson, ex-slave from Mississippi (MS, pp.165-166)

### CHILD SLAVE AS A “PET”

Massa take me as a little boy as a pet. . . . Had a little bed right by his own an’ take care of me. – Solbert Butler, ex-slave from near Deer County, South Carolina (SC1, p.107)

### HARSH WHIPPINGS, TORTURE, MURDER

One of the biggest complaints ex-slaves had was the whippings. Slave owners who whipped their slaves were the general rule. Most owners did this to one degree or another. Just as slave owners who were humane were the exception, so were the ones who devised cruel tortures. (References: Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 42-43 [re: one of biggest complaints]; and Rawick, *From Sundown*, 55; Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 120-121 [re: most owners whipped slaves, between two extremes])

\*\* Old Miss had a nigger oberseer an ‘dat was de meanest debil dat eber libbed on de Lawd’s green yearth. . . . Lots of times I’se seen him beat my mammy, an’ one day I seen him beat my Auntie who was big wid a chile, and dat man dug a roun’ hole in de groun’ and’ put her stummick in it, an’ beat an’ beat her for a half hour straight till the baby came out raght dere in de hole. – Henry Cheatam, ex-slave in Mississippi (AL, p.54)

Preacher Whitfield, bein’ a preacher, wus supposed to be good, but he ain’t half fed ner clothed his slaves an’ he whupped ‘em bad. I’se seen him whup my mammy wid all de clothes offen her back. He’d buck her down on a barrel an’ beat de blood outen her. Dar wus some difference in his beatin’ from de neighbors. De folks round dar ‘ud whup in de back yard, but Marse Whitfield ‘ud have de barrel carried in his parlor fer de beatin’. – Mattie Curtis, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1, p.105)

Dar wuz one woman dat I hyard mammy tell of bein’ beat clean ter death. De ‘oman wuz pregnant an’ she fainted in de fiel’ at de plow. De driver said dat she wuz puttin’ on, an’ dat she ort ter be beat. De master

said dat she can be beat but don't ter hurt de baby. De driver says dat he won't, den he digs a hole in de sand an' he puts de 'oman in de hole, which am nigh 'bout ter her arm pits, den he kivers her up an' straps her han's over her haid.

He takes de long bull whup an' he cuts long gashes all over her shoulders an' raised arms, den he walks off an' leabes her dar fer a hour in de hot sun. De flies an' de gnats dey worry her, an' de sun hurts too an' she cries a little, den de driver comes out wid a pan full of vinegar, salt an' red pepper an' he washes de gashes. De 'oman faints an' he digs her up, but in a few minutes she am stone dead.

– Analiza Foster, ex-slave from Person County, North Carolina (NC1, p.150)

Lots o' Niggers would slip off from one plantation to de other to see some other Niggers. Dey would always manage to git back 'fore daybreak. De wors' thing I ever heard 'bout dat was once when my Uncle Alf ran off to 'jump de broom.' Dat was what dey called goin' to see a woman. He didn' come back by daylight, so dey put de Nigger hounds after 'im. Dey smelled his trail down in de swamp an' foun' where he was hidin'.

Now he was one o' de biggest Niggers on de place an' a powerful fas' worker. But dey took an' give him 100 lashes wid de cat o' ninety-nine tails. His back was somethin' awful, but dey put him in de fiel' to work while de blood was still a-runnin'.

– Dora Fanks, ex-slave from Choctaw County, Mississippi (MS, p.51)

Oh Lordy! The way us Niggers was treated was awful. Marster would beat, knock, kick, kill. He done ever'thing he could 'cept eat us. We was worked to death. We worked all Sunday, all day, all night [and the rest of the week]. He whipped us 'till some jus' lay down to die. It was a poor life. . . .

If one o' his Niggers done something to displease him, which was mos' ever' day, he'd whip him 'till he'd mos' die an' then he'd kick him 'round in the dust. He'd even take his gun an', before the Nigger had time to open his mouth, he'd just stan' there an' shoot him down. . . .

. . . Slavery days was bitter an' I can't forget the sufferin'. Oh, God! . . . God Almighty never meant for human beings to be like animals. Us Niggers has a soul an' a heart an' a min'. We aint like a dog or a horse.

– Charlie Moses, ex-slave from Marion County, Mississippi (MS, pp.114-115, 117)

A heap o' white folks was good to dey Niggers, jus' as good as dey could be, but a heap of 'em was mean, too. My mistis was good to us an' so was Marse Jim Harper. He wouldn' let de boys 'buse us while he lived, but when he died dey was wild an' cruel. De was hard taskmasters. We

was fed good three times a day, but we was whupped too much. Dat got me. I couldn' stan' it. – Berry Smith, ex-slave from Sumpter County, Alabama (MS, pp.130-131)

I got more whuppin's dan any other Nigger on de place, 'cause I was mean. . . . I was so bad Marster made me go look at de Niggers dey hung to see what dey done to a Nigger dat harm a white man. – Susan Snow, ex-slave from Wilcox County, Alabama (MS, p.138)

I was glad to get a' freedom 'cause I get out's frum under dem whuppins. – Tom Wilson, ex-slave from Mississippi (MS, p.168)

Alex Heath, a slave wuz beat ter death, hyar in Smithfield. He had stold something, dey tells me, anyhow he wuz sentenced ter be put ter death, an' de folkses dar in charge 'cided ter beat him ter death. Dey gib him a hundred lashes fer nine mornin's an' on de ninth mornin' he died. – Cornelia Andrews, ex-slave from North Carolina (NC1, p.21)

Some of de slaves wus whupped wid a cabbin paddle. Dey had forty holes in 'em an' when you wus buckled to a barrel dey hit your naked flesh wid de paddle an' every whur dere wus a hole in de paddle it drawed a blister. When de whuppin' wid de paddle wus over, dey took de cat o' nine tails an' busted de blisters. By dis time de blood sometimes would be runnin' down dere heels. Den de next thing wus a wash in salt water strong enough to hold up an egg. Slaves wus punished dat way for runnin' away an' sich. – Andrew Boone, ex-slave from Northampton County, North Carolina (NC1, p.65) [See **Wilson Chinn photo with paddle** in Chapter 1]

We wus sold to a slave owner...by the name Joe Hayes an' a terrible man he wus. He would get mad 'bout most anything, take my mother, chain her down to a log and whup her unmercifully while I, a little boy, could do nothing but stan' there an' cry, an' see her whupped. – Charlie H. Hunter, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.216)

I have personally known a few slaves that were beaten to death for one or more of the following offenses:

Leaving home without a pass [from the owner],  
Talking back to – 'sassing' – a white person,  
Hitting another Negro,  
Fussing, fighting, and rukkussing in the [slave] quarters  
Lying,  
Loitering on their work,  
Taking things – the Whites called it stealing.

– Rev. W. B. Allen, ex-slave from Russell County, Alabama (?)  
(GA1, p.14)

(Interviewer:) Not only was [Mr. Heard] cruel, but it seemed that every one he hired in the capacity of overseer was just as cruel. For instance, [Mrs. Avery's] grandmother Sylvia was told to take her clothes off when she reached the end of a row. She was to be whipped because she had not completed the required amount of hoeing for the day. – Celestia Avery, ex-slave from Troup County, GA (GA1, p.21)

'Bout dat overseer he wuz a mean man, if one ever lived. He got de slaves up wid a gun at five o'clock an' wukked 'em 'til way after sundown, standin' right over 'em wid a gun all de time. If a Nigger lagged or tuk his eyes off his wuk, right den an' dar he would make him strip down his clo'es to his waist, an' he whup him wid a cat-o-nine tails. Evvy lick dey struck him meant he wuz hit nine times, an' it fotch da red [blood] evvy time it struck. – Alec Bostwick, ex-slave from Morgan County, Georgia (GA1, p.64)

When dey got ready to beat yo', dey'd strip you stark mother naked and dey'd say, 'Come here to me, God damn you! Come to me clean! Walk up to dat tree, and damn you, hug dat tree! Den dey tie yo' hands 'round de tree, den tie yo' feets; den dey'd lay de rawhide on you. . . . Sometimes dey'd rub turpentine and salt in de raw places, and den beat you some mo'. Oh, hit was awful! And what could you do? Dey had all de 'vantage of you. – Ferebe Rogers, ex-slave from Baldwin County, Georgia (GA3, p.118)

My master whipped his slaves with a cat-o-nine tails. He'd say to me, 'You ain't had a currin' down for some time. Come here!' Then he whipped me with the cat. The cat was made of nine strips of leather fastened onto the end of a whip. Lots of times when he hit me, the cat left nine stripes of blood on my back. – Sarah Graves, ex-slave from Missouri (MO, p.132)

A slave right here in Marshall [Missouri] angered his master, was chained to a hemp-break on a cold night and left to freeze to death, which he did. – Ed Craddock, ex-slave from Missouri (MO, p.96)

In Arkansas many of de slave owners would tie dere slaves to a wagon and gallop 'em all over town and would dey be banged up. – Lulu Chambers, ex-slave from Galatin County, Kentucky (MO, p.81)

My poppa was strong. He never had a lick in his life. He helped the marster, but one day the marster says, 'Si, you got to have a whoppin' and my poppa says, 'I never had a whoppin' and you can't whop me.' An' the

marster says, ‘but I kin kill you,’ and’ he shot my poppa down. My mama tuk him in the cabin and put him on a pallet. He died. – Anne Clark, ex-slave from Mississippi (TX1, p.160)

De first thing [Master] do when he buy a slave, am give him de whippin’. He call it puttin’ de fear of Gawd in him. – Thomas Cole, ex-slave from Jackson County, Alabama (TX1, p.163)

I seed slaves plenty times wid iron ban’s ‘roun’ dey ankles an’ a hole in de ban’ an’ a iron rod fasten to hit what went up de outside of dey leg to de wais’ an’ fasten to another iron ban’ ‘roun’ de waist. Dis yere was to keep ‘em from bendin’ dey legs an’ runnin’ away. Dey call hit putting’ de stiff knee on you, an’ hit sho’ made ‘em stiff! – George Young, ex-slave from Livingston, Alabama (AL, p.332) [**See Wilson Chinn photo with example** in Chapter 1]

Marse Jim, he had a strop ar leather stuck in de slit end of a staff, an’ he sho’ did whup ‘em layed ‘cross a barrel. Once m’ pappy run away an’ Marse Jim get de blood houn’s afte’ him, an’ catched him up ‘fo he could git fur, an’ dat dey he lay him ‘cross de barrel, an’ whupped him frum sun up ‘till sun down. When he quit off, m’ pappy couldn’t talk no more’n a whisper sca’cely. – Tom Wilson, ex-slave from Mississippi (MS, p.167)

[My mistress] uster make my aunt Caroline knit all day an’ when she git so tired aftah dark that she’d git sleepy, she’d make ‘er stan’ up and knit. She work her so hard that she’d go to sleep standin’ up an’ every time her haid nod an’ her knees sag, the lady’d come down across her haid with a switch. – Elizabeth Sparks, ex-slave in Virginia (VA, p.43)

Old Marse bad. He beat us till we bleed. He rub salt and pepper in. One time I sweep de yard. Young Miss come home from college. She slap my face. She want to beat me. Mama say to beat her [instead], so they did. She took de beatin’ for me. – Agatha Babino, ex-slave from near Carenco, Louisiana (TX1, p.33)

The Carters never did have any real ‘corrigible niggers, but I heard of ‘em plenty on other places. When they was real ‘corrigible, the white folks said they was like mad dogs and didn’t mind to kill them so much as killin’ a sheep. They’d take ‘em to the graveyard and shoot ‘em down and bury ‘em face downward, with their shoes on. I never seed it done, but they make some the niggers go for a lesson to them that they could git the same. – Cato Carter, ex-slave from Wilcox County, Alabama (TX1, p.148)

Long as I lived I minded what my white folks told me, ‘cept one time. They was a nigger workin’ in the fiel’ and he kept jerkin’ the mules

and Massa Oll got mad, and he gave me a gun and said, ‘Go out there and kill that man.’ I said, ‘Massa Oll, please don’t tell me that. I ain’t never kilt nobody and I don’t want to.’ He said, ‘Cato, you do what I tell you.’ He meant it. I went out to the nigger and said, ‘You has got to leave this minute, and I is, too, ‘cause I is ‘spose to kill you, only I ain’t and Massa Oil will kill me.’ He drops the hanes and we run and crawled through the fence and ran away. . . .

But today I is a old man and my hands ain’t stained with no blood. I is allus been glad I didn’t kill that man.

– Cato Carter, ex-slave from Wilcox County, Alabama (TX1, p.150)

My pore mama! Every washday old missy give her de beatin’. She couldn’t keep de flies from speckin’ de clothes overnight. Old missy git up soon in de mornin’, ‘fore mama have time git dem specks off. She snort and say, ‘Renee, I’s gwineter teach you how to wash.’ Den she beat mama with de cowhide. Look like she cut my mama in two. Many’s de time I edges up and tries take some dem licks off my mama. – Jacob Branch, ex-slave from Double Bayou, Texas (TX1, p.101)

One day I remembers my brother, January was cotched ober seein’ a gal on de next plantation. He had a pass but de time on it done gib out. Well suh, when de massa found out dat he was a hour late, he got as mad as a hive of bees. So when brother January came home, de massa took down his long mule skinner and tied him wid a rope to a pine tree. He strip’ his shirt off and said:

“Now, nigger, I’m going to teach you some sense.”

Wid dat he started layin’ on de lashes. January was a big, fine lookin’ nigger; de finest I ever seed. He was jus’ four years older dan me, an’ when de massa begin a beatin’ him, January neber said a word. De massa got madder and madder kaze he couldn’t make January holla.

“What’s de matter wid you, nigger” he say. ‘Don’t it hurt?’

January, he neber said nothin’, and de massa keep a beatin’ till little streams of blood started flowin’ down January’s chest, but he neber holler. His lips was quiverin’ and his body was a shakin’, but his mouf it neber open; and all de while I sat on my mammy’s and pappy’s steps a cryin’. De niggers was all gathered about and some uv ‘em couldn’t stand it; dey hadda go inside dere cabins. After awhile, January, he couldn’t stand it no longer hisself, and he say in a horse, loud whisper:

“Massa! Massa! Have mercy on dis poor nigger.”

– William Colbert, ex-slave from Fort Valley, Georgia (AL, pp.65-66)

[The following story might have been made up by slaves to bring a sense of humor to the serious reality of whippings.]

One time [master] got atter one of his young slaves out in de field and told him he was a good mind to have him whupped. Dat night de young Nigger was tellin' a old slave ‘bout it, and de old man jus’ laughed and said: “When Marster pesters me dat way I jus’ rise up and cuss him out.” Dat young fellow ‘cided he would try it out and de next time Marster got after him dey had a rukus what I ain’t never gwine to forgit. . . . Lordy, Chile, Marster jus’ fairly tuk de hide off dat Nigger’s back. When he tried to talk to dat old slave ‘bout it de old man laughed and said: “Shucks, I allus waits ‘till I gits to de field to cuss Marster so he won’t hear me.” – Julia Larken, ex-slave in Georgia (GA3, p.23)

#### ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PUNISHMENT; JAILS ON SOME PLANTATIONS

Alternative punishments included being locked up, the withholding of food, and the threat of selling the slave to a harsher master. Threatening to sell a slave to the Deep South from the Upper South was especially disturbing to the slave since masters in the Deep South were perceived as being more cruel than other slave owners.

(Interviewer:) Failing to obey [his master’s] command, he would have been given a whipping, or sent to the Southlands. Sending slaves to the plantations of Mississippi and other Southern states was a type of punishment all slaves [in the more northern plantations] feared. – Charles Grandy, ex-slave from Virginia (VA, p.22)

My daddy wus a fiddler, an’ he sometimes played fer de dances at de Cross Roads, a little village near de marster’s place. All what ain’t been mean could go, but de mean ones can’t. . . . – Bill Crump, ex-slave from Davidson County, North Carolina (NC1, p.101)

One day I was out in de quarters when he brung back old man Joe from runnin’ away. Old Joe was always a-runnin’ away an’ dat man Duncan put his houn’ dogs on ‘im an’ brung ‘im back. Dis time I’s speakin’ ‘bout . . . Duncan put his han’ on old Joe’s shoulder an’ look him in de eye sorrowful-lak. “Joe,” he say, “I’s sho’ pow’ful tired o’ huntin’ you. I ‘spect I’s gwina have to git de marster to sell you some’r’s else. Another marster gwina whup you in de groun’ if he ketch you runnin’ ‘way lak dis. I’s sho sad for you if you gits sol’ away. Us gwina miss you ‘roun’ dis plantation.” After dat old Joe stayed close in an’ dey warnt no more trouble out o’ him. – Gabe Emanuel, ex-slave from Port Gibson, Mississippi (MS, p.45)

Marse Cain was good to his niggers. He didn’t whip dem like some owners did, but if dey done mean he sold dem. Dey knew dis so dey minded him. One day gran’pappy sassed Mis’ Polly White an’ she told him dat if he didn’ ‘have hese’f dat she would put him in her pocket. Gran’pappy wuz er big man an’ I ax him how Mis’ Polly could do dat. He said she meant dat she would sell him den put de money in her pocket. He

never did sass Mis' Polly no more. – Sarah Debro, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1, p.119)

Ole Marster . . . ‘spained dat us wuz not to be ‘shamed of our race. He said us warn’t no ‘niggers’; he said us wuz ‘Negroes’, and he ‘spected his Negroes to be de best negroes in de whole land. . . .

. . . Ole marster never whipped none of his negroes, not dat I ever heared of. He tolle’ ‘em what he wanted done, and give ‘em plenty of time to do it. Dey wuz allus skeerd effen dey didn’t be smart and do right, dey might git sold to some marster dat would beat ‘em, and be mean to ‘em. Us knowed dey won’t many marsters as good to dey slaves as Ole Marster wuz to us. Us would of most kilt ourself workin’, fo’ us would of give him a reason to wanna git rid of us. No Ma’am, Ole Marster ain’t never sold no slave, not whilst I kin ‘member.

– Anna Parkes, ex-slave from Athens, Georgia (GA3, pp.88-89)

There was only one slave ever sold from our plantation, she was my aunt. The mistress slapped her one day, she struck her back. She was sold and taken south. We never saw or heard of her afterwards. – James V. Deane, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.7)

We had a jail over the rice barn where the slaves were confined, especially on Sundays, as punishment for things done during the week. – James Calhart James, ex-slave from South Carolina (MD, p.35)

There was one building used as a jail, built of stone about 20x40 feet with a hip roof about 25 feet high, 2-story. On the ground in each end was a fire place; in one end a small room, which was used as an office; adjoining, there was another room where the whipping was done. To reach the second story there was built on the outside, steps leading to a door, through which the female prisoners were taken to the room. All of the buildings had dirt floors. – Mrs. M. S. Feyman, ex-slave from near Frankfort, Kentucky (MD, pp.12-13)

#### FORBIDDEN TO LEARN TO READ

In general, it was illegal for slaves to learn to read in the slave states. Plantation owners saw education as a big threat to their ability to keep the slaves “in line.” For slaves to learn to read and write would also challenge the prevailing myth that members of the black race were inherently unintelligent.

(\*\*) ‘Ole Marse’ wuz sho hard about [reading and writing]. He said ‘Niggers’ wuz made by de good Lawd to work, and onct when my Uncle stole a book and wuz a trying to learn how to read and write, Marse Jasper had the white doctor take off my Uncle’s fo’ finger right down to

de ‘fust jint’. Marstar said he fixed dat darky as a sign fo de res uv ‘em! – Henry Nix, ex-slave, Georgia (GA3, p.80)

In discussing figures and “ought” or “0”, Andrew Boone told this to his interviewer:

\*\* I can’t read an’ write but dey learned us to count. Dey learned us to count dis way. “Ought is an’ ought, an’ a figger is a figger, all for de white man an’ nothin’ fer de nigger.” – Andrew Boone, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC, p.65)

My young marster learned me out o’ his speller, but Mistis whupped me. She say I didn’ need to learn nothin’ ‘cept how to count so’s I could feed de mules widout colicin’ ‘em. You give ‘em ten ‘years o’ corn to de mule. If you give ‘em more, it ‘ud colic’ ‘em an’ dey’d die. . . . Dat were de firs’ whuppin’ I ever got – when me an’ my young marster were a-spellin’. – Sam McAllum, ex-slave from Kemper County, Mississippi (MS, p.101)

My pappy, he had a stolen ejucation – ‘at was ‘cause his mistress back in South Ca’Line heped him to learn to read an’ write ‘fo he lef’ there. You see, in dem days, it was ag’inst de law fer slaves to read. – James Singleton, ex-slave from Simpson County, Mississippi (MS, p.127)

Lawd, you better not be caught wid a book in yor han’. If you did, you were sold. Dey didn’t ‘low dat. – Louisa Adams, ex-slave from Richmond County, North Carolina (NC1, p.8)

(excerpt from Rev. W. E. Northcross’ autobiography that was included in the slave narratives:) Some of my own people told my master that I had a book trying to read. He sent for me to come to the house. I obeyed, though I dreaded to meet him, not knowing what the consequence would be. But his heart had been touched by Divine power and he simply told me that he heard that I had a book, and if I was caught with it I would be hung. – Rev. W. E. Northcross, ex-slave from Colbert County, Alabama (AL, p.230)

#### OFF THE PLANTATION WITHOUT A PASS; RUNAWAYS; PATROLLERS

To leave the plantation for a legitimate purpose a slave needed a pass or permit from the owner or overseer. Legitimate purposes could include, among other things, going to see a wife or girlfriend on another plantation, going hunting or fishing, or doing an errand for the master. Small groups of white patrollers roamed the country looking for runaways and other slaves who were off the plantation without a pass. In some cases the patrollers came on the plantation to police the slaves. The few slave owners who were relatively humane allowed their slaves to leave the plantation without a pass and forbade the patrollers from coming onto the plantation or harassing the slaves off of the plantation.

If dey wanted to go ‘possum huntin’ or fishin’ dey could get passes from de overseer. – Callie Williams, ex-slave from Newport Landing, Alabama (AL, p.328)

I was born . . . in Charles County [Maryland] on the farm of Burton Stafford, better known as Blood Hound Manor. This name was applied because Mr. Stafford raised and trained blood hounds to track runaway slaves and to sell to slaveholders of Maryland, Virginia and other southern states as far south as Mississippi and Louisiana. . . .

. . . Mr. Stafford’s dogs were often sought to apprehend runaway slaves. He would charge according to the value and worth of the slave captured. His dogs were often taken to Virginia, sometimes to North Carolina, besides being used in Maryland. I have been told that when a slave was captured, besides the reward paid in money, that each dog was supposed to bite the slave to make him anxious to hunt human beings.

– Page Harris, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, pp.22-23)

\*\* My brother Harrison [ran away] an’ dey set de ‘nigger dogs’ on him. . . . Dey didn’t run him down till ‘bout night but finely dey cotched him, an’ de hunters feched him to de [mistress’] do’ an’ say: “Mary Ann, here’ Harrison.” Den dey turned de dogs loose on him ag’in, an sich a screamin’ you never hyared. He was all bloody an’ Mammy was a-hollerin’, “Save him, Lord, save my chile, an’ don’ let dem dogs eat him up.” Mr. Lawler said, “De Lord ain’t got nothin’ do wid dis here,” an’ hit sho’ look like He didn’t, ‘caze dem dogs nigh ‘bout chewed Harrison up. Dem was hard times, sho’. – George Young, ex-slave near Livingston, Alabama (AL, p.333)

You would have to show your remit. If de Pattyrollers caught you dey would whip yo’ . . . . Pattyrollers, is a gang of white men gitting together goin’ through de country catching slaves, an’ whipping an’ beatin’ ‘em up if dey had no remit. – Charles Crawley, ex-slave from Lunenburg County, Virginia (VA, p.11)

De patter rolls dey chases me plenty times, but I’s lucky, ‘cause dey never cotched me. I slips off to see de gal on de nex’ plantation and I has no pass and they chases me and was I scairt! You should have seed me run through dat bresh, ‘cause I didn’t dare go out on de road or de path. It near tore de clothes off me, but I goes on and gits home and slides under de house. But I’d go to see dat gal every time, patter rolls or no patter rolls, and I gits trained so’s I could run ‘most as fast as a rabbit. – Green Cumby, ex-slave from Henderson, Texas (TX1, p.186)

If de slaves went off de plantation without a pass, de patterrollers would ‘ketch ‘em an’ beat ‘em powerful bad. If de niggers could outrun de

pattyrollers an' git home fust dey couldn't be whipped. Dey had dogs called 'nigger hounds', same like dey had bird dogs, an' dey would track de slaves an' bring dem back home. – Cornelia Robinson, ex-slave from Lafayette, Alabama (AL, p.256)

Some of de niggers, after dey'd been beat, would try to run away and some of 'em got loose, but de patterollers caught a lot of 'em and den dey'd get it harder dan ever befo' and have shackles out on dere feet wid jes' enough slack for 'em to walk so dey could work. – Callie Williams, ex-slave from Newport Landing, Alabama (AL, p.328)

Old man Jim, he run away lots and sometimes they git the dogs after him. He run away one time and it was so cold his legs git frozen and they have to cut his legs off. Sometimes they put chains on runaway slaves and chained 'em to the house. I never knowed of 'em puttin' bells on the slaves on our place, but over next to us they did. They had a piece what go round they shoulders and round they necks with pieces up over they heads and hung up the bell on the piece over they head [to make noise if the slave tried to run away]. – Carey Davenport, ex-slave from Walker County, Texas (TX1, pp.198-199)

Sometimes Negro slave runaways who were apprehended by the patrollers, who kept a constant watch for escaped slaves, besides being flogged, would be branded with a hot iron on the cheek with the letter 'R'. – Dennis Simms, ex-slave from Maryland (MD, p.61)

I have heard that patrollers were on Kent Island and the colored people would go out in the country on the roads, create a disturbance to attract the patrollers' attention. They would tie ropes and grape vines across the roads, so when the patrollers would come to the scene of the disturbance on horseback and at full tilt, they would be caught, throwing those who would come in contact with the rope or vine off the horse, sometimes badly injuring the riders. [A number of slave narratives mention slaves putting vines or ropes across roads to knock patrollers off their horses.] – Perry Lewis, ex-slave from Kent Island, Maryland (MD, pp.49-50)

### SLAVES AND RELIGION

Religious tolerance on the part of owners varied. Some forbade any religious expression and punished slaves caught praying. Some slaves were told to not be caught praying for freedom. A couple of the narratives I read noted that the master had a church built on the plantation for the slaves' use. Some owners let the slaves go to the owners' white churches, where, in some cases, the preachers told them to obey their masters. On a number of plantations the owners read the Bible to their slaves. Some slaves seem to have had their own approach to religion and worshiped in cabins on their plantations or at meetings off of the plantations.

Mother said no prayer meetings wus allowed de slaves in Virginia where she stayed. Dey turned pots down ter kill de noise an' held meetings at night. Dey had niggers ter watch an' give de alarm if dey saw de white folks comin'. Day always looked out for patterrollers. – Kitty Hill, ex-slave from near Petersburg and then Pittsboro, Virginia (NC1, p.203)

Slaves were pretty tired after their long day's work in the field. Sometimes we would, unbeknown to our master, assemble in a cabin and sing songs and spirituals. Our favorite spirituals were "Bringin' in de sheaves," "De stars am shinin' for us all," "Hear de angels callin,'" and "The devil has no place here." The singing was usually to the accompaniment of a Jew's harp and fiddle, or banjo. – Dennis Simms, ex-slave from Maryland (MD, pp.61-62)

We didn' go to church, but Sundays we'd gather 'roun' an' listen to the mistis read a little out o' the Bible. The marster said we didn' need no religion an' he finally stopped her from readin' to us. – Charlie Moses, ex-slave from Marion County, Mississippi (MS, p.115)

Dare wus no churches on de plantation, but we had prayer meetin's in our homes. We went to de white folks church. My father used to take me by de hand an' carry me ter church. Daddy belonged ter de Iron Side Baptist Church. – Jerry Hinton, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.204)

We ain't had no sociables, but we went to church on Sunday an' dey preached to us dat we'd go ter hell alive iffen we sassed our white folks. – Mattie Curtis, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1 p.105)

Prayer meetings were held at night in the cabins of the slaves. On Sunday we went to the white folk's church. We sat in a barred-off place, in the back of the church or in a gallery. – Rev. Squire Dowd, ex-slave from Moore County, North Carolina (NC1, p.127)

[Mammy] said dey went to de white folk's church. . . . De preachers tolle 'em dey had to obey dere missus and master. – Lizzie Baker, ex-slave from Duplin County, North Carolina (NC1, p.36)

On Sundays we went ter church at de same place de white folkses did. De white folkses rid an' de niggers walked. . . . – Lucy Brown, ex-slave from Person County, North Carolina (NC1, p.75).

There was no church on the farm, but we were members of the old side Methodist church, having a colored preacher. The church was a long

ways from the farm. – Menellis Gassaway, ex-slave from Carroll County, Maryland (MD, p.17)

There was no church on the plantation; the slaves attended church on the next plantation, where the owner had a large slave church, he was a Baptist preacher, I attended the white church with the Randolph children [because his father was the master]. I was generally known and called Jim Randolph. I was baptized by the white Baptist minister and christened by a Methodist minister. – James Calhart James, ex-slave from South Carolina (MD, p.35)

There were no churches on the plantation but prayer meeting' were held in the [slave] quarters. Slaves were not allowed to go to the white folks' church unless they were coach drivers, etc. No sir, not in that community. They taught the slaves the Bible. – John C. Bectom, ex-slave from near Fayetteville, North Carolina (NC1, p.48)

(Interviewer of free black who did preaching:) By special permission of plantation owners in Prince George, St. Mary's, Baltimore and other counties in Maryland, he was often given permission to visit the darkeys and conduct a religious meeting in their cabins. He usually wore a long-tailed black "Kentucky" suit with baggy trousers and sported a cane. – "Parson" Resin Williams, 115 years old at time of interview, an ex-slave from Prince Georges County, Maryland (MD, p.75)

No one on the place was taught to read or write. On Sunday the slaves who wanted to worship would gather at one of the large cabins with one of the overseers present and have their church. After which the overseer would talk. When communion was given the overseer was paid for staying there with half of the collection plate taken up, some time he would get 25 cents. No one could read the Bible. Sandy Jasper, Mr. Ashbie's coachman was the preacher, he would go to the white Baptist church on Sunday with [the master's] family and would be better informed because he heard the white preacher.

Twice each year, after harvest and after New Year's, the slaves would have their protracted meeting or their revival and after each closing they would baptize in the creek, sometimes in the winter they would break the ice singing "Going to the Water" or some other hymn of that nature. And at each funeral, the Ashbies would attend the service conducted in the cabin where the deceased was, from there taken to the slave graveyard. A lot dedicated for that purpose, situated about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from cabins near a hill.

– Rev. Silas Jackson, ex-slave from Virginia (MD, p.32)

Mr. and Mrs. Dorsey conducted regular religious services of the Catholic church on the farm in a chapel erected for that purpose and in

which the slaves were taught the catechism and some learned how to read and write and were assisted by some Catholic priests who came to the farm on church holidays and on Sundays for that purpose. When a child was born it was baptized by the priest, and given names and they were recorded in the Bible. We were taught the rituals of the Catholic church and when any one died, the funeral was conducted by a priest, the corpse was buried in the Dorsey's graveyard, a lot of about 1½ acres, surrounded by cedar trees and well cared for. The only difference in the graves was that the Dorsey people had marble markers and the slaves had plain stones. – Charles Coles, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, pp.4-5)

We had a graveyard on the place. Whites were buried inside of railing and the slaves on the outside. The members of the white family had tombstones, the colored had headstones and cedar post to show where they were buried. – Richard Macks, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.54)

Dey baptized people [apparently referring to slaves] in creeks and ponds. – Hannah Crasson, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.93)

We didn't have many tear-downs an' prayer meetin's an' sich, case de fuss sturbed ole missus who wuz kinder sickly. When we did have sompin' we turned down a big wash-pot in front of de do', an' it took up de fuss, an' folkses in de yard can't hyar de fuss. – Henry Bobbitt, ex-slave from Warren County, North Carolina (NC1, p.60)

No prayer meetings wus allowed on de plantation. . . . – Charlie H. Hunter, Wake County, ex-slave from North Carolina (NC1, p.216)

Us niggers never have chance to go to Sunday School and church. The white folks feared for niggers to get any religion and education, but I reckon somethin' inside jes told us about God and that there was a better place hereafter. We would sneak off and have prayer meetin'. Sometimes the paddyrollers catch us and beat us good but that didn't keep us from tryin'. I remember one old song we use to sing when we meet down in the woods back of the barn. My mother she sing an' pray to the Lord to deliver us out o' slavery. – W. L. Bost, ex-slave from near Newton, North Carolina (NC1, p.70)

I went to church and Sunday school when I was a child, when they could ketch me. – Alex Huggins, ex-slave from New Bern, North Carolina (NC1, p.215)

## SLAVE SOCIAL LIFE

Slave masters varied in how much they allowed slaves to have a social life in regards to music, dancing, and visiting. Some allowed or even supported such things, whereas some forbade them. Many owners allowed slaves to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the Fourth of July.

We had suppers an' socials, generally gatherings for eatin', socials jist to git together an' eat. – George W. Harris, ex-slave from Jones County, North Carolina (NC1, p.177)

After work was done, the slaves would smoke, sing, tell ghost stories and tales, dances, music, home-made fiddles. . . . We had all legal holidays. Christmas morning we went to the big house and got presents and had a big time all day. . . .

When we wanted to meet at night we had an old conk, we blew that. We all would meet on the bank of the Potomac River and sing across the river to the slaves in Virginia, and they would sing back to us.

- James V. Deane, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.8)

They were not allowed to attend any dances or parties unless they slipped off unknown's. They had candy pullings sometimes too. While they would be there the patterrollers would visit them. Sometimes the patterrollers whipped all they caught at this place, all they set their hands on, unless they had a pass. – John C. Bectom, ex-slave from near Fayetteville, North Carolina (NC1, p.47)

We had dances and other socials durin' Christmas times. Dey give us de Christmas holidays. – Robert Hinton, ex-slave from near Raleigh, North Carolina (NC1, p.208)

Dey went up de riber to other plantations ter dances an' all dem things, an' dey wuz awful fond uv singin' songs. Dat's whut dey done after dey comes ter dere cabins at de end o' de day. De grown folkses sings an' somebody pickin' de banjo. De favorite song wuz 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' an' 'Play on yo' Harp Little David'. – Alice Baugh, ex-slave from Wendell, North Carolina (NC1, p.43)

Dey gave us Christmas holidays, an' 4th of July. . . . – George W. Harris, ex-slave from Jones County, North Carolina (NC1, p.177)

Marse Rufus uster let us take Sadday evenin' off an' go swimmin' er fishin' er go ter Raleigh. I 'members dat somebody in town had a fuss wid Marse Rufus 'bout lettin' his niggers run loose in town. Marse Rufus after dat had a oberseer in town ter see 'bout his niggers. – Eustace Hodges, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.212)

We used to have candy pullin's, an' I et more ash cakes den anybody. . . . We had dances in de winter time, and other plays. – Zeb Crowder, ex-slave from North Carolina (?) (NC1, p.97)

My daddy wus a fiddler, an' he sometimes played fer de dances at de Cross Roads, a little village near de marster's place. All what ain't been mean could go, but de mean ones can't, an' de rest o' us has ter habe a pass ter keep de patterrollers from gittin us.

Yes mam, we had our fun at de dances, co'n chuckin's, candy pullin's, an' de gatherin's an we sarbed de master better by habin' our fun.

– Bill Crump, ex-slave from Davidson County, North Carolina (NC1, p.101)

We ain't played no games ner sung no songs. . . . – Jennylin Dunn, ex-slave from Wake Cunty, North Carolina (NC1, p.131)

### SLAVE CHILDREN AND GAMES

Some slave children had a carefree life and played games among themselves and/or the master's children, while other slave children had it harder. There are a number of cases of slave children being treated cruelly by the master and/or mistress.

When I wuz a boy we chillun played marbles, prison base, blind fold and tag, hide an' seek. – George W. Harris, ex-slave from Jones County, North Carolina (NC1, p.177)

We played the games uv marbles, blind fold, jumpin', and racin', and jumpin' the rope. – Joe High, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.198)

We played no games in slavery time. – Charlie H. Hunter, Wake County, ex-slave from North Carolina (NC1, p.216)

De white and cullud chillen played together, all over de place. Dey went fishin' and rode de plough hosses and run de calves and colts and such devilmint. – Harriet Collins, ex-slave from Houston, Texas (TX1, p.173)

De chilluns uster play Hide an' Seek, an' Leap Frog, an' . . . was happy. – Alice Baugh, ex-slave from Wendell, North Carolina (NC1, p.43)

The only games we played were marbles, mumble pegs, and ring plays. We sang London Bridge. - James V. Deane, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.8)

When I was a small boy I used to run races with other boys, play marbles and have jumping contests. – Richard Macks, ex-slave from Charles County, Maryland (MD, p.56)

As a child I was very fond of dancing, especially the jig and buck. . . . I played children's plays of that time, top, marbles and another game we called skinny. Skinny was a game played on trees and grape vines. – James Wiggins, ex-slave from Maryland (MD, p.67)

#### SLAVES COULDN'T REFER TO THEIR FATHER AS "FATHER"

I do not know how universally true this was.

We called our fathers 'daddy' in slavery time. Dey would not let slaves call deir fathers 'father'. Dey called 'em 'daddy', an' white children called deir father, 'Pa'. – Jerry Hinton, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.204)

#### MASTER GAVE PUPPIES TO A SLAVE GIRL WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

Massa John had a fine bird dog. She was a mammy dog and one day she foun' six puppies out in de harness house. Dey was mos' all girl puppies so massa gwine drown 'em. I axed him to give 'em to me and purty soon de missus sent me to de pos' office, so I put de puppies in a basket and took 'em wid me. Dr. Lyles come by whar I was settin' and he say, "Want to sell dem pups, Siney?" I tell him, uh-huh. Den he say, "What 'nomination is dey?" I tell him, dey's Methodis' dogs. He didn' say no mo'. Bout a week after dat ole missus sent me to de pos' office again, so I took my basket of puppies. Sho' nuff, 'long come Dr. Lyles and he say, "Siney, see you still ain't sold dem pups". I say "Naw-suh". Den he axed me ag'in what 'nomination dey b'long to. I tole him dey was Baptis' dogs. He say, "How come? You tole me las' week dem was Methodis' pups." Ha-ha! Bless God!, look like he had me. But I say, "Yas-suh, but you see, Doctah, dey got dere eyes open since den!" He laff and go on down to his newspaper office. – Siney Bonner, ex-slave from near Pickensville, Alabama (AL, p.33)