

SLAVE NARRATIVES (PART 3)

SLAVES ACCOMPANYING MASTERS TO WAR

Some slaves joined the Confederacy by force while others did so voluntarily. Some fought in the war beside their masters as soldiers, and others functioned as servants to their masters. (Some slaves were forced to support the war in other ways. Here is an entry from the Nancy Robinson diaries which shows that a number of them were required to support the Confederacy by handling horses: “**Feb. 19, 1865** Mr. Robertson from Charleston [MS] came to press negro men for government service to drive teams [of horses]. I road to Alban to bring the required man for one from each family would be enough.”)

When de big war broke out I sho’ stuck by my marster. I ‘fit de Yankees same as he did. I went in de battles ‘long side o’ him an’ both fit under Marse Robert E. Lee. – Isaac Steir, ex-slave from Jefferson County, Mississippi (MS, p.146)

When de war come...young Marse Bill went. He went an’ took my brother Sim wid him. Marse Bill took Sim along to look after his hoss an’ everything. – Temple Herndon, ex-slave from Chatham County, North Carolina (NC1, p.137)

(Interviewer:) She remembers that all the “quality” young men who went to the war from Talbotton took Negro man-servants (slaves) along with them. These were usually called body-servants, and it was a body-servant’s duty to cook, wash, and do general valet service for his master. In a pinch, he was also supposed to raid a hen roost, or otherwise rustle food for his “white fokes.” – Mary Ferguson, ex-slave from Maryland and Tolbotton, Georgia (GA1, p.183)

(Interviewer:) When the Master’s son John Harris went to war, Charlie went with him as his body guard, and when asked what his duties were, he replied:

“I looked after Master John, tended the horses and tents. . . .
. . . “I loved young Marster John, and he loved me, and I just had to watch over that boy, and he came through all right.”
– Charlie Aarons, ex-slave from Jasper County, Mississippi (AL, p.8)

During the war . . . Simon served as body guard for John Edward Watkins, son of the plantation owner. Body guards went with their owners and cleaned the guns, kept the camp in order and did some cooking. – Simon Phillips, ex-slave from Greensboro, Alabama (AL, p.240)

SLAVE SENT TO WAR IN PLACE OF MASTERS

One day Marster Bob comes to me and says, “Jim, how you like to jine de army?” You see, de war had started. I says to him, “What does I have to do?” And he says, “Tend hosses and ride ‘em.” I was young den and thought it would be lots of fun, so I says I’d go. So de first thing I knows, I’s in de army away off east from here, somewhar dis side of St. Louis and in Tennessee and Arkansas and other places. I goes in de army ‘stead of Dr. Carroll.

After I gits in de army, it wasn’t so much fun, ‘cause tendin’ hosses and ridin’ wasn’t all I does. No, sar, I was to do shootin’ and git shot at!

– James Cape, ex-slave from southeast Texas (TX1, p.141)

SLAVES TAUGHT TO FEAR YANKEES

Many slave owners told their slaves lies about the Yankees in order to keep the slaves from cooperating with Yankee raiders or running to the Yankees to gain freedom.

All I done wus fer de Rebels. I wus wid ‘em an’ I jus’ done what I wus tole. I wus afraid of de Yankees ‘cause de Rebels had told us dat de Yankees would kill us. Dey tole us dat de Yankees would bore holes in our shoulders an’ wurk us to carts. Dey tole us we would be treated a lot worsor dan dey wus treating us. – Andrew Boone, ex-slave from Northampton County, North Carolina (NC1, p.66)

When dey hyard dat de Yankees wuz on dere way ter hyar dey says ter us dat dem Yankees eats little nigger youngins, an’ we shore stays hid. – Jennylin Dunn, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.131)

THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

[The Yanks] took me off [the plantation] an’ put me in de war. Firs’ dey shipped me on a gunboat an’, nex’, dey made me he’p dig a canal at Vicksburg. I was on de gunboat when it shelled de town. It was turrible, seein’ folks a-tryin’ to blow each other up. Whilst us was bulldoggin’ Vicksburg in front, a Yankee army slipped in behin’ de Rebels an’ penned ‘em up. – James Lucus, ex-slave from Wilkinson County, Mississippi (Lucus was one of Jefferson Davis’ slaves before the war) (MS, p.95)

(Isaac Stier fought with his master for the Confederacy and was at the Siege of Vicksburg.) De hongriest I ever been was at de Siege o’ Vicksburg. Dat was a time I’d lak to forgit. De folks et up all de cats an’ dogs an’ den went to devourin’ de mules an’ hosses. Even de wimmin an’ little chillun was a’starvin’. Dey stummicks was stickin’ to dey backbones. Us Niggers was sufferin’ so us took de sweaty hoss blankets an’ soaked

‘em in mudholes where de hosses tromped. Den us wrung ‘em out in buckets an’ drunk dat dirty water. . . .

I tell you, dem Yankees took us by starvation. Twant a fair fight. . . . Us folks was starved into surrenderin’. . . .

. . . De war was over in May 1865, but I was captured at Vicksburg an’ hel’ in jail ‘till I ‘greed to take arms wid de Nawth. . . . I was all de time hopin’ I could slip off an’ work my way back home, but de Yankees didn’ turn me loose ‘till 1866.

– Isaac Stier, ex-slave from Jefferson County, MS (MS, pp.146-148)

YANKEE RAIDS (SOME OF THE YANKEES MENTIONED IN THIS SECTION WERE PROBABLY GENERAL SHERMAN’S TROOPS, WHICH BURNED AND LOOTED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE SOUTH)

Some of de Yankees wuz in de smoke house gettin’ de meat, some of dem wuz at de stables getting’ de ho’ses, an’ some of dem wuz in de house getting’ de silver an’ things. . . . Dey went in de parlor an’ got de gol’ clock dat wuz Mis’ Mary Jane’s gran’mammy’s. Den dey got all de jewelry out of Mis’ Mary Jane’s box.

Dey went up to Mis’ Mary Jane, an’ while she looked at dem wid her black eyes snappin’, dey took de rings off her fingers; den dey took her gol’ bracelet; dey even took de ruby ear rings out of her ears an’ de gol’ comb out of her hair.

– Ida Adkins, ex-slave from Louisburg, North Carolina (NC1, p.11)

(This entry probably pertains to Gen. Sherman’s troops going through Georgia.) Dem Yankees, wid pretty blue clothes on come through our place and dey stole most evvything our Marster had. Dey kilt his chickens, hogs, and cows and tuk his hosses off and sold ‘em. – Rachel Adams, ex-slave from Putman County, Georgia (GA1, p.10)

(This entry probably pertains to Gen. Sherman’s troops going through Georgia.) When dem Yankee sojers come . . . dem fellows went all through our big house and stole whatever dey wanted. Dey got all of Mist’ess’ best sliver ‘cause us didn’t have no time to hide it atter us knowed dey was nigh ‘round de place. Dey tuk all de somepin’ t’ eat dere was in de big house. When dey had done et all dey wanted and tuk evvything else dey could carry off, dey called us negroes up ‘fore deir captain, an he said all of us was free and could go anytime and anywhar us wanted to go. – Nancy Smith, ex-slave from Athens, Georgia (GA3, p.164)

Dey had done et up ever’thing and toted off what dey didn’t eat. Dey tuk all Massa’s stock, burned down de smokehouse atter dey tuk de

meat out, an dey burned de barn, an' we'all think ever' time dat dey goin' to burn de house down, but dey musta forgot to do dat. – Rufus Dirt, ex-slave from Tuscaloosa, Alabama (AL, p.93)

I suppose dem Yankees was all right in dere place . . . but dey neber belong in de South. Why, Miss, one of 'em axe me what was dem white flowers in de fiel'? You'd think dat a gent'man wid all dem decorations on hissself woulda knowed a fiel' a cotton. – Hannah Irwin, ex-slave from near Louisville, Alabama (AL, p.168)

(This entry probably pertains to Gen. Sherman's troops going through Georgia.) When de war broke out de damn Yankees come to our place dey done eve'ything dat was bad. Dey burn eve'ything dey couldn't use, and dey tuck a heap o' corn. Marster had a thousand bushels de purtiest shucked corn, al nice good ears, in de pen at de house. Dey tuck all dat. Marster had some corn pens on de river, dough, dey didn't find. I jes' can't tell you all dey done. – Ferebe Rogers, ex-slave from Baldwin County, Georgia (GA3, p.119)

(This entry probably pertains to Gen. Sherman's troops going through Georgia.) I 'members dem Yankees comin' down de big road a-stealin' as dey went 'long. Dey swapped deir bags of bones for de white folkses good fat hosses. . . . Dem Yankees stole all da meat, chickens, and good bedclothes and burnt down de houses. Dey done devilment aplenty as dey went 'long. – Will Sheets, ex-slave from Oconee County, Georgia (GA3, p.134)

(This entry probably pertains to Gen. Sherman's troops going through Georgia.) When de Yankees come, all de young marsters was off in de 'Federate side. I see them now, gallopin' to de house, canteen boxes on their hips and de bayonets rattlin' by deir sides. De fust thing they ask, was: 'You got any wine?' They search de house; make us sing: 'Good, Old Time 'Ligion'; put us to runnin' after de chickens and a cookin'. When they leave they burnt de gin house and everything in dere. They burn de smoke-house and wind up wid burnin' de big house. – Anne Broome, ex-slave from near White Oak, South Carolina (SC1, p.74)

I 'members one day my young master, Green High, and me wuz standin' in de front yard when two men came down the avenue from de main road to the house. Dey wanted to know how fer it wuz to Green High's. Master told 'em it wuz about 2 miles away and gave 'em the direction. Dey were Yankees. Dey got on their horses and left. Dey didn't know dey wuz talking to Green High then. When dey left, master left. I didn't see him no more in a long time. Soon next day the yard wuz full uv Yankee soldiers. I 'members how de buttons on dere uniforms shined. Dey got corn, meat, chickens, and everything they wanted. Day didn't burn the

house. – Joe High, ex-slave from Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.198)

GENERAL SHERMAN'S TROOPS

I 'member de Yankees comin' and searchin' de house, takin' off de cows, mules, hosses, and burnin' de gin-house and cotton. They say dat was General Sherman's orders. They was 'lowed to leave de dwellin' house standin', in case of a doctor or preacher. – Henry Davis, ex-slave from South Carolina (SC1, p.168)

When Sherman and the Yankees were marching through they took all of the live stock but bothered nothing else. The buildings on the adjoining plantation were all burned. – Henry Bland, ex-slave near Edenton, Georgia (GA1, p.52)

Some of the Yankees entered the house, tore up the interior, and threw the furniture out doors. Another group robbed the smokehouse and smashed so many barrels of syrup that it ran in a stream through the yard. They carried much of the meat off with them and gave the remainder to the slaves. Chickens were caught, dressed, and fried on the spot. . . .

When they had eaten as much as they desired, a search for the corral was made, but the mules were so well hidden that they were not able to find them. Della's father's hands were tied behind him and he was then forced to show them the hiding place.

– Della Briscoe, ex-slave from Putnam County, Georgia (GA1, p.77)

I was in Atlanta...when General Sherman came to that town 'parin' his men for to go home. There was about two thousand in all, white and black. They marched up and down Marietta Street from three o'clock in the evening 'till seven o'clock next morning. Then they left. I remember well that there warn't a house left standing in Atlanta, what warn't riddled with shell holes. I was scared pretty nigh to death. . . . – Susan McIntosh, ex-slave from Oconee County, Georgia (GA3, p.49)

Us seed de Yankees whin' Gen'l Sherman come marching through our plantation. An ef Ah live fur thousand yeahs Ah'd never fergit dat day! Ah ain't nivver seed so many men in one crowd befo' er since, an de las' one uv em' wearing de same kind of clo'es. Dey come right up in de yahd, an a passel of 'em tromped right into de Big House, jist lak it was dare'n. Dey turned ebrything wrong side out'ards a-lookin' fer de sliver an de jewl'ry, but Ole Missus, she done had news dey was comin' an all de stuff was hid in de woods. Whin dey couldn't fin' de plate an' jewl'ry, dey was hoppin mad, an atter takin' all de hams an rations dey could tote off dey sot fire to de smoke-house, an' de bahn an' all de cotton dat was piled

around de ginhouse, to keep de Confederits frum gittin it, dey said. Dey took all de good houses [horses] an' mules an' lef' dere old hongry, broke-down nags dat won't fittin' fer nothin' 'cept fert'lize. But dey din't hu't nobody, not eben Cookie when she tuck er broom atter em in de kitchen. – Simon Walker, ex-slave from Forsyth, Georgia (AL, p.312)

REBEL TROOPS DISTURB SOUTHERN HOMES

Some Southern troops were respectful of the civilians they were defending, and plantation owners supported them as best they could when they were in their area. Other Southern troops were less respectful. General Wheeler's Confederate cavalry was especially notorious for abusing fellow Southerners. They are mentioned with disdain in a number of slave narratives.

Our own sojers did more harm on our plantation den de Yankees. Dey camped in de woods an' never did have nuff to eat an' took what dey wanted [from us]. – Lindsay Faucette, ex-slave from North Carolina (NC1, p.146)

I 'members when Wheelers Cavalry come through. Dey was 'Federates but dey was mean as de Yankees. Dey stold everything dey could find an' killed a pile of niggers. . . . Dey ax de niggahs if dey wanted to be free. If dey say yes, den dey shot dem down. . . . – Sarah Debro, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1, p.120)

REBELS MIGHT HAVE TREATED NORTH SAME AS NORTH TREATED SOUTH

When de Yankees come they took off all they couldn't eat or burn, but don't let's talk 'bout dat. Maybe if our folks had beat them and git up into dere country our folks would of done just like they did. – Louisa Davis, ex-slave from Fairfield, South Carolina (SC1, p.193)

KIND SLAVE OWNERS

Just as slave owners who used torture were the exception, so were the slave owners who were humane. There were certainly some cases, perhaps a very small percent, where slave owners deeply cared about their slaves, and a close bond developed between master and slave.

** '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. . . .
. . . [He] never whipped none of his negroes, not dat I ever heard of. He tole 'em what he wanted done, and gave 'em plenty of time to do it.
– Anna Parkes, ex-slave in Georgia (GA3, pp.88-89)

** (Interviewer:) With a few slaves and a small farm, Master Ingram was very lenient and kind to his slaves and usually worked with

them in the fields. (G. W. Patillo:) “We had no special time to begin or end the work for the day. If he got tired he would say, ‘Alright, boys, let’s stop and rest,’ and sometimes we didn’t start working until late in the day.” . . .

(Interviewer:) . . . Mr. and Mrs. Ingram never punished the children, nor allowed anyone but their parents to do so. If the boy became unruly, Mrs. Ingram would call his mother and say, “Harriett, I think G.W. needs to be taken down a button hole lower.”

– G. W. Patillo, ex-slave in Georgia (Ga3, p.93)

Mistus sho’ was good to . . . all ‘er niggers, an’ dey all loved ‘er. Us allus had plenty of evvything, she made us wear plenty of good warm clo’se. . . .

. . . Mos’ of de slaves stayed with Mistus after freedom come, ‘cause dey all loved her, an’ dey didn’ have no place to go. Mistus fed ‘em jes’ lak’ she had allus done and paid ‘em a little money too. . . .

All de niggers on de udder places called us free niggers long ‘fo’ freedom come, ‘cause we didn’ have no whipping post, an’ if any of us jes’ had to be whipped, Mistus would see dat dey warn’t beat bad ‘nough to leave no stripes. . . .

. . . I lef’ de old place not long atter Mistus died, ‘cause hit was too lonesome dar an’ I missed her so much.

– Georgia Smith, ex-slave from Oglethorpe County, Georgia (GA3, pp.152-154)

My aunt’s husband was freed at least 15 years before de war started. His master died and he was freed by a will when the master went to de court house in Ste. Genevieve. Now, just listen good. Dis master willed 800 acres to his slaves who divided up de farm. Before he died he put down in a way dat his daughters and sons-in-laws could not break it ‘cepting dey would raise several thousand dollars. De old slaves would sit down and tell us about it. De master turns in and pays de taxes up for 100 years. . . . My uncle’s part was 40 acres. . . . – Peter Corn, ex-slave from New Tennessee, Missouri (MO, p.90)

My first owner’s name was George Whitehorn and his wife’s was Jackie Whitehorn. When old Marse George died, we was handed down to Joseph Whitehorn in Miss Jackie’s will. She knowed long before freedom we were going to be free, so she had in her will dat her darkies – she always called us darkies – had caused dem to have all dey owned and it was no more dan right when we git free to divide up de plantation so every one of us could make a good livin’ on de livin’ we done made for dem, and dey still own and have plenty. She was a good old soul. She didn’t want a one of us to leave, even after freedom was declared. She said she would never live to see it and she didn’t either. She died ‘fore we was free, and dem chillum never did carry out her will neither.

‘Cause dey didn’t give a one of us nothin’, no, nothin’ at all.
– Mary Divine, ex-slave from Carroll County, Tennessee (MO,
pp.102-103)

SOME SLAVE OWNERS KIND DUE TO SELF-INTEREST

Some, if not most, slave owners who were humane did so out of self-interest.

** Nobody was bein’ mean to me. No, I was’nt bein’ whipped. . . .
What pusson with any sense is goin’ to take his horse or his cow an’ beat
it up? It’s prope’ty. We was prope’ty. Val’able prope’ty. – Alex Huggins,
ex-slave in North Carolina (NC1, p.214)

Miss, white folks jus’ had to be good to sick slaves, ‘cause slaves
was property. For Old Marster to lose a slave, was losin’ money. – Rachel
Adams, ex-slave from Putman County, Georgia (GA1, p.9)

Health of slaves was very important to every slave owner for loss
of life meant loss of money to them. Consequently, they would call in
their family doctor, if a slave became seriously ill. – Celestia Avery, ex-
slave from Troupe County, Georgia (GA1, p.21)

The Cavins allus thunk [thought] lots of their niggers and Grandma
Maria say, “Why shouldn’t they – it was their money.” – Will Adams, ex-
slave from Harrison County, Texas (TX1, p.11)

Mistis never ‘lowed no mistreatin’ of de slaves, ‘case dey was
raisin’ slaves for de market, an’ it wouldn’t be good bizness to mistreat
‘em. – Joseph Holmes, ex-slave from Virginia (AL, p.149)

WRONG TO BUY, SELL, OWN SLAVES EVEN CONDITIONS WERE KIND

Quite a few former slaves said they were treated pretty well and not whipped or punished
very often. Some even said they were only whipped when they deserved it. A small
percentage of slaves had very humane conditions (for slavery). At the same time, the
narratives contain a number of examples of harsh, even sadistic, treatment. Regardless of
how kind some slave owners were, the main point is that it was wrong for people to buy,
sell, and own other human beings. By its very nature slavery, is cruel and inhumane.

** I allus had de good marster. He sho’ was good to us, but you
knows dat ain’t de same as bein’ free. - Green Cumby, ex-slave from
Texas (TX1, p.186)

** It’s bad to belong to folks dat own you soul an’ body. – Delia
Garlic, ex-slave from Virginia and Georgia (AL, p.102)

WHITE FOLKS WERE THE ONES THAT WERE LAZY

The white Southern stereotype that the black race is lazy is interesting in light of these comments by former slaves.

Women had to work all day in de fields an' come home an' do de house work at night while de white folks hardly done a han's [a worker's] turn of work. – Analiza Foster, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC, p.151)

** De rich white folks nebbah did no wok; dey had da'kies t' do it foah dem. In de summah we had t' wok outdoo's, in de wintah in de house. I had t' ceard an' spin [card and spin wool] till ten o'clock. Nebbah git much rest, had t' git up at foah de nex' mawnin' an' sta't again. Didn' get much t' eat, nuthah...Lawdy, honey, yo' caint know what a time I had. All cold n' hungry. – Sarah Gudger, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC p.168)

Lord, pray Jesus, de white people sho been mighty proud to see dey niggers spreadin out [on their plantations] in dem days. . . . Yes, mam, dey was glad to have a heap of colored people 'bout dem cause white folks couldn' work den no more den dey can work dese days like de colored people can. Reckon dey love to have dey niggers back yonder just like dey loves to have dem dese days to do what dey ain' been cut out to do. – Josephine Bacchus, ex-slave in South Carolina (?) (SC1, p.21)

Our old mistus, she try to be good to us, I reckon, but she was terribly lazy. She had two of us wait on her and then she didn' treat us good. – Temple Cummins, ex-slave from Brookeland, Texas (TX1, p.187)

SOME EX-SLAVES BELIEVED THAT SLAVERY WAS A GOOD THING

Some former slaves preferred slavery to freedom because they had food, clothing, and shelter, and in their opinion, their former masters were not overbearing. Surviving after slavery was extremely difficult for many ex-slaves, in part due to their lack of preparedness for independence, including almost universal illiteracy and the rampant racism on the part of whites.

I think slavery was a mighty good thing for mother, father, me and the other members of the family, and I cannot say anything but good for my old marster and missus, but I can only speak for those whose conditions I have known during slavery and since. For myself and them, I will say again, slavery was a mighty good thing. – Mary Anderson, ex-slave in Wake County, North Carolina (NC1, p.19)

Yo' axes me what I thinks of Massa Lincoln? Well, I thinks dat he wuz doin' de wust thing dat he could ter turn all dem fool niggers loose when dey ain't got no place ter go an' nothin' ter eat. Who helped us out den? Hit wuzn't de Yankees, hit wuz de white folkses what wuz left wid der craps in de fiel's, an' wuz robbed by dem Yankees, ter boot. My ole

massa, fur instance, wuz robbed uv his fine hosses an' his feed stuff an' all dem kaigs o' liquor what he done make hisself, sides his money an' silver.

Slavery wuz a good thing den, but de world jist got better an' outgrewed it.

– Henry Bobbitt, ex-slave from Warren County, North Carolina (NC1, p.61)

SOME EX-SLAVES GLAD TO BE FREE

We wuz glad ter be free even do' we had good white folks. De work hours wuz from daybreak till dark, an' de wimmens had ter card an' spin [wool] so much eber night. We had our own chickens an' gyarden an' little ways of makin' money, but not so much fun.– Elbert Hunger, ex-slave near Raleigh, North Carolina (NC1, p.219)

(Interviewer:) When asked his opinion of slavery and of freedom Mr. Lewis said that he would rather be free because to a certain degree he is able to do as he pleases, on the other hand he did not have to worry about food and shelter as a slave as he has to do now at times. – George Lewis, ex-slave from Troupe County, Georgia (GA3, p.29)

(Interviewer:) Before freedom was declared Mr. Favors says that he prayed all of the time because he never wanted to be whipped with the cowhide, like others he had seen. Further he says that it was a happy day for him when he was told that he could do as he pleased because he realized then that he could do some of the things that he had always wanted to do. – Lewis Favor, ex-slave from Merriweather County, Georgia (GA1, p.180)

I knows I wuz fixed a heap better fo' de War, than I is now, but I sho' don't want no slav'ry to come back. It would be fine effen evvy Negro had a marster like Jedge Lumpkin, but dey won't all dat sort. – Anna Parkes, ex-slave from Athens, Georgia (GA3, p.90)

(Interviewer:) Because of the cruel treatment that she received at the hands of some of her owners, Mrs. Rush says that the mere thought of slavery makes her blood boil. – Julie Rush, ex-slave from Saint Simons Island, Georgia (GA3, p.128)

We wuz glad ter be free, an' lemmie tell yo', we shore cussed ole marster out 'fore we left dar. . . . I'se always been a farmer an' I'se made right good. I lak de white folks an' dey laks me but I'll tell yo' Miss, I'd ruther be a nigger any day dan to be lak my ole white folks wuz. – Charlie Crump, ex-slave from Evan's Ferry, North Carolina (NC1, p.104)

SOME EX-SLAVES CHOSE TO STAY WITH FORMER MASTERS AFTER THE WAR

Slaves often referred to the end of the war as “the surrender.” A factor in whether or not freed slaves stayed on the plantation after the war was how kind or cruel their previous owners and overseers had been. Another factor was how difficult it would be to survive off the plantation.

My marster, and my mistress, they was sho' all right white folkses. .

. . . One mornin' [after the surrender] Marster blowed the bugle his own self and called us all up to the big 'ouse yard. He told us: 'You all jus' as free as I is. You are free from under the taskmarster but you ain't free from labor. You gotter labor and wuk hard effen you aims to live and eat and have clothes to wear. You kin stay here and wuk for me, or you kin go wharsomever you please.' He said he 'ud pay us what was right, and...they didn't narry a nigger on our plantation leave our marster then! I wukked on with Marster for 40 years after the war!

– James Bolton, ex-slave from Oglethorpe County, Georgia (GA1, pp.56, 61)

Mother was glad and sorry too that she was free. Marse John had been so good to all his slaves that none of them really wanted to leave him. We stayed on a while, then mother left and rented a room. She worked hard and bought a house as soon as she could; others did the same. There were very few slaves that had any money at all to begin on. – Minnie Davis, ex-slave from Greene County, Georgia (GA1, p.148)

My folks stayed on wid Old Marster for 'bout a year or more. If us had left, it would have been jus' lak swappin' places from de fryin' pan to de fire, 'cause Niggers didn't have no money to buy no land wid for a long time after de war. – Ed McCree, ex-slave from Oconee County, Georgia (GA3, p.36)

'Cause master was good and kind to us, some of the other white folks used to call him 'nigger lover.' . . .

Not only was master good but his whole family was too....We slaves would eat our breakfast, and go to the fields, dare wont no hurry-scurry. . . . Master didn't make us work a 'tall in bad weather neither when it got real cold. . . . [The slaves were not supposed to work on Sunday but] lots of times we slaves would take turns on helping 'em serve Sunday meals just 'case we liked them so much. . . . We just did it on our own free will. Master sometimes gives us a little money for it too. . . .

We had plenty time to ourselves. Most of the time we spent singing and praying 'cause master was sich a good Christian and most of us had 'fessed religion. . . .

. . . When master told us we was free it didn't take much 'fect on us. He told us we could go where we pleased . . . that we didn't have to work for him any more 'less we wanted to. Most of us slaves stayed right there and raised our own crops [to eat and sell]. Master helped us much as he could. Some of us he gave a cow or mule or anything he could spare to help us. Some of us worked on the same plantation and bought our own little farms and little log cabins, and lived right there till master dies and the family moved away. Some of us lived there right on.

– Marriah Hines, ex-slave from South Hampton County, Virginia (VA, pp.28-29)

What I keer 'bout bein' free? Didn't old Marster give us plenty good sompin to eat and clo's to wear? I stayed on de plantation 'til I mah'ied [married]. – Nannie Bradfield, ex-slave from Uniontown, Alabama (AL, p.36)

SOME EX-SLAVES LEAVE PLANTATIONS OF BAD FORMER MASTERS AFTER THE WAR

After war am over Massa Tucker brung de freedom papers and read dem. He say us all am free as Hell. Old man Charley so happy he jes' roll on de floor like a hoss and kick he heels. De nex' mornin' mama start do somethin' and missy cuss her out. I turned to missy and say, "Us free as de bird." She sho' whip me for dat, but no more, 'cause she so mean us all leave. – Jacob Branch, ex-slave from Double Bayou, Texas (TX1, p.102)

SLAVES NO MORE

** When de war was over . . .

. . . One day my mammy come to de big house after me. . . .

. . . "Let her stay wid me," Mis' Polly said to Mammy.

But Mammy shook her head. "You took her away from me an' didn' pay no mind to my cryin', so now I'se takin' her back home. We's free now, Mis' Polly, we ain't gwine be slaves no more to nobody." . . . I can see how Mis' Polly looked now. She didn' say nothin' but she looked hard at Mammy an' her face was white.

– Sarah Debro, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina (NC1, pp.120-121)

SOME OWNERS AVOIDED TELLING SLAVES ABOUT FREEDOM; SOME EX-SLAVES WERE KEPT IN BONDAGE FOR YEARS AFTER THE WAR

There are quite a few examples of this among the narratives.

Boss tole us Abraham Lincoln wus dead and we were still slaves. Our boss man . . . tole us that there would not be freedom. We stayed there

another year after freedom. A lot o' de niggers knowed nothin' 'cept what missus and marster tole us. What dey said wus just de same as de Lawd had spoken to us. – Charity Austin, ex-slave from Georgia (NC1, p.33)

The war was . . . over. We didn't know we wuz free until a year later. I'se stayed on with Marse Frank's boys for twenty years. I'se did the same work fo \$35 to \$40 a year with rations thrown in. – Marshal Butler, ex-slave from Washington-Wilkes, Georgia (GA1, p.97)

(Interviewer:) After freedom was declared he was still held in bondage and hired out by the day [by Mr. Ormond, his former master]. Once he ran away but was found and brought back. In 1867 the remaining members of the Ormond family moved to Atlanta, bringing him along with them. After most of them died he was finally permitted to go or stay as he pleased. Immediately after freedom had been declared he had the good fortune to find his father. However, he never got a chance to spend any time with him as the Ormonds refused to release him. – George Eason, ex-slave from Forsyth, Georgia (GA1, pp.169-170)

After the war ended and all the slaves had been set free, some did not know it, [as] they were not told by their masters. [A number of them] were tricked into signing contracts which bound them to their masters for several years longer. – Jennie Kendricks, ex-slave from near Sheram, Georgia (GA3, p.8)

I wuz free a long time 'fo' I knew it. My Mistress still hired me out, 'till one day in talkin' to de woman she hired me to . . . she told me, "Fannie yo' are free, and I don't have to pay your Master for [your work for me]." – Fannie Berry, ex-slave from Virginia (VA, p.7)

[Mistress] didn't tell [mother] nuthin' 'bout being free [for awhile].
. . .

Den her mistress . . . tol' her . . . she coul' cook fer her jes th' same dat she would give her something to eat an' help clothe us children, dat wuz ef muma continual' to sta wid her an' work.

You see, we didn't have nuthin' an' no whar to go . . . so we all . . . jes took en stayed 'till we wuz able wid God's help to pull us selves together. But my God it wuz 'gainst our will, but, baby, [we] couldn't help ourselves. . . .

. . . Dese ol' white folks think us poor colored people is made to work an' slave fer dem, look! dey aint give you no wages worth nuthin. Gal cook all week for two an' three dollars. How can you live off it?

– Minnie Fulkes, ex-slave from Virginia (VA, pp.14-15)

When war am over he won't free me, says I'm valuable to him in his trade. He say, "Nigger, you's suppose to be free but I'll pay you a

dollar week and iffen you runs off I'll kill you." So he makes me do like befo' the war, but give me 'bout a dollar month, 'stead week.

. . . Times I don't know why I didn't die befo' I'm growed, sleepin' on the ground, winter and summer, rain and [occasional] snow.

– Frank Bell, ex-slave from New Orleans, Louisiana (TX1, pp.49-50)

[After telling the slaves they are free] he takes de little niggers and says, "De little fellows who I'se have sold dere mammies will stay wid me till dey am 21 years ole. You little fellows, I'se know you's age and I'se give yous de statement [of freedom when 21]." – James Brown, ex-slave from near Waco, Texas (TX1, p.119)

When massa come home from the war he wants let us loose, but missy wouldn't do it. I stays on and works for them six years after the war and missy whip me after the war jist like she did 'fore. [Katie Darling left when her brother came and helped her escape.] – Katie Darling, ex-slave from near Marshall, Texas (TX1, p.197)

Mother was workin' in the house, and she cooked too. She say she used to hide in the chimney corner and listen to what the white folks say. When freedom was 'clared, master wouldn't tell 'em, but mother she hear him tellin' mistus that the slaves was free but they didn' know it and he's not gwineter tell 'em till he makes another crop or two. When mother hear that she say she slip out the chimney corner and crack her heels together four times and shouts, 'I's free, I's free.' Then she runs to the field, 'gainst marster's will and tol' all the other slaves and they quit work. Then she run away and in the night she slip into a big ravine near the house and have [other slaves] bring me to her. Marster, he come out with his gun and shot at mother but she run down the ravine and gits away with me. – Temple Cummins, ex-slave from Brookeland, Texas (TX1, pp.187-188)

THE KU KLUX KLAN

After the war, the Ku Klux Klan and other violent organizations were formed to deny blacks true freedom and perpetuate white supremacy.

** I 'members dat de Ku Klux uster go ter de Free Issues houses [houses of former slaves?], strip all de family an' whup de ole folkses. Den dey dances wid de pretty yaller gals [mulatto, with white and black ancestry?] an' goes ter bed wid dem [rapes them]. Dat's what de Ku Klux wuz, a bunch of mean mens. . . . – Martha Allen, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC1, p.13)

** He wuz a good man, my gran'fathur wuz. . . . An' he made a good mayer too; people all said so, an dey wuz gonna' 'lect him fo' foe mo' year, an' de 'Ku Klux'ers said dey wuz en' gonna have no 'nigguh'

mayor. So dey tuk him out and killed him. Dey wuz awful times. – Betty Brown, ex-slave in Arkansas (MO, p.54)

** De Ku Klux kill niggers. Dey come to take my uncle. . . . Dey don't take him but tell him to vote Democrat next day or they will. . . .

Dey kill my old Uncle Davis. He wouldn't vote Democrat. Dey shoot him. . . . Dey dare his wife to cry.

– Agatha Babino, ex-slave in Louisiana (TX1, p.34)

Dem Ku Kluxes was de debbil. De Niggers sho' was scared of 'em. . . . Sometimes dey would go right in de fiel's an' take folks out an' kill 'em. – James Lucus, ex-slave from Wilkinson County, Mississippi (MS, p.96)

I was purtty good-size chile when de Ku Klux came and tried to git my daddy. Dey whipped him; den he run off and stayed off fer over seven years. . . . Dey was so scary looking dat I ain't never forgot dem. Dem's de awfulest 'boogers' I is ever see'd befo' or since. I was in de bed and so was Pa, but dey broke in our do' and got him. I kivered up my head and did not make narry a sound. – Alice Duke, ex-slave near Spartanburg, South Carolina (SC1, p.215)

FORMER SLAVES VALUED EDUCATION BUT OFTEN HAD TO FORGO SCHOOLING IN ORDER TO WORK

After de war a white woman started a school fer nigger chillen an my pa sent us. This white lady wuz a ole maid an wuz mighty poor.... My pa paid her fer teaching us in things to eat from his farm. We didn't never have no money. I loved to go to school; I had a blue back speller an I learned real quick but we didn't get ter go all the time. When there wuz work ter do on the farm we had ter stop an do it. – Susan Matthews, ex-slave from Georgia (?) (GA3, p.65)

I can tell you about after we was freed. When we was freed all the money my mama had was 50 cents. I never went to school till after I was freed. I went two winters and a little more to school near Burlington Junction. I never went a full term 'cause I had to work. – Sarah Graves, ex-slave from Missouri (MO, p.133)

CHILD, PART INDIAN, DENIED SCHOOLING

(The narration does not make it clear when this took place. Was it before her mother gave her away? Was it after slavery?) My father . . . was a Cherokee Indian . . . and my mother was a white woman. . . . My mother give me to Mr. George Naves when I was three years old. . . . My white folks tried to send me to school but de white folks wouldn't receive me in

deir school on account of I was mixed, and dere warn't no colored school a t'all, nowhere. – Harriet Miller, ex-slave from South Carolina (GA3, p.71)

POST WAR EXPLOITATION OF BLACKS; BLACK POVERTY

** I caint read an write. . . . I haint had no chance. . . . I had to depend on white folks I farmed wid to look atter my business. Some of em cheated me out of what I made. . . . Dey got mighty nigh all I made. Mr. Richard Taylor who owned a farm near Raleigh whur I stayed two years wus one of em. He charged me de same thing three times an I had it to pay. I stayed two years an made nothin'. – Addy Gill, ex-slave and sharecropper in North Carolina (NC1, p.156)

One my old Marse Will's chillum done settle close by and they let me work for them, and built me a log house and I farmed on halves [sharecropping]. They stood good for all the groceries I buyed that year. It took all I made that year to pay my debts and that's the way its been ever since. – Eli Davison, ex-slave from Dunbar, West Virginia (TX1, p.207)

** De white folks would pay niggers to lie to de rest of us niggers to git der farming done for nothin. He'd tell us come on and go with me, a man wants a gang of niggers to do some work and he pay you like money growing on trees. . . . Dey carried us by de droves to different parts of Alabama, Arkansas, and Missouri. After we got to dese places, dey put us all to work allright on dem great big farms. . . . [But] we always get through with fine big crops and owed de white man more dan we did when we started de crop, and [had] to stay to pay de debt. It was awful. All over was like that. – Ann Ulrich Evans, ex-slave in Alabama (MO, p.117)

** In slavery time they kept you down an' you had to wurk. . . . It's all hard, slavery and freedom, both bad when you can't eat. The ole bees makes de honey comb, the young bees makes de honey, niggers makes de cotton an' corn an' de white folks gets de money. Dis wus de case in Slavery time an' its de case now. De nigger do mos' de hard wurk on de farms now, and de white folks still git de money dat de nigger's labor makes. – Andrew Boone, ex-slave in North Carolina (NC1, p.66)

Freedom ain't nothin', 'less you is got somethin' to live on and a place to call home. Dis livin' on liberty is lak young folks livin' on love after they gets married. It just don't work. . . . It sho' don't hold good when you has to work, or when you gits hungry. . . . I knows what it means to be a nigger, wid nothin'. Many times I had to turn every way I knowed to git a bite to eat. – Henry Grant, ex-slave in South Carolina (SC1, p.8)

Now I gwine tell you the troof. Now that it's all over I don't find life so good in my old age, as it was in slavery time when I was chillun down on Marster's plantation. Then I didn't have to worry 'bout whar my clothes and my somepin' to eat was comin' from or whar I was gwine to sleep. Marster tuk keer of all that. Now I ain't able for to wuk and make a livin' and hit's sho' moughty hard on this old nigger. – James Bolton, ex-slave from Oglethorpe County, Georgia (GA1, p.62)

De conditions now of de colored people is of course better now cause dey is somebody. But every day dey is tryin' to starve us out and give de white man a job on de [new] state road [instead of us]. Dey do dat to keep us down. – Peter Corn, ex-slave from New Tennessee, Missouri (MO, pp.94-95)

For two years after freedom was declared I worked from farm to farm and de promise we was going to get paid, but we never got nothin' from none of dat work but de old slave cabin to sleep in and food enough just so we could work.

. . . So we had to just keep on traveling.

. . . We went to work on Sub Allen's farm for \$1.00 a week. I took sick dere and dey had to call in a doctor. My momma and me worked for him a long time, but we got ready to go and want our money he said, while I was sick it taken all he owed us to pay my doctor's bill so we didn't get nothin' dere.

– Mary Divine, ex-slave from Carroll County, Tennessee (MO, pp.104-105)

After us free dey turn us loose in de woods and dat de bad time, 'cause most us didn't know where to turn. I wasn't raise to do nothin' and I didn't know how. Dey didn't even give us a hoecake or a slice of bacon. – Minerva Bendy, ex-slave from near Woodville, Texas (TX1, p.55)

[Master] say to me I could stay [after given freedom] and cook for dem, and he give me five dollars a month and a house to stay in and all I can eat. I stays [a] month to do dere work.

After dat I wishes sometimes dat old times is back 'gain. I likes to be free, but I wasn't used to it and it was hard to know how to do.

– Issabella Boyd, ex-slave from Texas (TX1, p.86)

I 'lieve de slaves I knowed as a whole was happier and better off after 'mancipation dan befo'. Of course, de first few years it was awful hard to git' 'justed to de new life. All de slaves knowed how to do hard work, and dat de old slaves life, but dey didn't know nothin' 'bout how to 'pend on demselves for de livin'. – Thomas Cole, ex-slave from Jackson County, Alabama (TX1, p.166)

Since the nigger been free it been Hell on the poor old nigger. He has advance some ways, but he's still a servant. . . . We was turnt loose without nothin' and done been under the white man rule so long we couldn't hold no job but labor. – Eli Coleman, ex-slave from Kentucky (TX1, pp.169-170)

WHITES TOOK EVERYTHING

(Related in the late 1930s) You now it's a funny thing, de white folks took everything from us niggers, even try to take our old songs and have dem on de radio. We niggers say 'de white folks take everything, dis, dat, an' 'tother, but what we got is jes' natural borned to us. – Fil Hancock, ex-slave from Missouri (MO, p.159)

EXCERPTS PERTAINING TO CHAPTER TWO OF *ALMOST HEREDITARY* (JIM CROW ERA)

** = Used in Chapter 2 of *Almost Hereditary*

(Interviewer:) “Even after the war things were pretty tough for us,” stated Mr. Favors. “The plantation owners refused to pay more than thirty or forty cents to a person for a days work in the fields. Some of them would not allow an ex-slave to walk in the streets in front of their homes but made them take to the out-of-the-way paths through the woods to reach their various destinations. At other times white men cut the clothes from the backs of the ex-slaves when they were well dressed. If they didn't beg hard enough when thus accosted they might even be cut to death!” After the first three years following the war conditions were somewhat better, he continued. – Lewis Favor, ex-slave from Merriweather County, Georgia (GA1, p.180)

** Conditions and rules were bad and the punishments were severe and barbarous [during slavery]. Some marsters acted like savages. In some instances slaves were burned at the stake. Families were torn apart by selling. Mothers were sold from their children. Children were sold from their mothers, and the father was not considered in anyway as a family part. These conditions were here before the Civil War and the conditions in a changed sense have been here ever since. The whites have always held the slaves in part slavery and are still practicing the same things on them in a different manner. Whites lynch, burn, and persecute the Negro race in America yet; and there is little they are doing to help them in any way. . . .

. . . White folks are not going to do nothing for the Negroes except keep them down.

– Thomas Hall, ex-slave from Orange County, North Carolina when he was interviewed at his home in Raleigh, North Carolina in the late 1930s (NC1, pp.172-173)

** (This story was told in the late 1930s) I saw a strange niggah come to town once and didn't know where he was going and stepped in the door of a white hotel. When he saw all white faces, he was scared most to death. He didn't even turn around he just backed out and don't you know dem white folks kilt him for stepping inside a white man's hotel by mistake, yes they did. – Lulu Chambers, a former slave from Galatin County, Kentucky (MO, pp.81-82)

De ole court house had been burned and dey 'rested a nigger named Bill Burkhalter for settin' it on fire. Dey sent him to de pen' an' some officers started wid him to Montgomery. When dey got to Sipse River a mob ketched up wid 'em an' took Bill and hung him dere in the swamp. (As the narrator related the story, with his last words Burkhalter claimed he was innocent of the crime.) – Siney Bonner, ex-slave from near Pickensville, Alabama when she was interviewed in the late 1930s. (AL, p.33)

** (A story Zek Brown related in the late 1930s:) I gits into a picklement once years ago. I's 'rested on de street. I's not done a thing, jus' walkin' 'long de street with 'nother fellow and dey claim he stole somethin'....Did dey turn me a-loose? Dey turn me loose after six months on de chain gang. I works on the road three [of those] months with a ball and chain on de legs. – Zek Brown, an ex-slave from Warren County, Tennessee (TX1, p.123)

Then I gits locked up in jail. I don't know what for, never did know. One the men says to me to come with him and takes me to the woods and gives me an ax. I cuts rails till I nearly falls, all with chain locked 'round feet, so I couldn't run off. [Eventually] he turns me loose and I wonders 'gain. Never had a home. Works for mens long 'nough to git fifty, sixty cents, then starts roamin' 'gain, like a stray dog like. – Frank Bell, ex-slave at a saloon in New Orleans, Louisiana (TX1, p.50)