

Note of an ASH edition

Wash copy  
3<sup>rd</sup> msg w/ Henry Trewin's narrative  
is not here! Missfiled??

Ready for filming: 4-18-1977  
Filmed: 5-4-1977  
SAW

Alabama).

Levi D. Shelby, Jr.  
Tuscumbia, Alabama.

A USEFUL NEGRO PREACHER.

The following account of the Rev. W. E. Northcross, was given in 1897, and covers the activities of one of the most active Negro preachers, and one whose teachings were most helpful to his various flocks, ever to see service in northern Alabama.

He was born of slave parents and was about grown when the war closed. With the help of sympathetic white friends, he learned to read and write, chose the high calling of the Christian ministry and made a very commendable record for organizing churches, building houses of worship, ordaining candidates into the ministry and drawing to his pastorates large numbers of communicants, and for many years serving as treasurer and later as moderator of the Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, one of the largest Negro associations in Alabama. He built the First Baptist Church at Tuscumbia, an excellent brick edifice, and under his pastorate the membership increased from 75 to more than 900.

His work among his race is highly commended by the white people.

*Levi D. Shetty, Jr.*

" AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REVEREND W. E. NORTHCROSS".  
(1897)

(Chapter 1, - How Reared)

*Ex Slave  
Colbert Co*

I was born a slave in 1840, in Colbert County, Alabama. *Sect. #*  
Education was denied me, hence I grew up in ignorance. My mother and father were carried from me when I was only nine years old, but as soon as chance presented itself I ran away and went to them. My white people brought me back, and as they were not cruel to their slaves they did not "buck" me. I stayed with them until I was fifteen summers old. During this time my mistress made all the children, both girls and boys, come to her every Sunday, and she taught Sunday school. The book used was the old fashioned Catechism.

"Jesus keep me near the cross,  
There's a precious fountain,  
Free to all, a healing stream,  
Flows from Calvary's mountain."

It was against the law for them to learn to read and write, so she taught them the Lords prayer and a few other things in the book. She said that she wanted them to know how to pray, how to tell the truth and not to steal, and always try to do right in the sight of everybody and in the sight of God. With these influences, I confessed a hope in Christ at the age of thirteen years.

" Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the lamb,  
And shall I fear to own his cause,  
Or blush to speak his name?"

When she did not teach herself, she had an adopted girl to do the same. Finally the adopted girl married and moved to the farm where I was born, the farm from which I ran away. About this time, I was twenty years old. I felt that there was something for me to do. I began to lead prayer meetings.

Still I felt that there was more for me to do.

(Chapter 2,- Entering The Ministry)

I felt sure that I was called to preach, though "unlearned and ignorant." I trembled at the thought of preaching the gospel, but something seemed to push me <sup>r</sup> foward in that direction. So I asked the people to let me preach. This request was granted. The people at that time had no place or house of worship. I began to fast and pray night and day. Being "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts 4: 13) my heart silently murmured --

"Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, Feed me till I want no  
This was the only school I attended, both day and night. At this  
time I did not know "A" from "B", but I met a man who could read a little. This man liked me and promised to teach me how to read, provided I would keep it secret. This I gladly promised to do.

"I am weak, Thou art mighty, Hold me with thy powerful hand. "

I secured a blue back speller and went out on the mountain every Sunday to meet this gentleman, to be taught. I would stay on the mountain all day Sunday with out food. I continued this way for a year and succeeded well. I hired my own time and with my blue back speller went to the mountain to have this man teach me. The mountain was the great school which I attended. I went from there to the blacksmith shop to work. From that place I was captured by the Yankees and carried to war. As I was crippled I was allowed to remain in the commissary department for about six months. While we were at camp at Athens Alabama General Forest came upon us and defeated, captured, and killed until they were almost literally wiped out of existance. I had been kind to some little white children, by which I had won their love, and of course, the love of

their parents, and stayed with them three days during the battle. I came to a river and turned aside to a farm from which all the people had gone to save themselves from the war, I got a man to help reach an island where I worked three days without anything to eat except grapes and muscadines. I preferred to die on the island than to be killed by the soldiers. Therefore, in time of danger, I rushed to this house and the good people hid me and changed my clothes. Hence, when I was found I was taken for one of the gentleman's slaves. When I was permitted by the man to try to return to Lagrange, and had gone some distance, I was caught by deserters from the Southern army, who voted to shoot me. They bound me and kept me overnight, intending to do away with me the next day. It was a lonely desert on the Tennessee river. I could not sleep, and so all night I prayed to God, and the wives of the men prayed to God for the poor "nigger," and also prayed to their cruel husbands. Their prayers prevailed, and I was robbed and let go. I had vowed not to reveal their whereabouts. I left loving God and believing in his providence as I had never believed before.

"Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal."

I went home and got another spelling book, although it was not allowed. 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 <sup>simply</sup> told me that he heard that I had a book, and if I was caught with it I would be hung. SO I thanked him and departed. Notwithstanding my master's counsel I thirsted for knowledge and got some old boards and carried them to my house

to make a light by which I could see how to read. I would shut the doors, put one end of a board into the fire, and proceed to study; but when ever I heard the dogs barking I would throw my book under the bed and peep and listen to see what was up. If no one was near I would crawl under the bed, get my book, come out, lie flat on my stomach, and proceed to study until the dogs would again disturb me. I did this for many nights. I continued in this way to try to learn to spell and read as best I could.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

I, like the Ethiopian, wanted a guide. I moved to Mrs. McReynold's. God bless her,! She gave me a lesson every night for a period of four years. Then I went to my old master's brother, whose wife helped me every night as long as I would go to her for help. Rev. Shackelford (white) greatly aided me for a period of three years.

Boys and girls, grasp these golden opportunities which are now extended you from the school room. "Unlearned and ignorant" as I was I came along that way until the present time. My readers have better chances than I had. So I hope that they will make good use of their time and make my heart feel glad to see them setting their marks high and preparing themselves for the Great Beyond where all must go. Thither all nations will be called before the mighty judgement seat of the Ruler of the universe to give an account for the deeds done in this world. My prayer for the reader is, that they may make strong, useful, wise and christian men and women, and at the end of time meet their God in peace.

(Chapter 3, - My Work)

I will endeavor, in this chapter, to tell something about my works and whereabouts. I was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1867 by Rev. Mr. Slater (white), and Rev. Henry Bynum. Rev. Stephens Coleman and Rev. Henry Bynum, aided by Dr. Joseph Shackelford (white) laid down the foundation stones for the colored Baptist churches in Morgan, Franklin, Colbert, Lauderdale, and Lawrence counties, Alabama. I am now pastor of the First Baptist Church, at Tuscumbia, Ala., which is the best negro church edifice in North Alabama. This church was organized thirty-five years ago, by me, with seventy five members, but it now has a membership of nine hundred. I have pastored it for 10! these many years. This church is an excellent brick edifice. A few other brethren and myself organized the Muscle Shoals Baptist Association — one of the oldest and largest associations in Alabama. I have been Moderator for four years and its Treasurer for six years. I built the church at Russellville, Ala., and pastored it for four years, and then ordained Bro. P. Jones and recommended him as pastor. I built the Barton church and pastored it for a period of fifteen years, after which I recommended Rev. James Hampton there as pastor. I pastored the Cherokee church five years, ordained Bro. Dennis Jackson and recommended him there as pastor. I pastored Liberty Baptist church for three years, ordained Bro. Alex Brown and recommended him there as pastor. I served Iuka Mississippi for five years and then recommended a Brother from the West, who belonged to the Mt. Olive Association, to it. I built up the Sheffield church, pastored it three years and then recommended Bro. G. B. Johnson there as shepherd. I also built up Mt. Moriah church at Prides, Ala.,. I frequently uttered these words:

"Where Jesus leads me I will follow and his footsteps  
I'll pursue."

I organized St. Paul church (Colbert County) and pastored it for two years. Rev. E. C. White, who is now Assistant Moderator of the Muscle Shoals Association, was ordained by me. I have ordained more than twenty preachers to the gospel ministry, baptized six thousand persons, united in marriage five thousand couples, and buried about seven thousand persons. I have been faithful to every charge.

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I have been married three times and have known no woman but my wife, "though unlearned and ignorant!" I never had but one "fuss" with my wife. I told her at one time to hush and she failed to do so, then I slapped her, after which I went to the Lord in prayer and asked to be forgiven. I regret very much indeed to inform the world in print that I have been drunk from intoxicating liquors twice, which was before I professed religion. Notwithstanding I have ever held up temperance and aimed to keep it high until Shiloh comes to gather up his jewels. The following recommendation will show what the best people of Tuscumbia think of me:

Tuscumbia, Ala., March 13, 1897.

To whom it may concern:-

We take pleasure in stating that we have known the bearer of this letter, Rev. Wilson Northcross for a number of years, and that he is a conscientious, intelligent colored man of good character. He has been pastor of the missionary Baptist church of this place since the war, having been

instrumental in building the church, and always has made a good citizen. We believe him in every way worthy of the respect and confidence of his people.

Fox Delony, Judge of Probate.  
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"Resolve, That Rev. W. E. Northcross, our pastor, is a good, moral, christian man. He has been our pastor for thirty years, and we can truthfully say that he teaches in all things by example as well as by precept."

#### TUSCUMBIA MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The history of this church has undergone many changes, but they all worked for its betterment. At the close of the civil war the few members went from brush arbor to brush arbor for three years. Then they held services in gin houses and under shelters for two years and six months. Then as the church was growing rapidly, they thought best to draw out, buy a lot, and build to themselves. So they bought a lot for what they paid fifty dollars (\$50.) and erected a five hundred dollar (\$500.) building thereon in which to worship the lord. So the church continued to grow until it now has a membership of nine-hundred, a splendid brick edifice worth about six thousand dollars (\$6,000.) and a thriving congregation. The church has never had but one pastor, and I have been as faithful as a clock. Through me (Rev. W. E. Northcross) the church was built, and I have ever since held high the Baptist doctrine throughout North Alabama.

(Chapter 2, - Entering The Ministry)

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at the front of de yuth DIS WAS DAT LONG AGO.  
(Photo).

mailed  
6/3/37

De "sometimes enduring" de week an' on Sunday, too, de people could  
git "It's been so long sence, I don't remember such," William Henry  
(Bill) Towns said talking of slavery days. Towns was only seven when  
the Civil War began and his memories are those of childhood, which  
he mixes with reminiscences and opinions of the older slaves with  
whom he came in contact immediately after the war. Towns knows the  
exact date of his birth. He says: "I was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama December 7, 1854. My mother  
was name Jane Snoots. She come from Baltimore, Maryland. My father's  
name was Joe Towns, and he come from Huntsville, Alabama. I had a  
passel of brudders an' sistere; Charlie and Bob was my brudders; Betty,  
Kate, Lula an' Nellie was my sisters. Dere an' wasn't but two of us  
endurin' slavery. Dat was me an' Nellie de rest was born attter slavery.  
Me an' Nellie was Townses, the rest, Charlie, Kate, Lula, Bob and Betty  
was Joneses. Now dat come 'bout was dis away. Endurin' slavery my  
father was sold to anudder slave owner. Atter de war my mother  
married Frank Jones; den dese yuther chillun was born. A lot of de  
yuther slaves didn't know what it was to be free. It done been so  
long sence all of dis was I disremember most 'bout it. Anyway,  
the Big House was a two-story house; white like nos' houses  
endurin' dat time. On the north side of de Big House set a great,  
big barn, where all de stock an' stuff dat was raised was kep'.  
Off to de southwes' of de barn an' wes' of de Big House set 'bout  
five or six log houses. These house was built facin' a space of  
ground in de center of a squa'e what de houses made. Anybody  
could stan' in his front do' an' see in his house

at the front of de yuther houses. Caleb met him why he said that.

"Sometimes enduring' de week an' on Sunday, too, de people would git together out in dis squa'e an' talk 'fore goin' to bed. The chillun what was too young to work was always out in de front playin'. Jes' acrost from our place was anudder wid de quarters built 'mos' de same as ourn 'ceptin' <sup>dat</sup> dey had a picket fence 'roun' de quarters to pervent 'em from runnin' away. Course Mr. Young didn't have to worry 'bout his han's runnin' away, cause he wan't a mean man like some of de slave holders was. He never spoke harsh or whupped 'em, an' he didn't 'low nobody else to do it neither.

"I remember one day a fellow come from acrost on anudder farm an' spoke sumpin' 'bout Mr. Young bein' too easy wid his servants. He said, 'Them darn niggers will think they is good as you iffen you keep up de rate you goin' now, Young.' Mr. Young just up an' told him if he ever spoke like dat again he 'd call his bluff. Mr. Young told him de he didn't work his people like dey was oxes.

"All of Mr. Young's hands liked him 'cause he didn't make 'em sleep on corn shuck mattresses an' he didn't have dey meals cooked in a wash pot. A lot of de yuther slaves didn't know what it was to eat meat lessen it was a holiday. Mr. Young 'lowed his people to eat just what he eat. I hear my mother tell a tale 'bout a man what took a meat skin an' whipped his chillun's mouth wid it to fool folks like dey had some meat for dinner. Ole Caleb told one a lil bit bigger'n dat, though. He said one night him an' a feller was comin' from prayer meeting an' they runned 'crost a possum settin' in the root of a tree by de side of de road. He say he stopped to git him an' <sup>de</sup> this yuther feller told him he wouldn't bother wid him 'cause

he wouldn't git none of him no how. Caleb ast him why he said that. He said, "'cause your ole master is gwine take him jes' soon as you git hom wid him.' Caleb told him dat Mr. Young wasn't dat kiner man. De yuther feller hoped Caleb to ketch dat possum, an' he got a piece of him de nex' night when ever' body come in from de fiel'. Caleb said de ol' feller enj'yed de meat so much dat he wished he took him an' his family de 'hole possum.

'We didn't live so for from Big Spring Creek. Cose, we didn't do no fishin', 'cause we younguns had to 'tend gaps to keep de cattle off'n de crops. De grownups had to go to de fiel'. Life was kiner happy durin' slavery 'cause we never knowed nothing 'bout any yuther sort of life or freedom. All we knowed was work from one en' of de year to de yuther, 'ceptin' on holidays. Den we'd have to go to church or set around de fire an' lis'en to de old folks tell stories. The grownups would go to a dance or do sumpin' else for indertainment. Cose us younguns got a heap of pleasu'e outten dem fairy tales dat was tol' us by de older ones. I know ma an' dem use to tell some of de awf'lest tales sometimes. I'd be 'fraid to go from one part of de house to de yuther wid outten somebody wid me. Us younguns would had to play some sort of a game for indertainment. Dere was a whole lot of games an' riddles to be played dem days. It have been so long sence I played any of 'em I'se mos' near disremembers de biggest part of 'em. I 'members a song or two an' a few riddles what ol' Caleb use to tell us. De song goes sumpin' like dis:

Satu'day night an' Sunday, too,  
Had a yaller gal on my mind.  
Monday mornin', break of day,  
White folks had me gwine.

"De riddles was like dis;

Slick as a mole, black as a coal,  
Got a great long tail like a thunder hole.  
(Skillet)

Crooked as a rainbow, teeth lak a cat  
Guess all of your life but you can't guess dat.  
(black berry bush)

Grows in de winter dies in de spring  
Lives wid de root stickin' straight up.  
(icicle)

"Dere was anudder song what Caleb use to sing. It goes like dis;

Whar you gwine buzzard? Whar you gwine cow?  
Gwine down to de river to de jes' so.

"Dere was a whole lot more to dat song what I disremembers.

"Anudder song what comes to my min' is:

Hawk an' de buzzard went down to de law.  
When de hawk got back he had a broken jaw.  
Lady's pocketbook on de judge's bench  
Haden' had no use for a pocketbook sence.

"Sometimes I visits wid ol' Mingo White an' me an' him talks over dem days dat me an' him was boys. We gits to talkin' an' 'fore you know it ol' Mingo is cryin' lak a baby. 'gordin' to what he says he is lucky ter be alivin'. Dis is one thing I never likes ter talk 'bout. When slavery was goin' on it was all right for me 'cause I never had it hard, but it jes' wan't right to treat human bein's dat way. If we hadn't a had to work an' slave for nothin' we might have somepin' to show for what we did do an' wouldn't have to live from pillar to pos' now.

"Speakin' of clothin', everything that we wore back den was made by han'. Many a night my ma use to set an' spin wid a spindle. I have set an' done the cardin' for her so she could git her tas' done. In de summer we would wear un'erwear what was made outten

cotton, in de winter it was made outten flannel. De shoes was made of cowhide what was tanned right dere on de place. Dem was de hardes' shoes I ever seen. Sometimes dey'd wear out 'fore dey was any ways soft, an' den sometimes atter dey was wore out you couldn't hardly ben' 'em. Some of der han's would go barfooted until de fall an' den wear shoes. Slippers wan't wore den. De fust pair of slippers I ever 'members havin' was de ones what I boutht for my weddin'. Dey didn't cos' but a dollar an' six bits. My weddin' suit didn't cos' but eight dollars, an' a straw hat to match it cos' six bits.

"As I said afore, Massa Young an' ol' Mistis was mighty good folks on 'count of dey never whupped any of they han's. Iffen dere was one dat would give trouble dey would git rid of him. De overseers had to be kin' to de hands or else he was outten a job. De chillun was mighty nice, too. Ever' time dey went to town or to de sto' dey would bring us younguns some candy or somepin'. Joinin' our farm was a farm whar de slaves fared lak dogs. Dey was always beatin' on some of dem.

"Ever'body worked hard enduring' dat time. Dat was all we thought we was 'spose to do, but Abe Lincoln taught us better'n dat. Some say dat Abe wan't intrusted so much in freein' de slaves as he was in savin' de union. Don' make no diff'ence iffen he wan't intrusted in de black folks he sho' done a big thing by tryin' to save de union. Some of de slaveholders would double de proportion of work so as to git to whip 'em when night come. I heard my ma say after slavery that dey jes' whipped de slaves so much to keep dem cowed down an' 'cause dey might have fought for freedom much

sooner'n it did come.

"Caleb come from N'Orleans, Loulseanner. He say dat many a day ship loads of slaves was unloaded dere an' sold to de one offerin' de mos' money for dem. Dey had big chains an' shackles on dem to keep 'em from gittin' away. Sometime dey would have to go a long ways to git to de farm. Dey would go in a wagon or on hoss back.

"Talk 'bout learnin' to read an' *Write* why, iffen we so much as spoke of learnin' to read an' *Write* we was scolded like de debil. Iffen we was caught lookin' in a book we was treated same as iffen we had killed somebody. A servant bett'nt be caught lookin' in a book; didn't make no diff'ence if you wan't doin' nothin' but lookin' at de pictu'es.

"Speakin' of church; we went to de same church as de white folks did; only thing was we had to go in de evenin' atter de white folks. De white folkes would go along an' read de Bible for de preacher, an' to keep dem from talking of things dat might help dem to git free. Dey would sing songs like 'Steal Away,' 'Been Tollin' at the Hill So Long,' an' 'Old-Time Religion.'

"Ever' once in a while slaves would run away to de North. Mos' times dey was caught an' brought back. Sometimes dey would git desp'rit an' would kill demse'ves 'fore dey would stand to be brought back. One time dat I heard of a slave that had 'scaped and when dey tried to ketch him he jumped in de creek an' drown hisse'f. He was brought from over in Geo'gia. He hadn't been in Alabama long 'fore him an' two more tried to 'scape; two of 'em was caught an' brought back but dis yuther one went to de lan' of sweet dreams.

"After de day's work was done an' all had eat, de slaves had to go to bed. Mos' slaves worked on Sat'day jes' lak dey did on Monday; that was from kin' to caught, or from sun to sun. Mr. Young

never worked his slaves twell dark on Sat'day. He always let 'em quit 'roun' fo' 'clock. We would spen' dis time washin' an' bathin' to git ready for church on Sunday. Speakin' of holidays; de han's celebrated ever' holiday dat deir white folks celebrated. Dere wan't much to do for indertainment, 'ceptin' what I'se already said. Ever' Christmas we'd go to de Big House an' git our present, 'cause ol' Mistic always give us one.

"Slaves never got sick much, but when dey did dey got de bes'. Dere was always a nurse on de farm, and when a slave got sick dey was righ' dere to give dem treatments. Back in dose days dey used all sorts of roots and yarbs for medicine. Peach tree leaves was one of de mos' of'en. Sassafras was anudder what was used of'en; hit was used mostly in de spring made in tea. Azzafitty was anudder what was use to keep you from havin' azma. Hit was wore 'round de neck in a lil bag. Prickler ash was anudder what was taken in de ~~spring~~ <sup>spring</sup>. Hit was 'spose ter clean de blood. Some of de folks would use brass, cooper an' dimes wid holes in 'em to keep from havin' their rumertiz.

"I was seben years old when de war commence. I 'members Mrs. Young said de when de Yankees come dey was goin' to ast us iffen dey had been good to us. She said dat they was goin' to ast us all 'bout how much money dey had; an' how many slaves what dey owned. She told us to say dey was po' folks an' dat dey didn't have no money. I 'member my mother said dat she hoped Mr. Young and dem to hide deir money somers in a well dat wan't bein' used 'cause it gone dry. Dem Yankees sho' did clean up whar they went along. Dey would ketch chickens by de bunches and kill 'em an' den turn 'roun'

an' make de ol' Mistis clean 'em an' cook 'em for dem. Dem Yankees set fire to bales an' bales of cotton. Dey took de white folks close an' did away wid 'em. Sometimes dey would tear 'em up or give dem to de slaves to wear. De war ended in sixty-five an' I was eleben years ol' den.

"Jes' atter de war we was turned loose to go for ourse'f.. What I mean by dat we was free. I didn't mean that we lef' Mr. Young's 'cause we stayed wid him for de longest atter slavery was over.

"My fust work was in a blacksmith shop down on West Six Street. I worked for fifty cents a day den until I learned de trade. Atter I worked at de blacksmith shop for about two years I took up carpenter work. I served apprentice for three years. I followed carpent'ing the res' of my life.

"I married Lizzie Anderson when I was twenty-one years ol'. She wan't but seventeen years ol'. We didn't have no big weddin', we jes' had de fambly dere. I raised ten chillun up until April de twenty fourth. That's when William Henry died. My chilluns doin' pretty well in life. Dere's two of my sons what's doctors, one is a carpenter. The other one is Grand Orator of the Shriners. My gals is doin' fine, too. Three of 'em is been school teachers, one a beauty cult'ist an' de other one a nurse. I feels stal'fied 'bout my chillun now. Dey seems to be able to make a livin' for they se'ves pretty well.

"I thinks that Abe Lincoln was a mighty fine man even if he was tryin' to save thejr union. I don't like to tdk 'bout this that have done happened. It done passted so I don't say much 'bout it,

Alabama

- 9 -

specially de Presidents, 'cause it might cause a 'sturbance right now. All men means well, but some of 'em ain't broadminded 'nough to do anythin' for nobody but themse'fs. Any man that tries to help humanity is a good man."

Wash. Copy  
6-3-37  
T. E. B.

Alabama

Levi D. Shelby, Jr.,  
Tuscumbia, Alabama.

TODAY'S FOLKS DON'T  
KNOW NOTHIN'

Petterson Maryoni,  
Editor

Mary Ella Grandberry

Life as a child is not clear in the ninety-year old memory of Mary Ella Grandberry, who lives in Sheffield, but she remembers that she did not have time to play as do children of today.

"I don't know jes' how old I is," Mary Ella said, "but I knows dat I'm some'ers nigh ninety yars ol'. I was borned in Barton, Alabama. My father an' mother come from Richmond, Virginny. My mammy was name Margaret Keller an' my pappy was Adam Keller. My five sisters was Martha, Sarah, Harriet, Emma an' Rosanna, an' my three brothers was Peter, Adam, Jr., an' William.

"Us all live in a li'l two-room log cabin jes' off the Big House. Life wan't ver' much for us, 'caze we had to work an' slave all de time. Massa Jim's house was a little ol' frame buildin' lack a ord'nary house is now. He was a single man an' didn't hab so terr'ble much, it seem. He had a whole lot, too, but jes' to look at him you'd thank he was a po' white man. Dere was a lot o' cabins for de slaves, but dey wasn't fitten for nobody to lib in. We jes' had to put up wid 'em.

"I don' 'member much about when I was a chil'. I disremembers ever playin' lack chilluns do today. Ever since I kin 'member I had a water bucket on my arm totin' water to de han's. Iffen I wan't doin' dat, I was choppin' cotton. Chilluns nowadays sees a good time to w'at we did den. Ever' mornin' jes' 'bout hip of day de oberseer was 'roun' to see dat we was ready to git to de fiel's. Plenty times us had to go widouten breakfas', 'caze we didn' git up in time to git it 'fo' de man done come to git us on de way to de fiel'. Us wukked 'twell dinner time jes' de same before we got anythang to eat.

"De food we et was fix jes' lack hit is now. My mammy fixed our grub at home. De on'y diffe'nce 'tween den an' now was us didn' git nothin' but common things den. Us didn' know what hit was to git biscuits for breakfas' ever' mornin'. It was cornbread 'twell on Sundays den us'd git fo' biscuits apiece. Us got 'fat back' mos' ever' mornin'. Sometimes us mought git a chicken for dinner on a Sunday or some day lack Chris'mas. It was mighty seldom us gits anythin' lack dat, dough. We lacked possums an' rabbits but dey didn' come 'twell Winter time when some of de men folks'd run 'crost one in de fiel'. Dey never had no chanst to git out an' hunt none.

"Dere was no sech thang as havin' diffe'nt clo's for winter an' Summer. Us wore de same thang in summertime as in de winter-time. De same was true 'bout shoes. Us wore brogans from one yeah to de yuther.

"My Ol' Massa was a putty good man but nothin' exter. One thang 'bout him, he wouldn' 'low none of de oberseers to whup none of us, lessen he was dar to see hit done. Good thang he was lack dat, too, 'caze he sated de blacks a many a lick what dey'd got iffen he hadn' been dar. Massa Jim was a bach'lor, an' he ain't never had much truck wid women folks. Iffen he had any chilluns, I never knowed nothin' 'bout 'em.

"De oberseers was terrible hard on us. Dey'd ride up an' down de fiel' an' haste you so twell you near 'bout fell out. Sometimes an' most inginer'ly ever' time you 'hin' de crowd you got a good lickin' wid de bull whup dat de driver had in de saddle wid him. I hearn mammy say dat one day dey whupped po' Leah 'twell she fall out like she was daid. Den dey rubbed salt an' pepper on de blisters to make 'em burn real good. She was so so' 'twell she couldn' lay on her back nights, an' she jes' couldn' stan' for no clo's to tedh

back whatsoever.

"Massa Jim had 'bout one of de bigges' plantations in dat section. I guess he had nigh onto a hun'erd blacks on de place. I never knowed 'zackly how many thar was nor how big de place was.

"De folks now'days is allus complainin' 'bout how dey is havin' sech hard times, but dey jes' don' know nothin'. Dey should hab come up when I did an' dey'd see now dey is libin' jes' lack kings an' queens. Dey don' have to git up 'fo' day when hit's so dark you kin jes' see your han's 'fo' your eyes. Dey don' know what it's lack to have to keep up wid de leader. You know dey was allus somebody what could wuk faster dan de res' of de folks an' dis fellow was allus de leader, an' ever'body else was s'pose to keep up wid him or her whatsoever hit was. Iffen you didn' keep up wid de leader you got a good thrashin' when you gits home at night. Hit was allus good dark when de han's got in from de fiel'. Co'se iffen dar was a lady what had a baby at home, she could leave jes' a little 'fo' de sun sot.

"Younguns now'days don' know what it is to be punish'; dey thank iffen dey gits a li'l whuppin' from dey mammy now dat dey is punish' terrible. Dey should of had to follow de leader for one day an' see how dey'd be punish' iffen dey gits too far behin'. De bigges' thang dat us was punish' for was not keepin' up. Dey'd whup us iffen we was caught talkin' 'bout de free states, too. Iffen you wan't whupped, you was put in de 'nigger box' an' fed cornbread what was made widouten salt an' wid plain water. De box was jes' big 'nough for you to stan' up in, but hit had air holes in hit to keep you from suffocatin'. Dere was plenty turnin' 'roun' room in hit to 'low you to change your position ever' oncet in a while. Iffen you had done a bigger 'nough thang you was kep'

in de 'nigger box' for months at de time, an' when you got out you was nothin' but skin an' bones an' sourcey able to walk.

"Half de time a slave didn' know dat he was sol' 'twell de massa'd call him to de Big House an' tell him he had a new massa from den on. Ever' time dat one was sol' de res' of 'em'd say, 'I hopes nex' time'll be me.' Dey thought you'd git a chanst to run away to de free states. I hearn my mammy say dat when she come from Virginny dat she come on a boat built outten logs. She say she never was so sick in all her life. I seed a 'hole wagon load of slaves come through our farm one day what was on dere way to Arkansas. Dey was de mos' I ever seed travel at de same time.

"De white folks didn't 'low us to even look at a book. Dey would scol' an' sometimes whup us iffey dey caught us wid our head in a book. Dat is one thang I sho'ly did want to do an' dat was to learn to read an' write. Massa Jim promised to teach us to read an' write, but he neber had de time.

"Dere wan't but one chu'ch on de place what I lived on, an' de colored and de white both went to hit. You know we was neber 'lowed to go to chu'ch widoutten some of de white folks wid us. We wan't even 'lowed to talk wid nobody from anudder farm. Iffey you did, you got one of de wus' whuppin's of your life. Atter freedom Massa Jim tol' us dat dey was 'fraid we'd git together an' try to run away to de No'th, an' dat dat was w'y dey didn' wan' us gittin' together talkin'.

"A few years 'fo' de war my pappy learnt to read de Bible. (Mary Ella apparently forgot her previous comment on penalties for learning to read). Whenever we would go to chu'ch he would read to us an' we'd sing. 'Bout de mos' two pop'lar songs dey sung was "Steal Away an' "I Wonder Whar Good Ol' Daniel Was. "Steal Away is sech a pop'lar song what ever'body knows hit. De yuther one is done

mought' nigh played out, so I'll sing hit for you. It goes lack dis:

"I wonder whar was good ol' Dan'el,  
 I wonder whar was good ol' Dan'el,  
 I wonder whar was thankin' (thinking) Peter,  
 I wonder whar was thankin' Peter.

(Chorus)

I'm goin' away, goin' away.  
 I'm goin' away, goin' away,  
 I wonder whar was weepin' Mary,  
 I wonder whar was weepin' Mary,  
 I'm goin' away, I'm goin' away,  
 I'm goin' away to live forever,  
 I'll never turn back no mo'.

"De slaves would git tired of de way dey was treated an' try to run away to de No'th. I had a cousin to run away one time. Him an' anudder fellow had got 'way up in Virginny 'fo' Massa Jim foun' out whar dey was. Soon as Massa Jim foun' de whar'bouts of George he went attar him. When Massa Jim gits to George an' 'em, George pretended lack he didn' know Massa Jim. Massa Jim as' him, 'George don't you know me?' George he say. 'I neber seed you 'fo' in my life.' Den dey as' George an' 'em whar did dey come from. George an' dis yuther fellow look up in de sky an' say, 'I come from above, whar all is love.' Iffen dey had owned dey knowed Massa Jim he could have brung 'em back home. My pappy tried to git away de same time as George an' dem did, but he couldn' see how to take all us chillun wid him, so he had to stay wid us. De blacks an' de whites would have de terr'bles' battles sometimes. Dat would be when de blacks would slip off to de No'th an' was caught an' brung back. De paterollers'd ketch de colored folks an' lock 'em up

twell de owner come atter 'em.

"Iffen a slave was cotoched out after nine o'clock he was whupped. Dey didn' 'low nobody out atter it was dark 'lessen he had a pass from de Massa. One night, 'fo' George an' dis fellow (I disremembers his name, but I thinks it was Ezra) runned away, George tried to git over to de bunk whar he lived an' one of de oberseers seen him an' dey put him in de 'nigger box' for three weeks. Jes' as soon as he got out again, George an' dis Ezra slipped off. Dey had a sign dat dey would give each yuther eve'y night atter sundown. George would hang de lantern in de window, an' den he would take it outen de window an' hang it raght back in dar ag'in. I couldn't never make no sense outen it. I axed him one day whut he was adoin' dat for. He say dat 'fo' long I'd know 'zackly what it all about. Dis was de sign of how long dey have to wait 'fo' dey try to git away.

"Atter de day's work was over, de slaves didn't have nothin' to do but go to bed. In fac', dey didn't feel lack doin' nothin' else. On Satiday dey sot up an' washed so's dey could have some clean clothes to wear de comin' week. We wukked all day, ever' day 'cep'n some Sat'days, we had a half day off den. Us didn' git many an' dn'y when us as' for 'em. On Sundays us jes' laid 'roun' 'mos' all day. Us didn't git no pleasure outten goin' to church, 'caze we warn't 'lowed to say nothin'. Sometimes even on Christ'mas us didn't git no res'. I 'members on one Chris'mas us had to build a lime kiln. When us git a holiday us rested. Iffen dere was a weddin' or a funeral on our plantation us went. Odderways we don't go nowhar.

"De war come when I was a big gal. I 'member dat my uncle an' cousin jined in wid de Yankees to hope fight for de freedom. De Yankees come to our place an' runned Massa Jim away an' tuk de house for a horsepittil. Dey tuk all of Massa Jim's clothes an'

gived dem to some of dere frien's. Dey burned up all de cotton, hay, peas an' ever'thing dat was in de barns. Dey made de white folks cook for de colored an' den serve 'em while dey et. De Yankees made 'em do for us lak we done for dem. Dey showed de white folks what it was to work for somebody else. Dey stayed on our place for de longes'. When dey did leave, dere warn't a mouthful to eat in de house. When de war was over, Massa Jim told us dat we had to find som'ers else to live. Co'se some of my folks had already gone when he come home. Us le f' Massa Jim's an' moved to anudder farm. We got pay for de wuk what we did on dis yuther place. Raght atter de war de Ku Klux got atter de colored folks. Dey would come to our houses an' scare us mos' to death. Dey would take some of de niggers out an' whup 'em an' dose dat dey didn't whup dey tied up by dere fingers an' toes. Dese Ku Klux would come to our windows at night an' say: 'Your time ain't long acomin'.' De Ku Klux got so bad dat dey would even git us in de daytime. Dey tuk some of de niggers an' throwed 'em in de river to drown. Dey kep' dis up 'twell some folks from de North come down an' put a stop to it.

"I ma'ied Nelson Granberry. De weddiñ' was private. I don't have no chilluns, but my husban' got fo'. I haven't heered from any of 'em in a long time now. I guess dey all daid.

"Abe Lincoln was de bes' president dat dis country eber had. Iffen it hadn't been for him we'd still be slaves raght now. I don't think so much of Jeff Davis 'caze he tried to keep us slaves. Booker T. Washington was one of de greates' niggers dat ever lived, he always tried to raise de standard of de race.

"I joined the church 'caze de Bible says dat all people should join de church an' be Christians. Jesus Christ set up de church an'

said dat ever'body what wanted to be saved to come unto him. Sin is de cause of de world bein' in de fix dat it's in today. De only way to fight sin is to git together. Iffen we can do away wid sin raght now, de world would be a paradise. In de church we learn de will of God an' what he would have us do.

"Dere was no po' white trash in our 'munity; ~~but~~ dey was kep' back in de mountains."

Wash. Copy

R.L.D.

6-9-37

"SLAVERY TYPIFIED"

Mrs. Mary Ella, Grandberry

Sheffield, Alabama.

I dont know just how old I am, but I do know that I am some where near ninety years old. I was born in Barton, Alabama. My father and mother came from Richmond, Virginia. My mother was named Margaret Keller, my father was name Adam Keller.

My sisters wuz ; Martha, Sarah, Harriet, Emma and Rosanna Keller. My brothers wuz; Peter, Adam, Jr. and William Keller.

We all lived in a little old two roomed log cabin, just off from the big house. Life wuznt very much for us. We had to work and slave all of the time. Mas'er Jim's house wuz just a little ole frame buildin' like er ordinary house uv today. He wuz a single man and didn' have so terribly much. He had a 'hole lot to but jest ter look at him yer wou'd thank he wuz er pooh white man. THERE wuz a lot uv cabins fer ther slaves. They wuznt fit fer nobody ter live in, but thets what we had ter put up wid den.

I don' remember very much about my life as er chil'e. I don' ever member playin like chillun do ter day. Why ever since I can member I had a water bucket hung on ter my arm toatin (carrying) water ter de hands. If I wuznt doin thet I wuz choppin cotton. Chillun uv ter-day sees er good time ter what we did den. Ever mornin jest er bout ther hip uv day ther overseer wuz round ter see thet we wuz ready ter git ter de field. Lots uv times we had ter go out wid out breakfast cause we didn git up in time ter git it fore ther man wou'd git us on our way ter de field. We had ter work till dinnah (dinner) fore we got any thang ter eat.

Ther food we ete (ate) wuz fixed jest lack hit is now. My mammy fixed our food at home. Ther only diffe'nce in de food den and der food now wuz we didn' have nottin but common food den. We didn' know what hit wuz ter have biscuits ever mornin fer breakfast, it wuz cawn (corn) bread till on sunday then we wou'd git four biscuits er piece. We got rat back nearly ever mornin. We mought (might) have er chickin fer dinnah some times on sunday or some day like chris'mas; it wuz mighty seldom thet we got any thang tho. We liked possum and rabbits too, they didn come till der winner (winter), when some uv de men fo'kes wou'd run cross one in de field. They never had er chance ter hunt any.

There wuz no sech (such) thang as havin cloose (clothes) fer winner (winter) and summer. We wore de same thang in de summer as in de winner. De same is true bout shoes. We wore broggands from one uv ther ye'r (year) ter de odder.

My ole Masser (master), Jim Barton wuz er pertty (pretty) good feller but nottin extar (Extra). One thang bout him, he wou'dn' low (allow) none uv the overseers ter whup (whip) none uv ther blacks unless he wuz thar ter see it done. Good thang he wuz like dat though cause he saved ther blacks er many lick thet thy'd got if he hadn'er been thar. Masser Jim wuz er bachlor. He never had much use fer women fokes. If he had any chillun I never knowed bout dem.

De overseers wuz terribly hard on us. Dey wou'd ride up and down de field and hurry yer so til yer neerly fell out. Some times and most nigh ever time yer got hind de crowd yer got er good lickin wid de bull whup (WHIP) dat de driver had in de saddle wid him. I heerd mammy say thet one day dey whupp-ed pooh Leah, till she fell out unconscious. Den dey rubbed salt and pepper on de blisters ter make dem burn. She wuz so soor (sore) till she couldnt lay on her back at night. Why she jest could stand fer her cloose (clothes) ter tot (touch) her back.

Masser(master) Jim had bout one uv ther biggest plan'ations in des sexions (sections). I guess he had nigh on ter er hunnerd(hundred) blacks on his place. I never knowed zactly how thar wuz nor how big his estate wuz.

De fo'kes is allus(always) complainin bout dey is havin sech(such) er hard time, but dey jest don' know, dey shou'd uv come up when I did. Dey wou'd see dat dey is livin lack kings and queens. Dey don' have ter git up fore day when hit is so dark dat yer jest kin see yer hands fore yer eyes. Dey don' know what hit is ter have ter keep up wid de leader. Yer know dey wuz allus somebody thet cou'd work faster then de rest uv de fo'kes, well dis feller wuz called de leader, and ever body else wuz spose(suppose) ter keep up wid him or her which ever one hit wuz. If yer didn' keep up wid de leader yer got er good thrashin' when yer got home thet night. Hit wuz allus good dark when de hands got in from de ffield. Course if thar wuz er lady thet had er baby at home she cou'd leave jest er little fore sunset.

Des younguns don' know what it is ter be punished; dey thank when dey gits er little whuppin(whipping) from their mammy now, thet they is punished terribly. Dey shou'd uv had ter foller de leader fer one day and see how dey wou'd be punished if dey got to fer behind. De biggest thang thet we wuz punished fer wuz not keepin up. Dey wou'd whup us if we wuz caught talkin bout de free states too. If yer wuznt whupped yer wuz put in de "nigger box", and fed cawn(corn)bread wid out salt, and water. De box wuz jest big er-nouf fer yer ter stand up in, but hit had air holes in hit ter keep yer from sufficatin. Dere wuz plenty turnin round room in hit ter low yer ter change yer position ever once in er while. If yer had done er bigger nouf thang you wuz kep' in de nigger box fer months at de time, and when yer got out yer wuz notting but skin and bones; yer wou'dn' be able ter hardly walk.

Half uv de time a slave didn' know thet he wuz sold til de masser wou'd call him ter de house and tell him thet he had er new master from now on. Ever time thet one wuz sold the rest uv them wou'd say, I hope next time it will be me. Dey thought thet they wou'd git er chance ter run away ter de free states. I heerd(heard) my mother say thet when she came from Virginia thet she came on er boat build out uv logs. She say she never wuz so sick in all her life. I seed er 'hole wagon load uv slaves come through our farm one day, they wuz on their way ter Arkansas. Thet wuz the most I ever seed travel at one time.

De white fo'kes didn' allow us ter even look at er book, dey would scold and sometimes whup us if dey caught us wid our head in er book. Dat is one thang I shorely(surely) did want ter do, and thet wuz ter learn ter read and write. Masser Jim, promised ter teach us ter read and write, but he never had de time.

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I wonder whar wuz good ole Danial,  
I wonder whar wuz thankin(thinking) Peter  
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"Chorus "

I'm goin er way, goin er way  
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I wonder whar wuz weepin Mary,  
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I'M goin er way, I'm goin er way,  
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If thar wuz er weddin or a burryin we went ter hit, specially if hit wuz er member uv de farm dat we wuz on. If dere wuznt er weddin or er funeral ever now and den we wou'dn git ter go no whar.

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de work dat we did on dis odder place. Shortly after de war de Ku Klux took out after de colored people. Dey would come to de colored fokes house and scare dem ter deaf(death). Dey would take de colored fokes out and whup dem ter deaf, and does(those) dat dey didn whup dey would tie em up by their fingers or toes. Dey wuz terribly mean. De Ku Klux would come ter yer windoor(window) at night and say yer time aint long. De fokes wuz scared ter death,; at night a hole (whole)bunch uv dem would git ter-gether and stay. De Ku Klux got so bad dat dey would git us in de day time. Dey took some uv de colored people and throwed dem in de river ter drown. Dey did dis till some uv de fokes from de north cameand stopped them, and den dey didn stop, but dey did quiet down fer er while. Dey tells me dat de Ku Klux is still organized in some parts uv de country right now.

I married Nelson, Granberry. THE weddin wuz private. I dont have any chillun, but my husband got four, Three boys and er girl. I havent heerd(heard) from any uv them fer er long time dey might all be dead.

Abe Lincoln wuz de best president thet this country ever knowed. If hit hadn er been fer him we would still be slaves right now. I dont thank(think) so much uv Jeff,Davis cause he tried ter keep de slaves from gittin their freedom. I ought not ter say it but it is true. Booker T. Washington wuz one uv the most outstandin negroes in the country.He wuz tryin ter rise(raise)the standard uv the negro race.

I joined the church because the Bible says that all people should join the church and be christians. Jesus Christ set up the Church and said fer every body the wanted ter be saved to come unto him. Sin is the cause uv the world bein in the fix it is in today. The only way to fight sin is ter git together. If we can do way wid sin right now the world would be a paradise. In the church we learn the Will of God and what he would have us to do.

There were no pooh white trash in our community, they wuz kept back in the mountains.

Shelby Levy  
Justification

"SLAVERY TYPIFIED"

Mrs. Mary Ella, Grandberry

Sheffield, Alabama.

I dont know just how old I am, but I do know that I am some where near ninety years old. I was born in Barton, Alabama. My father and mother came from Richmond, Virginia. My mother was named Margaret Keller, my father was name Adam Keller.

My sisters wuz ; Martha, Sarah, Harriet, Emma and Rosanna Keller. My brothers wuz; Peter, Adam, Jr. and William Keller.

We all lived in a little old two roomed log cabin, just off from the big house. Life wuznt very much for us. We had to work and slave all of the time. Mas'er Jim's house wuz just a little ole frame buildin' like er ordinary house uv today. He wuz a single man and didn' have so terribly much. He had a 'hole lot to but jest ter look at him yer wou'd thank he wuz er pooh white man. THERE wuz a lot uv cabins fer ther slaves. They wuznt fit fer nobody ter live in, but thets what we had ter put up wid den.

I don' remember very much about my life as er chil'e. I don' ever member playin like chillun do ter day. Why ever since I can member I had a water bucket hung on ter my arm toatin (carrying) water ter de hands. If I wuznt doin thet I wuz choppin cotton. Chillun uv ter-day sees er good time ter what we did den. Ever mornin jest er bout ther hip uv day ther overseer wuz round ter see thet we wuz ready ter git ter de field. Lots uv times we had ter go out wid out breakfast cause we didn git up in time ter git it fore ther man wou'd git us on our way ter de field. We had ter work till dinnah (dinner) fore we got any thang ter eat.

Ther food we ete (ate) wuz fixed jest lack hit is now. My mammy fixed our food at home. Ther only diffe'nce in de food den and der food now wuz we didn' have nottin but common food den. We didn' know what hit wuz ter have biscuits ever mornin fer breakfast, it wuz cawn (corn) bread till on sunday then we wou'd git four biscuits er piece. We got fat back nearly ever morning. We mought (might) have er chickin fer dinnah some times on sunday or some day like chris'mas; it wuz mighty seldom thet we got any thang tho. We liked possum and rabbits too, they didn come till der winner (winter), when some uv de men fo'kes wou'd run cross one in de field. They never had er chance ter hunt any.

There wuz no sech (such) thang as havin cloose (clothes) fer winner (winter) and summer. We wore de same thang in de summer as in de winner. De same is true bout shoes. We wore broggands from one uv ther ye'r (year) ter de odder.

My ole Masser (master), Jim Barton wuz er pertty (pretty) good feller but nottin ext~~er~~ (Extra). One thang bout him, he wou'dn' low (allow) none uv the overseers ter whup (whip) none uv ther blacks unless he wuz thar ter see it done. Good thang he wuz like dat though cause he saved ther blacks er many lick thet thy'd got if he hadn'er been thar. Masser Jim wuz er bachlor. He never had much use fer women fokes. If he had any chillun I never knowed bout dem.

De overseers wuz terribly hard on us. Dey wou'd ride up and down de field and hurry yer so til yer neerly fell out. Some times and most nigh ever time yer got hind de crowd yer got er good lickin wid de bull whup (WHIP) dat de driver had in de saddle wid him. I heerd mammy say thet one day dey whupp-ed pooh Leah, till she fell out unconscious. Den dey rubbed salt and pepper on de blisters ter make dem burn. She wuz so soor (sore) till she couldnt lay on her back at night. Why she jest could stand fer her cloose (clothes) ter tot (touch) her back.

Masser(master) Jim had bout one uv ther biggest plan'ations in des sexions (sections). I guess he had nigh on ter er hunnerd(hundred) blacks on his place. I never knowed zactly how thar wuz nor how big his estate wuz.

De fo'kes is allus(always) complainin bout dey is havin sech(such) er hard time, but dey jest don' know, dey shou'd uv come up when I did. Dey wou'd see dat dey is livin lack kings and queens. Dey don' have ter git up fore day when hit is so dark dat yer jest kin see yer hands fore yer eyes. Dey don' know what hit is ter have ter keep up wid de leader. Yer know dey wuz allus somebody thet cou'd work faster then de rest uv de fo'kes, well dis feller wuz called de leader, and ever body else wuz spose(suppose) ter keep up wid him or her which ever one hit wuz. If yer didn' keep up wid de leader yer got er good thrashin' when yer got home thet night. Hit wuz allus good dark when de hands got in from de field. Course if thar wuz er lady thet had er baby at home she cou'd leave jest er little fore sunset.

Des younguns don' know what it is ter be punished; dey thank when dey gits er little whuppin(whipping) from their mammy now, thet they is punished terribly. Dey shou'd uv had ter foller de leader fer one day and see how dey wou'd be punished if dey got to fer behind. De biggest thang thet we wuz punished fer wuz not keepin up. Dey wou'd whup us if we wuz caught talkin bout de free states too. If yer wuznt whupped yer wuz put in de "nigger box" and fed cawn(corn)bread wid out salt, and water. De box wuz jest big er-nouf fer yer ter stand up in, but hit had air holes in hit ter keep yer from sufficatin. Dere wuz plenty turnin round room in hit ter low yer ter change yer position ever once in er while. If yer had done er bigger nouf thang you wuz kep' in de nigger box fer months at de time, and when yer got out yer wuz notting but skin and bones; yer wou'dn' be able ter hardly walk.

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