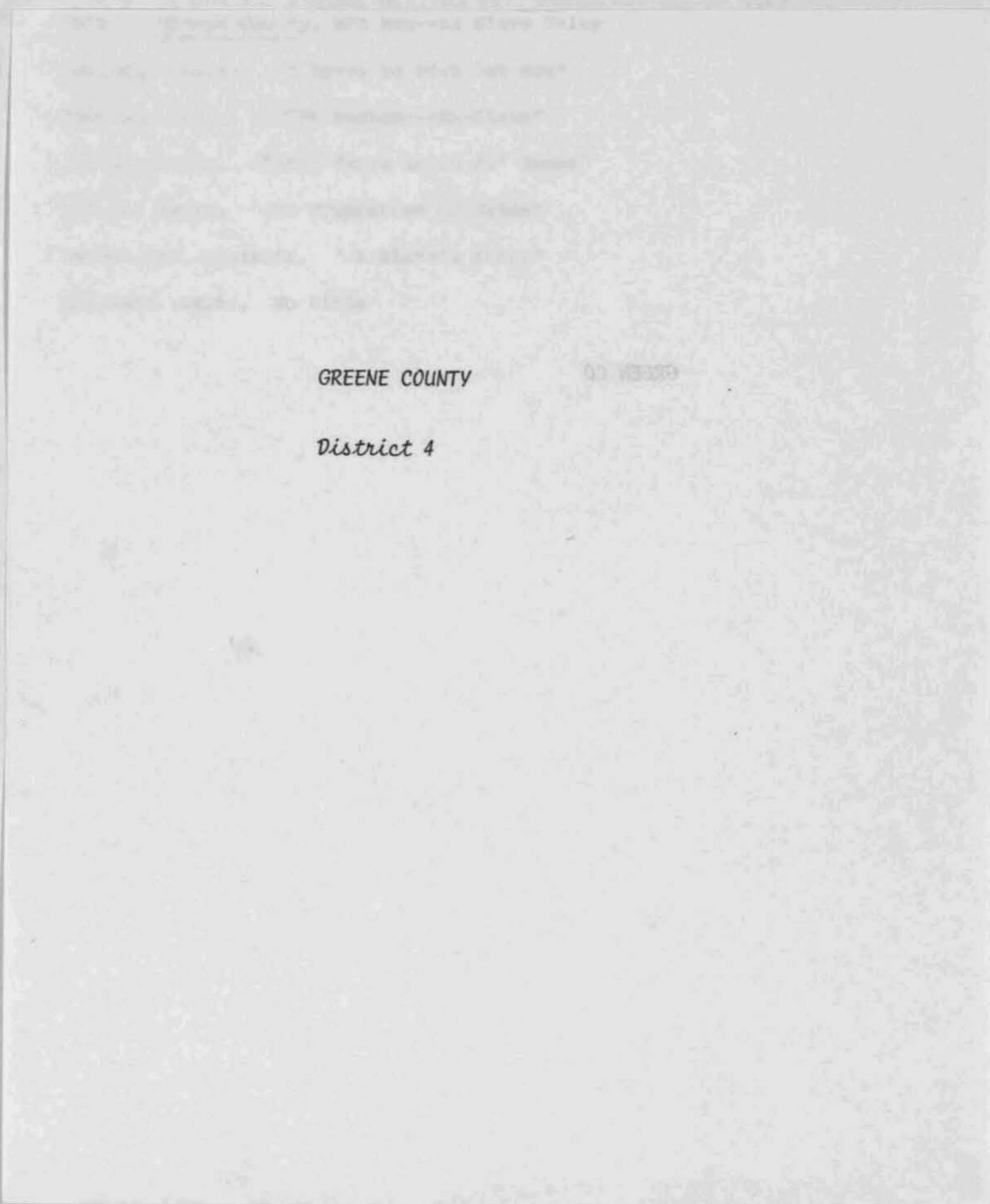


WPA Alabama Writers Project  
EX SLAVES TALES  
Greene County. #4

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GREENE COUNTY

01 1838

*District 4*

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#4  
Alice L. Barton,  
Eutaw, Alabama. *Greene Co.*

DOLPH PARHAM---EX-SLAVE.

Dolph Parham was born eighty-five years ago, near Knoxville, Ala., in Greene County. He now lives at the Greene County home and has been there for many years. The old ex-slave is totally blind.

Ned and Tilda Parham were his parents. They were also born near Knoxville, Alabama

Dolph was a small boy during slavery days. His job was to drive ~~x~~ and watch the cows and help carry the water for the Big House.

"I wore homemade spun clothes made by my Ma and my Mistiss," said Dolph. He wore brass toed shoes that was out grown by the master's children. Same winters he did not have any shoes.

George Parham, the master and Sylvia Parham the mistress.

"Master George shore was good to me, but he believed in de whippin' if I didn't work," says Dolph.

Mr. George Parham's plantation was not very large, about one hundred and fifty acres. Twenty slaves worked this plantation.

The slaves had to get up in the mornings in time to get their breakfast, feed the stock and he ~~x~~ be ready to go to the field as soon as it was light enough for them to see the master would wake the slaves by calling at their door.

There was not a church on the plantation. The master and family went to church in the wagons and the slaves walked behind.

Mr. George Parham was a doctor and always cared for his slaves well.

Dolph never married. He continued to live with his master after the war.

Greene County

Alice L. Barton,

Jack Kytte

I LOVED ~~TO~~ PICK DAT BOX

(Photo)

George Dillard, born in Richmond, Va., in 1852, now idles about his little home at Eutaw and recalls days when he was a slave. The memories bring smiles to his wrinkled, black face.

"Honey, dar was a dance every Sattidy night," he chuckled, "an' all de niggers nigh 'bout broke ~~dey~~<sup>dey</sup> legs a-dancin.'"

"And didn't you dance just as hard as the others, Uncle George?"

"Well, Mistus, I was right spry; but I was at my best in de job of pickin' de banjer. I shorely did love to pick dat box while de other niggers danced away."

George said his family came from Virginia to Mississippi, and that he came to Greene County about 60 years ago. His two masters were a Mr. Dillard and Bob Steele.

George explained that he was a field hand and had to work hard most of the time.

"But us had plenty to eat," he said. "De food was cooked in Old Mistus' kitchen an' sont to de fiel' on a big cart. I 'member dat a bell would ring for us to git up, an' we would work as long as it was daylight."

George said that Mr. Steele owned about 200 slaves and that he always had plenty <sup>of everything</sup> The plantation, he said,

Geo. Bellard,

Green County

X

consisted of about 2,000 acres.

"Ol' Massa had a church right on de plantation for us niggers," he continued. "Many's de time I danced late in de night an' den had to git up an' go to church wid de rest. All of us had to go. A white man would preach, but I allus enjoyed de singin' most of all."

George believes earnestly that ghosts exist, but admits they have never bothered him.

"Dey is all aroun'," he maintains, "but dey don't follow me. No'm, I's not afraid of dem; but I knows plenty of niggers dat'll run if a ghost so much as breshes by dem."

The old ducky said that "atter freedom come to de worl'" he continued to live with his master and worked a share crop. He said that Mr. Steele was always fair and good to him; always giving him the best of everything.

George married Celia Shelton, and to them were born 24 children.

"It was a bunch of dem," he said, "but I loved ebry one. I had a nice weddin' an' de white folks helped me <sup>to get</sup> ~~in~~ myself a 'oman an' <sup>then to get</sup> ~~married~~ married to her.

##

Fifty Years in  
de Po' House

Alice S. Barton  
John Morgan Smith

LINDY PATTON

"White folks," said Lindy Patton, <sup>from a chair in the Greene Co. Poor House,</sup> "I was <sup>born</sup> ~~born~~ in 1841 an' it's  
50 taken me ~~50~~ years to git to de po' house. <sup>Now I is</sup> got jus fo' mo'  
years to make it an even fifty dat I been dere. I hopes I makes de  
grade, caze dat would be some sorta record wouldn't it? Fifty years  
in de po' house.

"I <sup>worked</sup> ~~worked~~ in de fiel's an' I worked hard all day long.  
De white folks useta gimme de clothes of de <sup>lil</sup> ~~little~~ white chilluns.  
I was <sup>born</sup> ~~born~~ in <sup>born</sup> ~~born~~ in Knoxville, Alabama, in Greene County, an' I belonged to  
"assa Bill Patton. I remembers a slave on our plantation dat was always  
a runnin' away. De "assa try beatin' him but dat didn't do no good.  
Dat nigger would run away in spite of nothin' they could do.  
One  
~~One~~ day de Massa decided he was goin' to take de nigger to Mobile an'  
swap him for anudder one. De "isstis tol' him to leave de ole fool  
alone, said it warn't <sup>with</sup> ~~worth~~ the trouble. Well, de massa started out  
to Mobile wid de nigger, an' when de got dere an' de train stop, de nigger,  
he lit out an' de "assa runned raght behine him. De "assa musta runned  
a mile or mo' till finally de "assa he gib out an' let de nigger go.  
Two days <sup>later</sup> de "assa he died f'um a-chasin' dat low down bur' head.

"We sho <sup>had</sup> ~~have~~ to git up early white folks; at de break of day,  
an' all de ~~hundreds~~ slaves on our place had a certain chore to  
do eve'y day.

"Nawsuh, de white folks didn't teach us to read or write. White  
folks, I can't hardly count none at all. We didn't have no church on  
our place either, we jus' went along wid de "assa an' sot in de back.  
I ~~ain't~~ ain't never ma'ied, an' I ain't never goin' to."

G. Samek

Green County #4

THE PROPHETESS OF EUTAW

[NANCY VAUGHN]

Aunt Nancy Vaughn, was born in slave times, her mother had belonged to Colonel Irving in Greensboro. Aunt Nancy lives "different" from the other negroes. She lived in a land of her own, she heard voices, and told about them, but no one believed her.

Finally she stopped speaking of the voices, but they continued and when Aunt Nancy was a grown woman she knew it was the Lord's voice she had been hearing. One day the Lord came to Aunt Nancy and told her "Dress yo-self in a white robe, I'll tell you how to make it, and go tell the Pope, I say, his time is nigh".

"Yas Lawd, I'll go, but that Pope is 'long ways frum heah, you knows I jest gets a little washin' now and then fum de white white folks, I suah ain't got money to go all dat way. The Lord told Aunt Nancy to go see Sister Jane an pious Church member, so Nancy dressed in a robe made of a bed sheet and went to Sister Jane. "Sis Jane, I done had a message fum de Lawd". "You is, what he say". Said Sis Jane properly impressed.

"He say, Nancy make yorself, a white robe, and go tell de Pope I say his time is nigh' I say, Lawd How kin I go tell de Pope, he time nigh', I ain' got no money, dat Pope long ways fum Eutaw. He say, "Go tell Sis Jane, about dat." So heah I is.

"Well, said Sister Jane, "If the Lawd say so, mus he say so. Dis heah my house and land may come I kin borry the money fum de white folks. Us gotta see dem Pope somehow.

Sister Jane got six hundred dollars for her place, made herself a ~~white robe and she and Nancy went to Rome.~~ They

[Nancy VAUGHN, cont.]

white robe and she and Nancy went to Rome. They took a steamboat from Mobile and then a train. Finally reaching Rome two bewildered darkies in a strange land, speaking a language neither of them understood.

"We got a mans what talks like us talks and two lake de Pope talks". He took us to de Pope's house. Fus, us kneels down and de Pope come in. I riz right, <sup>up.</sup> ain't de Lawd send me?

"I sez to 'em Pope you ain't been rulin' right and yo time es nigh".

The mans what talk's boff lak me and same as de Pope tell him what I say.

The Pope say somethin' in his tongue which I never did know what it was he say. Then us go away fum dere an' took a steamboat and come home. By the time us gits back to Eutaw, I heahs de Pope done daid".

Neither Aunt Nancy nor Sister Jane ever told many thing about their trip so far as I know, This is the story of their journey as they have told it over and over.

Her death, which occured when she was nearing eighty was as strange as her life. The white robe, symbol of her devoted life, was winding sheet. It caught afire against her stone one night and Aunt Nancy Vaughn left the world in a pillar of flame.

Oct. 7, 1936.

Alice S. Burton  
John Morgan Smith

*Queen County*

LUCINDIA WASHINGTON

A slave's story

Little black Cindy skipped along the narrow path that led to the Spring House. In her hand she swung an empty cedar pail that she was soon to fill with cool, fresh milk. She entered the small glade overhung with willow trees and spread with soft grass, and gazed at the sparkling water of the spring as it caught the beams of sunlight coming through the trees and reflected them in myriads of little points. Shadows of the waving leaves danced over the ground and ~~at~~<sup>up</sup> the side of the stone Spring House. How cool and nice it was here, she thought. Gentle breezes rustled the limbs of small ~~and~~ saplings and quietly stirred the long grass along the upper part of the branch.

A young rabbit hopped from a little clump of bushes and Cindy watched him as the small creature drank thirstily from the crystal water. Occasionally, the bunny would lift his <sup>head</sup> as if warned by ~~the slightest sound~~ a ~~slight~~ slight sound, but in a moment she saw him fold back his delicate ears and once more dip his small mouth into the babbling water.

After quenching his thirst, the rabbit hopped a few feet away and nibbled on a wisp of ~~tender~~ tender grass. Cindy was as still as a statue as she watched the procedure. "Dat's de cutest little bunny I ever seed," she said to herself. "I wish I could ~~catch~~<sup>catch</sup> him." But Cindy knew that she could not catch a rabbit, so she was contented to stand in the shadow of a sycamore and gaze eagerly at the animal ~~nibbling~~<sup>nibbling</sup> on the grass.

Suddenly, without warning, Cindy's eyes protruded from their sockets with an expression of ~~expressing~~ fear. Slipping noiselessly through the green undergrowth she saw a giant rattler gliding slowly toward the young rabbit. She wanted to cry out, ~~she~~ but she was afraid; afraid of

Lucinda Washington  
 Greene County

attracting the rattler's attention toward her. She was deathly afraid of snakes. Since babyhood, she had harbored a growing fear of them. If Cindy had been still before this time, she now became a frozen image. It would not have been apparent that she was even breathing. So frightened was she of the snake that her whole body broke out in a profuse perspiration. Her eyes were glued to the tremendous brown monster that without the slightest sound oozed ~~deftly~~ deftly toward its victim. Cindy was hypnotized! The snake seem to hold her in a strange spell. Slowly, inexorably he moved entirely out of the undergrowth and was now weaving on the clear ground. He approached the rabbit within a distance of three feet and began to carefully form himself in a deadly coil. Cindy saw every movement. She saw each diamond on ~~his~~ <sup>its</sup> brown back; each scale of its crawling skin; each lash and point of its tongue; the whiteness of its bottom the ~~small~~ <sup>large</sup> track that it had made in the sand. She watched its eyes gleam expressionless and ominous. She gazed at the deadly mouth as it slowly began to open. She was aware of the first appearance of the two death-like fangs pointing downward. She saw the ten-buttoned rattle stand erect. She saw it quiver; shake; sound. She saw the rabbit turn with fear. She saw the strike; the sinking of the fangs into the soft, brown fur. She watched the rabbit give an ephemeral struggle; witnessed the brief pitiful look in the bunny's eyes and at last saw the mouth sink into the small belly and draw the last breath of life away.

The experience was more than the little girl could stand. Cindy was now in a state of frenzied. She could not move, nor speak, nor turn her eyes. She could only stare! At ~~what~~ what?

The monstrous snake then girded himself for further onslaught. After being sure its victim was dead, he loosed his grip and stretched at full length upon the ground; drew the rabbit out until it too was stretched carefully out with ~~its~~ its hind feet together and its head



p. 4

"All dis happen in Sumpter County whar I was bawn. Us had a pretty place dere. I'll never forgits how de niggers worked dere gardens in de moonlight. Dere warn't no time in de day. De white folks work tuk dat time. ~~De~~ De oberseer rung a big bell for us to git up by in de mawnin' at fo' o'clock, an' de fus' thing we done was to feed de stock."

"You axe was we punished?" Yassuh, we was punished for ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> thing; most of all for stealin'.

Yassuh, we was taught to read an' write, but mos' of de slaves didn't want to learn. Us little niggers would hide our books under de steps to keep fum havin' to study. Us'd go to church wid de white folks on Sunday and sit in de back, an' den we go home an' eat a big Sunday meal. When we got sick fum eatin' too much or somp'n, Massa Jim Godfrey was a doctor an' he'd tend to us. Den when new nigger babies came, nine little black bugs was tied up in rags 'round dere necks for to make de babies teethe easy.

"When I was ma'ied, white folks, at de age of thirteen, Alex Washington, my husband an me had a forty dollor weddin'. My mistis baked me a cake, an' a white schoolmaster named Henry Hindron spoke de ceremony. Me an' dat ole husband had twenty-two chilluns.

"Yas ma'm. I sho does believe in <sup>h i</sup>gostes. We's got one good spirit an' one bad un. One goes to heaben an' de udder stays on earth. <sup>h</sup>Gostes sho does lak whiskey, caze ~~dey~~ dey'll follow you iffen you got any. Iffen you po' it on de groun' beside you, dough, dey'll lose track of you.. Always give a gos' de raght han' side of de road, white folks, an' he won't never bother you. <sup>h</sup>Yes my chile, I is got religion. I seed Jesus a hanging fum de cross. ~~He~~ He give his blood so dat us could live. I know I is goin' to heaben."

Sebia Williams

Sebia Williams an ex-slave of Green County looks on the days of slavery as being the happiest days of her life.

Mr. Ben Williams, her master, lived in the northern part of Green County.

Sebia does not know her age. She says she remembers when Eutaw was a forest and when negroes were put upon a block and sold to the highest bidder. She also remembers when the first homes were built. From what she tells she must be about one-hundred years old. She is very feeble and her hair is almost white.

"Did you like to be a slave?" She said, "Yes, Miss, if I got sick my master got me medcin; if I needed clothes he show got them. " "Did you have plenty to eat? I asked. "Yes Miss, my master was show good to me we had plenty to eat; we did not have dishes to eat out of we had wooden bowls and spoons and eat til' we got full."

Sebia did not work in the field. She helped nurse the Williams children and helped with the weaving. She lived with her master as long as he lived.

This old ex-slave does not have a home. She lives with her relatives. At present she is living with her niece on Mr. John Webb's place about three miles west of Eutaw, Alabama.