

I Got a Record [Quotes]

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African American restaurant operator, nurse, and washerwoman.

Interview conducted by Geneva Tonsil on December 1, 1939

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"My father uster b'long to Mr. Sam Ellington. He sold him to Dick Petite, a spec'later, from Mississippi. I don't 'member it but my ma tole us chilluns 'bout it when we grow'd up.

"Dey had slaves in pens, brung in droves and put in dem pens jes' lak dey wus cows. Dey sold dem by auctionin' off to the highest bidder. I wus only a chile and nevah went 'round much. Dey put girls on the block and auctioned dem off, 'What will you give fer dis nigger wench?' Lot of the girls wus bein' sold by their master who wus their father, taken rat out uv the yards with their white chilluns and sold lak herds uv cattle.

"My sister was given away when she wus a girl. She tole me and ma that they'd make her go out and lay on a table and two or three white men would have in'ercourse with her befo' they'd let her git up. She wus jes' a small girl hone. She died when she wus still in her young days, still a girl. Oh! You is blessed to live in this day and don't know the tortures the slaves went through. Honey, slavery wus bad, but I wus so young I missed all the evil but chile I know'd 'bout it.

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"I wus born in Washington, Georgia, on February 28, 1855, and when I wus set free with a blind ma, she took me to Sparta, Georgia.

"I had ter work hard fer with a blind ma it wus nothin' she could do to 3 earn money. I didn't have nobody to help me but ma's brother. I'd go ter him ter git a little somethin' fer food. I stayed in Sparta until 1928. I got lots of work there.

"I married in Sparta and wus very happy. My husband took care uv me and life wusn't so hard. He died and in a year or so atter that I married agin. My fust husband wus good to my blind ma and when she died he come home from work to stay with me and console me. He wus a good, Christian man. My fust husband drove a carriage for drummers 'round through the country. He loved me. He supported me and our chilluns, and my blind ma.

The white folks he worked for lak'd him and they wus nice to me too. After my husband's death, I worked and made a good living. I cooked, washed and ironed fer the white folks.

When I married my second husband I sho'ly married a wealthy man. I 'member I went into the smoke house and when I saw all that meat, hams, shoulders, lard and sausage in dat house, I said 'Lawdy, is all dis mine?' He had turkeys, geese, guinea and ducks. He had

a lot uv chilluns and when I married him the white folks said a quorum uv us got together and asked ourselves, 'Whut did a woman lak you marry ole man Kensey fer?' I tole them 'cause I wus jes' lonesome, I wus tired uv living by myself.

"After my husband, Mr. Kensey, died, I opened a restaurant in Sparta and I din't run no shoddy place either. The best people et at my place. Mr. Britt, a business man there in Sparta and for whose wife I'd nursed, would tell people to go down to eat at 'Mollie's' place. I fed white and colored. I had a place in front where I served the white and they liked my victuals too. Soldiers, railroad men, and drummers come to eat at my place. I stayed in Sparta until 1918, when times got so bad.