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August 1936

Interview, Charlotte Martin and Alfred Farrell, Slave Interview, August 1936

Charlotte Martin

Alfred Farrell

Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida

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Charlotte Martin

Charlotte Mitchell Martin, one of twenty children born to Shepherd and Lucinda Mitchell, eighty-two years ago, was a slave of Judge Wilkerson on a large plantation in Sixteen, Florida, a little town near Madison. Shepherd Mitchell was a wagoner who hauled whiskey from Newport News, Virginia for his owner. Wilkerson was very cruel and held them in constant fear of him. He would not permit them to hold religious meetings or any other kinds of meetings, but they frequently met in secret to conduct religious services. When they were caught, the "instigators"- known or suspected- were severely flogged. Charlotte recalls how her oldest brother was whipped to death for taking part in one of the religious ceremonies. This cruel act halted the secret religious services.

Wilkerson found it very profitable to raise and sell slaves. He selected the strongest and best male and female slaves and mated them exclusively for breeding. The huskiest babies were given the best of attention in order that they might grow into sturdy youths, for it was those who brought the highest prices at the slave markets. Sometimes the master himself had sexual relations with his female slaves, for the products of miscegenation were very remunerative. These offsprings were in demand as house servants.

After slavery the Mitchells began to separate. A few of the children remained with their parents and eked out their living from the soil. During this period Charlotte began to attract attention with her herb cures. Doctors sought her out when they were stumped by difficult cases. She came to Live Oak to care for an old colored woman and upon whose death she was given the woman's house and property. For many years she has resided in the old shack, farming, making quilts, and practicing her herb doctoring. She has outlived her husband for whom she bore two children. Her daughter is feebleminded- her herb remedies can't cure her!

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide,(Negro Writers' Unit
Live Oak, Florida

Alfred Farrell
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
August 20, 1936
John A. Sims
Editor

REFERENCES

I. Personal interview with Bolden Hall, living near the Masonic Hall, in the Eastern section of Live Oak, Florida

2. Personal interview with Charlotte Martin, living near Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in the Eastern section of Live Oak, Florida

3. Sarah Poon, living near Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Live Oak, Florida