

Amelia Jones
London, Ky., Laurel County
Interview by Perry Larkey

Concerning slaves of this section of the country, I will quote experiences and observation of an old negro lady who was a slave, Mrs. Amelia Jones, living in North London, Kentucky. "Aunt Amelia" as she is known around here is eighty-eight years of age, being sixteen years of age at the close of the Civil War. Mrs. Jones says:

"I will tell as best I can remember, I was born eighty-eight years ago in Manchester, Ky. under a master by the name of Daw White. He was a southern republican and was elected as a congressman by that party from Manchester, Ky. He was the son of Hugh White, the original founder of Whitesburg, Ky.

Master White was good to the slaves, he fed us well and had good places for us to sleep, and didn't whip us, only when it was necessary, but didn't hesitate to sell any of his slaves, he said, "You all belong to me and if you don't like it, I'll put you in my pocket" meaning of course that he would sell that slave and put the money in his pocket.

The day he was to sell the children from their mother he would tell that mother to go to some other place to do some work and in her absence, he would sell the children. It was the same when he would sell a man's wife, he also sent him to another job, and when he returned his wife would be gone. The master only said, "don't worry you can get another one".

Mrs. Jones has a sister ninety-two years of age living with her now, who was sold from the auction block in Manchester. Her sister was only twelve years of age when sold and her master received \$1,220.00 for her, then she was taken south to some plantation. Also her father was sold at that place at an auction of slaves at a high price, handcuffed and taken south. She never saw her father again. She says the day her father was sold there was a long line of slaves to be sold and after they were sold and a good price paid for each they were handcuffed and marched away to the South, her father was among the number.

The Auction block at Manchester was built in the open, from rough-made lumber, a few steps, and a platform on top of that, the slave to be sold. He would look at the crowd as the auctioneer

would give a general description of the ability and physical standing of the man. He heard the bids as they came in wondering what his master would be like.

Mrs. Jones claims she had no privileges but had as before stated, plenty to eat and wear, and a good place to sleep; but most masters treated them cruelly and beat them most of the time. They were also underfed at most places, but since they had such a good master they did not want for a thing.

Cemetery Hill as it is known to us here, being in London, Ky., was a hill on which a Civil War battle was fought. The trenches are still here. The hill was given to the north to bury their dead by Jarvis Jackson, a great grandfather of the Jarvis Jackson who is now city police of London, today. For some reason, the soldiers were taken up and moved to a different place only a few years ago. Mrs. Hoage says "The first daisies that were brought to this country were put on that hill" and she can remember when the entire hill was covered with them.

The southern side had trenches on the east side of the Dixie Highway on and surrounding the site where the Pennington Hospital is now standing, which are very vivid today. The London City School being in the path bears a hole today from a cannonball. Shot no doubt from the Southern forces. The new addition to the school hides the hole, but until recent years it could be seen being about ten inches in diameter.

Zollie Coffey, a southern general had camped at Wild Cat, Ky. but was forced to retreat when general Garrard and Lucas and Stratton two captains under him, all from Clay county, with a large crowd came in. He, on his retreat, came through London and had a battle with an army of Ohioans camped on Cemetery Hill. Quoted a poem by Mrs. Hodge, which she remembered from those days:

"Just raise your eyes to yon grassy hill,
View the bold Ohioans working with skill,
Their bombs lying around them to spew fiery flames,
Among the seceders, 'til they won't own their names."

Mrs. Hodge quotes another poem from memory about Gen. Coffey's retreat from Wild Cat:

"Our tigers and bullpups to Wild Cat did go,
To fight our brave boys, tho our force they did not know.

When they come in gunshot distance, Schelf told them to halt,
We're not Murphey's honey, nor Alex Whites salt.

His orders to his men, was "go thru" or "go to hell"
But our Indiana Hoosier boys, heard them too well,
In less than thirty minutes, they gave them many balls,
Wild Cat had had kittens, Oh; don't you hear them squall.

They did not stay long, before they did retreat,
Went on double quick and left all their meat,
As they went back through Barbourville, they say Zollie did say
I've lost fifteen hundred killed or run away.

Away back in Mississippi, we're forced to go
As for our loss you'll never know
Slipped back when the union fell asleep
Hauled off our dead and buried them deep.

To fight against Garrad, it never will do,
Stratton and Lucas is hard to out do,
They conquered our tigers and bull pups too,
In spite of our force and all we could do."

Coffer was killed by Colonel Frye at Mill Springs. A statue is erected to Zollie Coffer at Somerset, Kentucky.

Both sides were cruel during the Civil War. Mrs. McDaniel who lives here tells a story of how her father was killed in Clay County while eating dinner one day. Some federal soldiers drove up and asked what side he was on and upon saying the confederate side, they took him outside and shot him with a gun in his own yard.

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