Florida Slave Narratives: Andrews, Samuel Simeon

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For almost 30 years Edward Waters College, an African Methodist Episcopal School, located on the north side of Kings Road in the western section of Jacksonville, has employed as watchman, Samuel Simeon Andrews (affectionately called "Parson"), a former slave of A.J. Lane of Georgia, Lewis Ripley of Beaufort, South Carolina, Ed Tillman of Dallas, Texas, and John Troy of Union Springs, Alabama.

"Parson" was born November 18, 1850 in Macon, Georgia, at a place called Tatum Square, where slaves were held, housed and sold. "Speculators" (persons who traveled from place to place with slaves for sale) had housed 84 slaves there—many of whom were pregnant women. Besides "Parson," two other slave-children, Ed Jones who now lives in Sparta, Georgia, and George Bailey were born in Tatum Square that night. The morning after their births, a woman was sent from the nearby A.J. Lane plantation to take care of the three mothers; this nurse proved to be "Parson's" grandmother. His mother told him afterwards that the meeting of mother and daughter was very jubilant, but silent and pathetic, because neither could with safety show her pleasure in finding the other. At the auction which was held a few days later, his mother, Rachel, and her two sons, Solomon Augustus and her infant who was later to be known as "Parson," were purchased by A.J. Lane who had previously bought "Parson's" father, Willis, from a man named Dolphus of Albany, Georgia; thus were husband and wife re-united. They were taken to Lane's plantation three miles out of Sparta, Georgia, in Hancock County. Mr. Lane owned 85 slaves and was known to be very kind and considerate.

"Parson" lived on the Lane plantation until he was eight years old, when he was sold to Lewis Ripley of Beaufort, South Carolina, with whom he lived for two years; he was then sold to Ed Tillman of Dallas, Texas; he stayed on the Tillman plantation for about a year

and until he was purchased by John Troy of Union Springs, Alabama—the richest slave-holder in Union Springs, Alabama; he remained with him until Emancipation. He recalls that during one of these sales about $800.00 was paid for him.

He describes A.J. Lane as being a kind slave-holder who fed his slaves well and whipped them but little. All of his other masters, he states, were nice to children, but lashed and whipped the grown-ups.

Mr. Lane's family was comprised of his wife, Fannie (who also was very kind to the slaves) five children, Harriett Ann, Jennie, Jeff, Frankie and Mae Roxie, a brother (whose name he does not recall) who owned a few slaves but was kind to those that he did own. Although very young during slavery, "Parson" remembers many plantation activities and customs, among which are the following: That the master's children and those of the slaves on the plantation played together; the farm crops consisted of corn, cotton, peas, wheat and oats; that the food for the slaves was cooked in pots which were hung over a fire; that the iron ovens used by the slaves had tops for baking; how during the Civil War, wheat, corn and dried potatoes were parched and used as substitutes for coffee; that his mother was given a peck of flour every two weeks; that a mixture of salt and sand was dug from the earthern floor of the smokehouse and water poured over it to get the salt drippings for seasoning; that most medicine consisted of boiled roots; when thread and cloth were dyed with the dye obtained from maple bark; when shoes were made on a wooden last and soles and uppers fastened together with maple pegs; when the white preachers preached "obey your masters"; that the first buggy that he saw was owned by his master, A.J. Lane; it had a seat at the rear with rest which was usually occupied by a man who was called the "waiter"; there was no top to the seat and the "waiter" was exposed to the weather. He recalls when wooden slats and tightened ropes were used for bed springs; also the patience of "Aunt Letha" an old woman slave who took care of the children in the neighborhood while their parents worked, and how they enjoyed watching "Uncle Umphrey" tan cow and pig hides.

"Parson" describes himself as being very frisky as a boy and states that he did but very little work and got but very few whippings. Twice he ran away to escape being whipped and hid in asparagus beds in Sparta, Georgia until nightfall; when he returned the master would not whip him because he was apprehensive that he might run away again and be stolen by poorer whites and thus cause trouble. The richer whites, he relates, were afraid of the poorer whites; if the latter were made angry they would round up the owners' sheep and turn them loose into their cotton fields and the sheep would eat the cotton, row by row.

He compares the relationship between the rich and poor whites during slavery with that of the white and Negro people of today.

With a face full of frowns, "Parson" tells of a white man persuading his mother to let him tie her to show that he was master, promising not to whip her, and she believed him. When he had placed her in a buck (hands tied on a stick so that the stick would turn her in any direction) he whipped her until the blood ran down her back.

With changed expression he told of an incident during the Civil War: Slaves, he explained had to have passes to go from one plantation to another and if one were found without a pass the "patrollers" would pick him up, return him to his master and receive pay for their service. The "patrollers" were guards for runaway slaves. One night they came to Aunt Rhoda's house where a crowd of slaves had gathered and were going to return them to their masters; Uncle Umphrey the tanner, quickly spaded up some hot ashes and pitched it on them; all of the slaves escaped unharmed, while all of the "patrollers" were badly injured; no one ever told on Uncle Umphrey and when Aunt Rhoda was questioned by her master she stated that she knew nothing about it but told them that the "patrollers" had brought another "nigger" with them; her master took it for granted that she spoke the truth since none of the other Negroes were hurt. He remembers seeing this but does not remember how he, as a little boy, was prevented from telling about it.

Asked about his remembrance or knowledge of the slaves' belief in magic and spells he said: "I remember this and can just see the dogs running around now. My mother's brother, "Uncle Dick" and

"Uncle July" swore they would not work longer for masters; so they ran away and lived in the woods. In winter they would put cotton seed in the fields to rot for fertilizer and lay in it for warmth. They would kill hogs and slip the meat to some slave to cook for food. When their owners looked for them, "Bob Amos" who raised "nigger hounds" (hounds raised solely to track Negro slaves) was summoned and the dogs located them and surrounded them in their hide-out; one went one way and one the other and escaped in the swamps; they would run until they came to a fence—each kept some "graveyard dust and a few lightwood splinters" with which they smoked their feet and jumped the fence and the dogs turned back and could track no further. Thus, they stayed in the woods until freedom, when they came out and worked for pay. Now, you know "Uncle Dick" just died a few years ago in Sparta, Georgia."

When the Civil War came he remembers hearing one night "Sherman is coming." It was said that Wheeler's Cavalry of the Confederates was always "running and fighting." Lane had moved the family to Macon, Georgia, and they lived on a place called "Dunlap's Hill." That night four preachers were preaching "Fellow soldiers, the enemy is just here to Bolden's Brook, sixteen miles away and you may be carried into judgment; prepare to meet your God." While they were preaching, bombs began to fly because Wheeler's Cavalry was only six miles away instead of 16 miles; women screamed and children ran. Wheeler kept wagons ahead of him so that when one was crippled the other would replace it. He says he imagines he hears the voice of Sherman now, saying: "Tell Wheeler to go on to South Carolina; we will mow it down with grape shot and plow it in with bombshell."

Emancipation came and with it great rejoicing. He recalls that Republicans were called "Radicals" just after the close of the Civil War.

Mr. Lane was able to save all of his meat, silver, and other valuables during the war by having a cave dug in the hog pasture; the hogs trampled over it daily.

"Parson" states that among the papers in his trunk he has a piece of money called "shin plasters" which was used during the Civil War.

The slaves were not allowed to attend schools of any kind; and school facilities immediately following Emancipation were very poor; when the first teacher, Miss Smith, a Yankee, came to Sparta, Georgia and began teaching Sunday School, all of the children were given testaments or catechisms which their parents were afraid for them to keep lest their masters whip them, but the teacher called on the parents and explained to them that they were as free as their former masters.

"Parson" states that when he was born, his master named him "Monk." His grandfather, Willis Andrews, who was a free man of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, purchased the freedom of his wife Lizzie, but was never able to purchase their four children; his father, also named Willis, died a slave, was driven in an ox-cart to a hole that had been dug, put in it and covered up; his mother nor children could stop work to attend the funeral, but after the Emancipation, he and a brother returned, found "Uncle Bob" who helped bury him and located his grave. Soon after he had been given his freedom, "Parson" walked from Union Springs, Alabama where his last master had taken him—back to Macon, Georgia, and rejoined his mother, Rachel, his brothers, Samuel Augustus, San Francisco, Simon Peter, Lewis, Carter, Powell Wendell and sisters, Lizzie and Ann; they all dropped the name of their master, Lane, and took the name of their grandfather, Andrews.

"Parson" possesses an almost uncanny memory and attributes it to his inability to write things down and therefore being entirely dependent upon his memory. He had passed 30 years of age and had two children who could read and write before he could. His connection with Edward Waters College has given him a decided advantage for education and there are few things that he cannot discuss intelligently. He has come in contact with thousands of students and all of the ministers connected with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the State of Florida and has attended all of the State and General Conferences of this Church for the past half century. He has lived to be 85 years of age and says he will live until he is 106. This he will do because he claims: "Your life is in your hand" and tells these narratives as proof:

"In 1886 when the present Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was called the S.F.W. and I was coming from Savannah to Florida, some tramps intent upon robbery had removed spikes from the bridge and just as the alarm was given and the train about to be thrown from the track, I raised the window and jumped to safety. I then walked back two miles to report it. More than 70 were killed who might have been saved had they jumped as I did. As a result, the S.F. and W. gave me a free pass for life with which I rode all over the United States and once into Canada." He proudly displays this pass and states that he would like to travel over the United States again but that the school keeps him too close.

"I had been very sick but took no medicine; my wife went out to visit Sister Nancy—shortly afterwards I heard what sounded like walking, and in my imagination saw death entering, push the door open and draw back to leap on me; I jumped through the window, my shirt hung, but I pulled it out. Mr. Hodges, a Baptist preacher was hoeing in his garden next door, looked at me and laughed. A woman yelled 'there goes Reverend Andrews, and death is on him.' I said 'no he isn't on me but he's down there.' Pretty soon news came that Reverend Hodges had dropped dead. Death had come for someone and would not leave without them. I was weak and he tried me first. Reverend Hodges wasn't looking, so he slipped up on him."

"Parson" came to Umatilla, Florida, in 1882 from Georgia with a Mr. Rogers brought him and six other men, their wives and children, to work on the railroad; he was made the section "boss" which job he held until a white man threatened to "dock" him because he was wearing a stiff shirt and "setting over a white man" when he should have a shovel. This was the opinion of a man in the vicinity, but another white friend, named Javis warned him and advised him not to leave Umatilla, but persuaded him to work for him cutting cord wood; although "Parson" had never seen wood corded, he accepted the job and was soon given a pass to Macon, Georgia, to get other men; he brought 13 men back and soon became their "boss" and bought a house and decided to do a little hunting. When he left this job he did some hotel work, cooked and served as train porter. In

1892 he was ordained to preach and has preached and pastored regularly from that time up to two years ago.

He is of medium size and build and partially bald-headed; what little hair he has is very grey; he has keen eyes; his eyesight is very good; he has never had to wear glasses. He is as supple as one half his age; it is readily demonstrated as he runs, jumps and yells while attending the games of his favorite pastimes, baseball and football. Wherever the Edward Waters College football team goes, there "Parson" wants to go also. Whenever the crowd at a game hears the scream "Come on boys," everyone knows it is "Parson" Andrews.

"Parson" has had two wives, both of whom are dead, and is the father of eight children: Willis (deceased) Johnny, Sebron Reece of Martin, Tennessee, Annie Lee, of Macon, Georgia, Hattie of Jacksonville, Ella (deceased) Mary Lou Rivers of Macon, Georgia, and Augustus somewhere-at-sea.

"Parson" does not believe in taking medicine, but makes a liniment with which he rubs himself. He attributes his long life to his sense of "having quitting sense" and not allowing death to catch him unawares. He asserts that if he reaches the bedside of a kindred in time, he will keep him from dying by telling him: "Come on now, don't be crazy and die."

He states that he enjoyed his slavery life and since that time life has been very sweet. He knows and remembers most of the incidents connected with members of the several Conferences of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida and can tell you in what minutes you may find any of the important happenings of the past 30 or 40 years.

Source:
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Back