

# WPA Sources for African-American Oral History in Arkansas: Ex-Slave Narratives and Early Settlers' Personal Histories

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IN ARKANSAS, AS ELSEWHERE, the paucity of material written by nineteenth-century African Americans has been one of the obstacles to incorporating their perspectives into the study of the state's history. Enforced illiteracy during slavery prevented generations of African Americans from writing letters, diaries, and other documents that might have survived to offer researchers first-hand accounts of their experiences.<sup>1</sup> Literate slaves were few. For many years, the main source of written first-hand accounts by slaves and former slaves were the slave narratives popular from the early nineteenth century through the Civil War. Generally, these narratives were published either by abolitionist groups to expose the horrors of slavery or by pro-slavery apologists to promote the "contented slave" image. Unfortunately, the authors of those former slaves' autobiographies and other early narratives, and those who told their sto-

<sup>1</sup>In contrast to some other southern states, Arkansas did not forbid the education of slaves, but, as Orville Taylor wrote, "withholding education was merely accepted as a normal practice in the system of slavery as imported from the older states." Orville W. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1958), 187. The practice became so standard, in fact, that it was apparently understood by many to be law. For example, former slave Adeline Blakeley stated that "there was a law against teaching a slave to read and write. One woman—she was from the North did it anyway. But when folks can read and write its going to be found out. It was pretty hard for that woman." Adeline Blakeley interviewed by M[ary] D. Hudgins in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972), 8A: 182.

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ries to second parties, did not collectively provide a large or representative sample of the nineteenth-century African-American population.<sup>2</sup>

By the early twentieth century, several currents in African-American life were working to promote black biographical and autobiographical writing. African-American scholars, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, led what one scholar called a "concerted quest for a 'usable past,' one that would impart a sense of self-respect and identity to the American Negro."<sup>3</sup> Their desire to include the viewpoints of slaves in the study of slavery stimulated renewed interest in the earlier narratives as well as publication of more autobiographies, biographies, and reminiscences of former slaves. At the same time, followers of Booker T. Washington were eager to provide inspiring examples of African Americans lifting themselves "up from slavery."<sup>4</sup> Yet this latter impulse in some cases served to shift the focus of biographies and autobiographies away from slavery. Many of these publications told less about their subjects' lives in bondage and more about the successes they had achieved as free citizens, because they were intended to encourage other African Americans as they made their "way upward."<sup>5</sup>

Two excellent Arkansas examples of this latter genre are *How I Succeeded in My Business*, by the Reverend A. H. Miller, and *From Slavery to Wealth, the Life of Scott Bond; the Rewards of Honesty, Industry, Economy and Perseverance*. Reverend Miller began his book by stating that he was "born a slave in St. Francis County, Arkansas, in the year A. D. 1851. Sometime during the Civil War—I cannot name the exact date—my mother moved to Helena and took me with her. It is there I

<sup>2</sup>For more information about these, see Marion Wilson Starling, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981); Ama Bontemps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); Gilbert Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); John W. Blassingame, *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1987); William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Civitas Anthology of African American Slave Narratives* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1999); Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup>Norman R. Yetman, "The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection," *American Quarterly* 19 (Fall 1967): 538.

<sup>4</sup>Russell C. Brignano, *Black Americans in Autobiography; an Annotated Bibliography of Autobiographies and Autobiographical Books Written since the Civil War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974); Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

<sup>5</sup>Dan A. Rudd and Theo. Bond, with preface by Hon. I. C. Napier, *From Slavery to Wealth, the Life of Scott Bond; the Rewards of Honesty, Industry, Economy and Perseverance* (Madison, AR: Journal Printing Company, 1917).

was brought up.<sup>6</sup> Miller made only that single reference to his and his mother's slave roots, and then proceeded to describe his multifaceted career, in which he rose from a dray driver to a wealthy investor in real estate. An ordained minister, he held many positions in district and state associations of the Baptist Church and also served in public office, including one term representing Phillips County in the Arkansas House of Representatives (1874-75).<sup>7</sup> Scott Bond was born a slave in Madison County, Mississippi, in 1853. His family was taken to Cross County, Arkansas, in 1858, and then moved to St. Francis County, Arkansas, in 1872. Bond established himself as a farmer and became a major landowner and businessman. His business interests included cotton crops, cotton gins, brick kilns, a sawmill, a gravel pit, and, according to his biographers, the "largest general store between Memphis and Little Rock."<sup>8</sup> He became an active member of the National Negro Business League. Bond's biography included only a few remarks about his childhood in slavery but featured seventy-three photographs documenting various aspects of his extensive farming and business enterprises as well as showing his home and family (including one of the family with Booker T. Washington).<sup>9</sup>

Like the early slave narratives, then, the individual success stories—as well as scholarly studies based on public documents, newspapers, and slaveholders' records, like Orville Taylor's *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*—failed to provide a broad-based perspective on slavery and emancipation from the viewpoint of those who had experienced them. By 1972, however, scholarship had begun to appear based on interviews with more than two thousand former slaves conducted by the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA) nearly forty years before.<sup>10</sup> That year, George P. Rawick published unedited typescripts of the full collection of interviews, and microfilm of the interviews became available from the

<sup>6</sup>Rev. A. H. Miller, *How I Succeeded in My Business* ([n. p.], [1910]), [1].

<sup>7</sup>*Historical Report of the Secretary of State, 1998* (Little Rock: Secretary of State, 1998): 240.

<sup>8</sup>Ulysses S. Bond, "Highlights in the Life of Scott Bond," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1962): 148.

<sup>9</sup>Rudd and Bond, *From Slavery to Wealth, the Life of Scott Bond*, following p. 344.

<sup>10</sup>George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972) and John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) were the first to make extensive use of the ex-slave narratives for historical research.

Library of Congress.<sup>11</sup> For years, the collection of interviews had been unavailable except as a seventeen-volume set of typescripts in the Library of Congress and had received only limited attention from scholars.<sup>12</sup> Rawick's publication of the full set provided for the first wide access to a substantial quantity of testimony from people who had survived slavery. Numerous publications followed that mined them as sources.<sup>13</sup> Works based on the Arkansas ex-slave narratives have ap-

<sup>11</sup>Rawick, *The American Slave* in nineteen volumes. Rawick subsequently published two supplemental series of interviews he located in state archives and in the Archive of Folk Song in Washington, D.C. The interviews for former slaves living in Arkansas at the time of the interviews are available in volumes 8-11 in the original series, in volume 2 of the first supplement (1977), and in volume 1 of the second supplement (1979). The eleven-reel microfilm set is *Slave Narratives: Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, DC.: Library of Congress Photo Duplication Service, 1972). Full text of the interviews, including those conducted in Arkansas, are now also available on a Library of Congress website; "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938," <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>.

<sup>12</sup>Four publications by WPA units had been based on interviews in individual states: *These are Our Lives, as Told by the People and Written by Members of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939); *Drums and Shadows; Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*, by the Savannah Unit, Georgia Writers' Project, Work Projects Administration (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940); *The Negro in Virginia*, compiled by workers of the Work Projects Administration in the state of Virginia, sponsored by the Hampton Institute (New York: Hastings House, 1940); and *Gumbo Ya-ya* [Louisiana Writers' Project] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945). A manuscript using Arkansas interviews written by Bernie Babcock, the Federal Writers' Project's director in Arkansas from 1935 until 1938, was never published. The project's national office rejected the work, *Childhood Stories by Ex-Slaves*, because of the use of dialect. Report of November 19, 1940, Records of the Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, Records Group 69, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (microfilm, University of Arkansas Library). Selections from the interviews were included in B. A. Botkin, ed., *Lay My Burden Down; a Folk History of Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945); Julius Lester, *To Be A Slave* (New York: Dial Press, 1968); Norman Yetman, *Life under the Peculiar Institution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970); and Norman R. Yetman, ed., *Voices from Slavery* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970).

<sup>13</sup>These include Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979); Paul C. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Charles W. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

peared more slowly, though, and there has yet to be an attempt to integrate the interviews into a broad history of slavery in Arkansas.<sup>14</sup>

As welcome as the Rawick collection was, many scholars expressed doubts as to the reliability of the WPA ex-slave narrative interviews. They cited the state-based projects' lack of established oral history methodology; the biases of interviewers; the personal agendas of those interviewed; the age of interviewees, the time elapsed since their slave experiences, and the possible inaccuracy of memories; and potential errors introduced by interviewers, typists, and state and federal supervisors in the editing and transcription process.<sup>15</sup> One complaint involved Arkansas specifically. C. Vann Woodward noted that "the states included are very disproportionately represented. Arkansas, which never had more than 3.5 percent of the slave population, furnished 33 percent of the ex-slaves interviewed, while Mississippi, which in 1860 contained more than 10 percent of the slaves, is represented by little more than 1 percent of those interviewed."<sup>16</sup> This concern ignored the fact that the interviews were assembled by the states in which the subjects were living *at the time of the interview*, which frequently were not the states in which they had been enslaved. For example, the interviews conducted in Arkansas include ones with Tines Kendricks from Georgia, Talitha Lewis from North Carolina, Henry Pettus from Georgia, Warren McKinney, Wylie Nealy, and Cal Woods from South Carolina, as well as many others who had been slaves in other states.<sup>17</sup> During and after Reconstruction, Arkansas's population of former slaves swelled as African Americans moved to the state seeking better living conditions or were recruited for

<sup>14</sup>William L. Van Deburg, "The Slave Drivers of Arkansas: A New View from the Narratives," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 1976): 231-245; Bob Lancaster, "Voices from Hell," *Arkansas Times* 13 (October 1986): 48-66; Horace D. Nash, "Blacks in Arkansas During Reconstruction: The Ex-slave Narratives," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 48 (Autumn 1989): 243-259; Linda Jeanne Lovell, "African-American Narratives from Arkansas: A Study from the 1936-1938 Federal Writers' Project *A Folk History of Slavery in the United States*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arkansas, 1991); Thomas E. Jordan, "The Collection of Ex-Slave Narratives in Little Rock by the Federal Writers Project," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 40 (Spring 1992): 2-14 and 40 (Summer 1992): 42-47; Carl Moneyhon, "The Slave Family in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58 (Spring 1999): 24-44.

<sup>15</sup>David P. Henige, *Oral Historiography* (New York: Longman, 1982), 116-117; Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935), 16-18.

<sup>16</sup>C. Vann Woodward, "History from Slave Sources," *American Historical Review* 79 (April 1974): 472.

<sup>17</sup>Rawick, ed., *The American Slave* (1972), 9B: 177-186, 9B: 252, 10A: 27, 30, 188, 338, 10A: 188, 11A: 229. On this issue, see also, George E. Lankford, ed. *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas: Slavery Narratives from the 1930s WPA Collections* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), xvi-xvii.

agricultural labor.<sup>18</sup> Only with the publication in 1997 of Howard Potts' *A Comprehensive Name Index for The American Slave* and, more recently, George Lankford's volume *Bearing Witness* has it become easier to locate those among the interviewees who had actually been slaves in Arkansas.<sup>19</sup>

Other of the shortcomings noted in WPA interviews seem less grave in the case of Arkansas. First, the Arkansas interviewers, unlike the project staffs in most other states, included two African Americans—Samuel Taylor and Pernela Anderson. Taylor conducted 130 of Arkansas's 696 interviews and was identified by a prominent scholar as the most skillful interviewer in the program nationally.<sup>20</sup> Second, Irene Robertson, one of Arkansas's many white female interviewers, conducted 286 of Arkansas's interviews, making her responsible for more interviews than any other single person in the national program. Robertson collected more than 12 percent of the entire WPA ex-slave narrative collection. According to one scholar, one advantage of having so many interviews conducted by a single interviewer was that "as workers gained sophistication and experience in conducting the interviews, the quality of the products they obtained improved."<sup>21</sup> The benefits of Robertson's experience, as well as her increasing adherence to guidelines issued by the national office, can be observed in the interviews she conducted. By 1941, Henry Bennett of the WPA Writers' Unit, Library of Congress, rated her work as "outstandingly good."<sup>22</sup> Another advantage of her having conducted so many interviews is a greater consistency in the Arkansas narratives than in those from states where there were many different interviewers with different styles of conducting and transcribing interviews.

The remaining Arkansas interviewers displayed varying levels of ability and racial prejudice. Only one Arkansas interviewer, Watt McKinney, proved the worst of the criticisms about white bias to be justified. One historian accused him of "betraying his own stereotyped im-

<sup>18</sup>Though only two hundred fifty entries were completed by African Americans in Arkansas under the Southern Homestead Act (of 1866), claims were filed by approximately one thousand. Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 103. One Arkansas freedman, John Pope, was sent to Mississippi by his former master to recruit black workers. Rawick, *The American Slave*, 10A: 359.

<sup>19</sup>Howard E. Potts, compiler, *A Comprehensive Name Index for The American Slave* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997); Lankford, *Bearing Witness*.

<sup>20</sup>Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, xlvi.

<sup>21</sup>Yetman, "Background," 552.

<sup>22</sup>Rawick, ed., *The American Slave*, Supplement Series 1, 2: liv.

ages of African Americans and his blatant racism."<sup>23</sup> For example, he used trite dialect excessively, as well as digressing into "glory days" depiction of the Old South—including a lengthy account of Confederate military exploits.<sup>24</sup> Fortunately, McKinney conducted only ten interviews, and his prejudices are relatively easy to identify.

As the Arkansas interviews collected by Rawick have proved unusually valuable, it is all the more important that another source for ex-slave testimony from the state not be overlooked. A much smaller number of interviews with former slaves are among the records of another WPA project—the Early Settlers' Personal History questionnaires.<sup>25</sup> These interviews were conducted between 1936 and 1941 under the auspices of the state's Historical Records Survey of the Federal Writers' Project. Like other WPA projects, this effort sought to record the experience of ordinary people, in this case longtime residents of an area.

Originals of Early Settler interview questionnaires completed in Arkansas are preserved in Special Collections of the University of Arkansas Libraries in Fayetteville.<sup>26</sup> These interviews are filed by county with material collected by the WPA's Historical Records Survey. This collection includes eleven questionnaires for interviewees identified as former slaves (nine of whom had been slaves in Arkansas), six questionnaires for African Americans not identified as former slaves, and two hundred sixteen questionnaires for interviewees not identified as African-American. Two former slaves were interviewed in both the Early Settlers' Personal Histories and the ex-slave narrative projects—Pate Newton and Adeline Blakeley (the latter was, in fact, interviewed by two different ex-slave narrative interviewers, though in one she is identified only as "Aunt Adeline").<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Lovell, "African-American Narratives from Arkansas," 106.

<sup>24</sup>Especially see McKinney's reports for interviews with Jeff Davis, James Gill, and Henry Turner in Rawick, *The American Slave* (1972), 8B: 117-121, 9A: 19-26, 10B: 363-368.

<sup>25</sup>Some of these interviews are available electronically through the Library of Congress, but this website does not include interviews from the Arkansas project. "American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940," <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintr/wpahome.html>.

<sup>26</sup>Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records Inventory Files, 1936-1942. Group A County Archives Inventory, Title [separate number for each county], File F-Questionnaires, boxes 14, 20, 24, 25, 32, 66, 70, 96, 100, 104, 111, 123, 125, 142, 148, 150, 153, 164, 166, 184, 191, 197, 211, 222, 224, 230, 243, 251, 266, 524, ov2, ov3, ov6, and ov7. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

<sup>27</sup>Pate Newton interviewed by Sallie C. Miller in Rawick, *The American Slave* (1972), 10A: 216-218; Adeline Blakeley interviewed by M[ary] D. Hudgins in *ibid.*, 8A: 180-193; "Aunt Adeline" interviewed by Zillah Cross Peel in *ibid.*, 8A: 11-16. Blakeley's name is sometimes rendered Blakely in the WPA material.

**Table 1: Early Settlers' Personal History Interviewees—Former Slaves<sup>a</sup>**

County, state of interview	Narrator or interviewee	Date of birth	Place of birth	Age	Master	Where enslaved	Interviewer	Box no. <sup>b</sup>	No. of pages <sup>c</sup>
Hempstead, AR	Johnson, Chess	1/5/ 1844	Columbus, AR	97	not given	AR	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Royal, Emma (Mrs. John)	12/1/ 1858	Corsicana, TX	82	Melton, Johnson	TX	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Mitchell, Ben	9/27/ 1844	Macon, GA	96	Dixon, Bill	GA	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Moore, Primus	3/10/ 1854	Washington, AR	87	not given	AR	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Smith, William	6/10/ 1857	Hempstead Co., AR	83	not given	AR	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Reed, Lawston	8/2/ 1855	Charteau Parish, LA	86	not given	AR	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Hempstead, AR	Sutton, Malinda (Mrs. Eligah)	12/ 12/ 1845	Little River Co., AR	96	not given	AR	Hill, Arthur R.	96	3 T
Johnson, AR	Newton, Pate	5/9/ 1853	Johnson Co., AR	87	Newton, [?]	AR	Perway, Lucian	123	19 H
Washington, AR	Blakeley, Adeline	7/10/ 1847 ca.	Hickman Co, TN	91 ca.	Parks, John; Blakeley, Nora; Hudgins, Mrs. Harvey M.	AR	Erwin, Virgil	251	4 T
Yell, AR	Parker, Harry	1845 ca.	Yell Co., AR	95 ca.	Parker, John	AR	Bristow, Pierce	266	6 H
Yell, AR	Edwards, Laura Jackson (Mrs. John)	3/9/ 1860	MS	80 ca.	Jackson, Mrs. Elsie	MS & AR	Scott, Sarah R.	266	1 T

- Table based on the format employed in Howard Potts, *Comprehensive Name Index for The American Slave*.
- Box number in United States Historical Records Survey, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.
- Letters after pages indicate if the report is typewritten (T) or handwritten (H).



**Table 2: Early Settlers' Personal History Interviews—African Americans Not Identified as Former Slaves<sup>a</sup>**

County, state of interview	Narrator or interviewee	Date of birth	Place of birth	Age	Interviewer	Box no. <sup>b</sup>	No. of pages <sup>c</sup>
Crawford, AR	William, Author	9/9/1871	Bradie, NC	69	Selby, Johnny L.	66	2 H
Crawford, AR	Childs, Rebecca (Mrs. Jesse)	1869	SC	71	Selby, Johnny L.	66	3 H
Hempstead, AR	McKinley, A R.	3/8/1873	Lewisville, AR	68	Hill, Arthur	96	5 H
Hempstead, AR	Tellington, Frank	5/7/1861	Clinton, NC	80	Hill, Arthur	96	6 H
Lonoke, AR	Washington, George	1858	Shelby, TN	83	Webster, Silas E.	ov 6	1 H
Yell, AR	May, Ike	1873	Dardanelle, AR	67	Scott, Sarah R.	266	3 T

- a. Table based on the format employed in Howard Potts, *Comprehensive Name Index for The American Slave*.
- b. Box number in United States Historical Records Survey, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.
- c. Letters after pages indicate if the report is typewritten (T) or handwritten (H).

Though significantly fewer in number than the ex-slave narratives, the Early Settler interviews of Arkansas African Americans provide more biographical data about the informants. Especially helpful are the dates and places of birth, present and previous occupations, the names of spouses and dates of marriage, and often the names of children, grandchildren, and, sometimes, great-grandchildren. This information is rarely available in traditional sources for early African-American research. For example, the censuses of 1860 and before did not list even the names of slaves, much less names of their spouses or their places of birth. And those interviewed by the Early Settlers' Project do not necessarily show up in other sources. Of the seven former slaves interviewed by the project in Hempstead County, none of the three born before 1850 were identified through Hempstead County deed books in *Black Slaves and Early Freedmen of Hempstead County, Arkansas 1819-1850*.<sup>28</sup> Only a few of the seventeen African Americans interviewed as early settlers can be found in

<sup>28</sup>Linda McDowell, *Black Slaves and Early Freedmen of Hempstead County, Arkansas 1819-1850*. (Little Rock: Jubilee, Inc., 2000).

indexes to the censuses of 1870 and 1880 or in the Soundex index to the 1930 census for Arkansas.<sup>29</sup>

The questions asked of the early settlers were different than those used in the ex-slave interviews. The ex-slave interviews were reported in narrative, anecdotal style, while the Early Settler reports followed closely a set list of fifty-nine questions which solicited biographical information as well as material on folkways and history. The biographical questions asked interviewees when and where they were born; their former occupations; when, where, and to whom they were married; names of children and grandchildren; when and how they came to Arkansas if they were not born in the state; and schools attended. The folkways questions asked about how early homes were built; farming implements; how fires were fought; local celebrations; the first time subjects saw an automobile, a train, and an airplane; prices of food and other goods (questions pertaining to food also included one about whether tomatoes had been considered poisonous). The history questions asked about the Civil War, Reconstruction (especially carpetbaggers and the Ku Klux Klan), duels, feuds, robberies, hangings, Indian dwellings or artifacts, and more. Answers to some of the Early Settler questions were brief, general, or "do not remember," while others were lengthy and included many details.

Transcriptions of the Early Settler questionnaires for African Americans in Arkansas will be made available on the web site of Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Libraries.<sup>30</sup> The full text of the longest of these interviews is reprinted here.

<sup>29</sup>When interviewees do turn up in postbellum censuses, the ages, states of birth, and other details do not always agree with data collected in the Early Settler interview or other sources. For example, a Ben Mitchell appears in the 1880 census in Hempstead County (stamped page 520), but the names of his wife and children and his state of birth are different than those given in the interview. Also in the 1880 census for Hempstead County (stamped page 482) is Elijah Sutton with wife Malinda and son Charles. The names match those given in the interview, but Malinda's age is given as twenty-three, so she would have been born in 1857 or 1856, not 1845 as stated in her interview.

<sup>30</sup><http://libinfo.uark.edu/specialcollections/wpa>.

**WPA Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire  
for Pate Newton<sup>31</sup>**

Interviewed by Lucian F. Petway, Unit Foreman. 4/9/1941  
Johnson County, Arkansas Form J.  
Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire

1. Early settler's name  
*Pate Newton. (Colored)*
2. Address  
*Clarksville, Arkansas*
3. Present occupation (most of the old timers are now retired).  
*Retired.*
4. Previous occupation or occupations.  
*Farm hand; slave; railway section laborer; stone mason; well digger and servant.*
5. Date of birth.-----  
*May 1853. Day unknown.*
6. Place of birth.  
*Johnsonville, Johnson County, Arkansas. (Now Hagerville)*
7. Married? To whom? When? Where?  
*Married; (twice) 3-10-1870 and sometime in 1880. Johnsonville, Arkansas. Clarksville, Arkansas. First wife, Mary Lee; Second, Rachel Hervey.*
8. [Skipped on questionnaire form]
9. If an immigrant give particulars. City and country of derivation, name of ship on which arrived, etc.  
*Native*

<sup>31</sup>Interview with Pate Newton, April 9, 1941, Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records Inventory Files, 1936-1942, Group A, County Archives Inventory, Title 36-Johnson County, File F-Questionnaires, box 123. The handwritten document has been transcribed as literally as possible. Although misspellings have not been corrected, logical capitalization has been imposed because the interviewer mixed upper and lower-case letters throughout.

10. How long has the individual resided in Arkansas?

*87 years*

11. If not a native tell of the voyage to Arkansas. Boat? Wagon train? etc.

[no answer]

12. Why did the individual come to Arkansas?

[no answer]

13. Get details of construction of early homes. (In the southern and southeastern parts of the state chimneys were frequently built of clay and split wood or trimmed branches due to the scarcity of stone and the lack of brick kilns. Some of the more pretentious houses were built with brick imported up the rivers. In the northwestern part of the state stone houses occurred much more frequently. Pay particular attention to these and similar regional differences.)

*Has not alone seen clay and wood chimneys, but built them. Earliest homes remembered was erected from home hewed logs. They contained no windows, shutters being used (wooden). Door latches was home made of the sliding bolt type. All were made from wood, a number of these latches which was made of hickory are still in service in Johnson County. Some have been in use 80 or more years. Puncheon floors.*

14. What form of lighting was used in the early days? Pine knots? Tallow dips? Candles poured at home? Oil or fat lamps? etc.

*Pine knots; tallow dips and candles. Candles was poured and molded at home. A manufactured mold which completed (12) twelve candles at each pouring was owned by this slaves master.*

15. When were electric lights first used in your community?

[no answer]

16. What kind of fuel was used? (This was wood in most parts of the state, of course, because it was plentiful and convenient, but in some of the western counties coal may have appeared early.)

*All homes used wood for heating and cooking. The blacksmiths used a high grade soft non-clinging coal mined in the western part of county. (Interviewers note—this coal is known as the "Philpoit" coal and is mined in Lee Township, Range 25 W., Townships 9 and 10 North. This is adjacent to the old stage line "wire" road, so named because it carried the first telegraph wires*

*from St. Louis south. This road was also the stage route. In 1840 a traveler from the east discovered this coal which lies near the surface (overburden 6 to 30 feet) and is easily mined by stripping overburden. It is considered the finest blacksmith coal in the United States.)*

17. What kinds of food did the early settlers have? Were fish and game depended upon for the meat supply? Was game plentiful? What kinds?

*Beef, pork, mutton, goat, fowls and poultry; abundant game could be slain with stones; wild game included deer, turkey, bear, pigeons, doves, prairie chickens, o'possum, coon, rabbit, wild hogs, and guienna pigs, other wild animals included beaver, panther, mink, muskrat, and wild cats.*

*Mr. Newton killed the first beaver he ever seen with an old time one-eyed hoe; he was six (6) or seven (7) years of age at the time. His owner sold the pelt for \$5.00 giving the money to the boy who had never before seen so much money.*

18. What kinds of clothes were worn and how manufactured?

*Practically all clothing was home woven; slaves (women & children) carded and spun wool and cotton using homemade carders and locally made looms. Mr. Newton was grown before he had worn factory made garments and apparel other than shoes. All wool and cotton was raised on farm.*

19. Were there any interesting customs or incidents connected with early courtships? Was bundling ever practiced? (It is highly improbable but possible.) Were charivaries (usually pronounced 'shivaree' in Arkansas and the lower Mississippi Valley territory) frequent?

*Bundling unknown; charivaries prevalent from earliest memory; horseback riding was the means of reaching your girl when she lived in a place inaccessible to buggy or cart; if roads was passable the buggy and cart was used. Masters of slaves encouraged early marriages and large families as each colored child represented a value in excess of any other product of the plantation.*

20. Compare some early food, clothing, etc. prices with those of today. (Since staples were usually bought in barrels, hogsheads, bushels, and similar large units, present prices will have to be quoted on the same basis.)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Abbreviations used in these lists include cwt. for hundred weight, bbl. for barrel, lb. for pound., bu. for bushel, and pr. for pair. No date is specified for the "Early day price."

<u>Early day price</u>	<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Today's price</u>
3 to 5¢ per dozen	eggs	17 ½¢ per doz.
3 to 4¢ per cut	dressed hogs	14¢ per cut
2 to 5 dollars each	live hogs	7.50 per cut
\$1.00 each	pigs (6 wks. old)	\$3.00 to 5.00 each
with the mother free		
\$2.00 per cwt.	dressed beef	14¢ per lb.
1¢ per lb.	beef hides	9¢ per lb.
\$5.00 per cwt.	salt	\$1.50 per cwt.
\$5.00 per bbl	wheat flour	\$5.00 per bbl
10¢ per bu.	corn	60¢ per bu.
3 to 9¢ yard	cotton goods	8 ½¢ to 35¢ yard
\$2.50 pr.	shoes	\$2.00 to \$20.00[pr]
10¢ pr.	hose	25¢ to \$2.50 pr.

21. What were some of the incidents pertaining to the sharing of food and other supplies in times of common need?

*In adversity the entire community shared with and cared for the unfortunates; neighbors did the cooking, housework, farming, etc., in sickness; when buildings destroyed by fires, storm, etc., neighbors hued logs for replacing property and on given days a "raising" day was held. The neighbors all appeared on this day—the womenfolk with food to be prepared for the men who with their own tools, set about to replace the destroyed building of their unfortunate neighbor. A prime requisite on these occasions was an ample supply of hard liquors and a sumptuous feed. Buildings was usually completed within the day and a "barn dance" held on the new premises the same evening to commemorate the event.*

22. What were some early cultivated crops? Domesticated animals? (For instance, when did tomatoes cease to be known as 'Love Apples,' regarded as poisonous? When moved from the flower garden to the vegetable garden?)

*Early crops was about the same as today, vegetable and grain seed was preserved from year to year. Tobacco was grown extensively in Johnson County prior to turn of present century. Herbs such as sage, dill, catnip, mint, hoarhound, mullen, etc. was grown in the home garden. Tomatoes was always known and grown as a vegetable. Shallots was the leading onion. Oxen was used in farm work.*

23. What were early farm implements? Any homemade? If purchased, where? Prices?

*Yokes for oxen was homemade. Woodwork of early plows was made in the home shop. Double shovels and bull tongue plows was factory made and about the only farming implements used other than hand tools. Plows was purchased from plow factory located in Clarksville, the county seat. Prices ranged from \$2.50 to \$7.50 for plows.*

24. What were early industries in the community?

*Plow factory; iron foundry; water power grist mills; flour mill; brick kilns and saw mills.*

25. What were some native wild plants used as food or for flower gardens? (For example: mullein, sassafras roots, sweet gum resin, sunflower seed, paw-paws, sumac berries, poke salad—or salet, or salud. There are stories told of various food substitutes used during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. These might supply interesting side-lights.)

*"Mullen" boiled with sugar syrup for coughs, asthma, and tuberculous.*

*"Sassafras tea" for blood conditioning; general tonic.*

*Resin in salves and on violin bows (sweet gum). Powdered to stop bleeding.*

*Sunflower seed in cough syrups. Boiled to thick mass, a poultice for burns.*

*Poke was used in the following manner—young shoots as a food; berries as a dye and in a wine for rheumatism. Roots in liniment.*

*Parched corn was used as a substitute for coffee; may apple, jimson, burdock, etc. used in medicines.*

*Wild cress, garlic, grapes, muscadimes, huckleberries, paw paws, plums, haws, honey, and persimmons used as food.*

26. Relate interesting incidents of the early days. Tell of childhood impressions and memories. Tell of group activities such as house raisings and warmings, quilting bees, corn huskings, brush arbor meetings, dances, games, socials, hunts and game drives, hog killing, sorghum making, play parties, and the like. Compare early farm and town life with that of today. Tell any experiences relating to the Indians, their customs and habits.

*Can remember the California Gold Rush of 1849 when five (5) of his owners sons made this journey to the west as members of an*

*immigrant train; all returned to Johnson County.<sup>33</sup> In celebration of their homecoming remembers a big festival at the home; abundant foods, drinks and entertainment for several days. In his boyhood farmers raised and preserved their own seed. Roads would be impassable for a part of year making trips to county seat infrequent. Farmers in those days had a years supply of necessities such as food, fuel, clothing and feed for stock—today's farmers buy as needed which makes them dependent on cash crops—which makes the chief difference of yesterdays farmer and today's, security and freedom from debt and insecurity and indebtedness. Also according to Mr. Newton, the early day farmer was happier and more contented. There was no automobiles, shows, grocery stores, ready made clothing shops, etc., to tempt him. He worked harder but was healthier, more self-reliant and his diversifications cost far less.*

*Free range permitted unlimited ownership of hogs and cattle. Abundant oak timber afforded mast for the hogs and thousands of acres of idle land supplied feed for the cattle. Stock on open ranges were identified by marks and brands. Each fall cattle buyers using sheppard dogs for herders would come through the country buying the surplus cattle. These buyers would start from the northern part of county, working south to the boat landing at Spadra on the Arkansas River and later, to the railroad towns of Knoxville, Lamar, (Cabin Creek), Clarksville, Spadra, Hartman and Coal Hill. The railroad being located in the southern part of county in the river valley.*

*Hogs were seldom shipped, as every landowner would have a large number of pigs for slaughter each winter, a central abattoir would be constructed for the community and on given days the neighbors would meet for butchering. The slaves under supervision of owners would go into the forest, locate and drive the animals to the slaughtering place. Large casks, tubs, and barrels was used for "scalding." Water was heated by placing hot stones in the water that had been poured into vats. Some would not stun hogs as they claimed the meat would be superior if pig was merely stabbed and permitted to bleed to death. Others would stun with axe and some shot the animals. "Intrals" (the guts) was placed in tubs and*

<sup>33</sup>There is a problem with chronology here, since Newton stated he was born in 1853. Lists of groups who left for the gold fields from 1849 through 1854 compiled in Priscilla McArthur's *Arkansas in the Gold Rush* (Little Rock: August House, 1986), 226-235, do not include members of the Newton family, but these lists are admittedly incomplete.



*the slave women would then set to work removing the fat for rendering into lard. The "chittlings" (stomach) was the favorite part of the carcass according to the Negro mammies.*

*Bread, coffee, dishes, etc., were brought along and at meal time the "melts," livers and tenderloins would be barbecued over the live embers. Plenty of hard liquor and home grown tobacco was available and a general good time had by all including the children who converted the bladders into excellent, almost indestructable, balloons. The next phase was resumed in the home where the carcasses was cut into hams, "middlings," (bacon) shoulders, and sausage meat. Salt was applied to all cuts except the sausage meat and after "curing" for six (6) weeks in the dry salt bed the meat was washed, placed in the home made smoke house and smoked continuously with the smoke of burning hickory and corn cobs for from two (2) to four (4) weeks. Lard was rendered and sausage made. All spices used in sausage was grown in the home garden. They consisted of sage, black pepper, thyme and red pepper. Salt was sometimes taken from smoke houses earthen floor.*

*Early sorghum mills would move from plantation to plantation and was usually community owned. Grower was required to "strip" cane, furnish fuel and containers. There was small demand for "sorghum" the bulk being used in the home.*

*Group hunting was prevelant and included the stalking of bear, panther and fox. There being annual fox races. Small and edible game was seldom hunted in groups.*

*An annual "Brush Arbor" meeting (in fact two (2). One for white folks and one (1) for the colored) (Revival) was held after crops was "laid by. Dances and "play parties" was weekly events. All quilts was "homemade" which called for frequent "bees." Corn husking was unknown.*

*When Mr. Newton moved to Clarksville ("the county seat") there was no electric lights; no automobiles; no paved streets, roads or highways. No cafes. No soda fountains. (Drug stores sold drugs in those days) No picture show. No natural gas. Today he enjoys each of these comforters.*

27. Tell of early methods of combating forest fires, town or building fires. Forrest fires was fired against. Town and building fires was combatted by "bucket brigades."

28. Get origin of place and thing names such as hills, valleys, rivers, sloughs, bayous, plants, animals, etc.

*"Wild Cat Nob" large hill said to be thickly populated by wild cats, 1860-70.*

*"Pine Creek" in the mountainous section of county that in those days contained much pine, thus "Piney" Creek*

*"Big Danger" high bluff, very steep wall—an Indian said, "Big Danger."*

29. Tell of early taverns, hotels, boarding houses, stagecoach stations, boat landings, etc.

*Stage coach stations remembered are St. James Hotel, Clarksville, Bordens Corner and Garrett home (Shady Grove).*

*Earliest tavern remembered, St. James, Clarksville.*

*Boat landings—Spadra Bluff; Knoxville Bend; Morrisons Bluff; Pattersons Bluff, and Roseville.*

30. Tell of early schools.

*Did not attend school.*

31. Name of teacher?

*Did not attend school.*

32. How were funds provided? Tuition? How much? Was payment made in kind?

*Did not attend school.*

33. School books used? Title? Author? (Many of the old plantations maintained tutors either for individual families or groups of families. Sometimes 'school' was conducted on the premises for darkies' youngsters. Check on such information.)

*Did not attend school.*

34. What constituted the reading matter of the early settlers? Books? Magazines? Newspapers? Get titles and authors.

*The Bible; Websters Dictionary. Nothing further known.*

35. Where was the first telegraph station in the community? When established?

*Clarksville, sometime in 1860s.*

36. Tell of the early "Horse cars." When were trolley cars substituted? When buses?

*Never used.*

37. When and where was the first automobile seen?

*Clarksville—1908. Homemade by Cull Johnson, Coal Hill, Ark.*

38. When and where was the first train seen?

*Clarksville—sometime in 1870s or early 80s. Small Wood burner engine—wooden coaches—1 baggage—2 passenger.*

39. When and where was the first airplane seen?

*Clarksville. 1918. Small open cockpit.*

40. When did automotive busses begin interurban operation? (Give descriptions on the five foregoing.)

*No interurban busses other than school busses.*

41. Early theatrical performances? Local people? Traveling stock companies?

*Had home talent shows for various benefits. Traveling stock companies played county seat (Clarksville). His owner would take his family in to town to see shows—one of the slaves driving.*

42. Tell of any important local celebration in memory of any individual or event.

*Annual Peach Festivals. County Fairs.*

*The slaying of Judge Meers by Sid Wallace.*

*The hanging of Sid Wallace.*

*The slaying of sheriff John Powers, the counties most popular peace officer by bandits who had, or were robbing, the Johnson County Bank and the subsequent hanging of two (2) of the three (3) participating bandits.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Newton was in the same block on the night of this robbery and heard the shots. They frightened him and he ran home not knowing the bank had been robbed or the sheriff slain. The officer with his deputy Joe B. King had sleeping quarters over the bank. The blasting of safe aroused them. Running down stairway they encountered bandits who opened fire, fatally wounding sherriff. Two of the robbers was caught and hung.*

<sup>34</sup>This robbery is reported in the *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), February 6, 1902, p. 1 (columns 6 and 7).

*The third, John Dunn, the leader of gang and slayer of Powers was never captured. A few years ago a man suspected of being the fugitive was arrested in a western state and returned to Johnson County; the State was unable to identify prisoner and subsequently released.*

*Lynching of two Negro men accused of raping white women; one was hung on Spadra Creek, Clarksville and the other at Spadra.*

43. Does the individual recall any early historical character such as Sam Houston, Col. James Bowie, former President Zachery Taylor, the James boys, etc.?

*Nothing on this.*

44. Tell of any duels. Where were they fought? By whom? Why?

*Nothing on this.*

45. Tell of any feuds. Who was involved? Where? Why?

*Wallace-Meers feud involving political and Civil War differences; Wallaces alleged mistreatment by Republican and northerners migrating to south at close of Civil War. Sid Wallace killed Judge (county) Meers and for the crime, was hung.<sup>35</sup>*

46. Tell of any early tombstone inscriptions. Where?

*Nothing on this.*

*(Interviewers note—have information on monument bearing inscription "1797" in Lee Cemetery, two miles north of Clarksville. Will verify later.)*

47. Tell of any bank robberies, stage holdups, executions of horse thieves or other impromptu executions, including lynchings. Give details.

*Robbery of Johnson County Bank on the night of February 5<sup>th</sup> 1902. Name of Bandits:  
George Durham*

<sup>35</sup>Newspaper accounts of Meers' murder and of the hanging of Sid Wallace are available in the *Arkansas Gazette* on August 29, 1873, p. 4 (column 2), March 14, 1874, p. 4 (column 3), March 15, 1874, p. 1 (column 3). One local history says Meers "was on the bench as Circuit Judge just after the Civil War, in the days of reconstruction, when he was shot and killed from the roadside by an unknown person." Ella Molloy Langford *Johnson County, Arkansas, The First Hundred Years* (Clarksville, AR: Ella M. Langford, 1921), 174-175.

*John P. Dunn  
Fred Underwood  
Jim Wallace.*

*Mr. Newton was out on a drunk this night and was in one hundred feet of bank when safe was blown. Paid no attention to blast but later when Sheriff John Powers and under-sheriff Joe B. King who was sleeping above bank and had been awakened by blast appeared and engaged the robbers in gun battle, Mr. Newton thinking they was shooting at him, quickly retreated to the home of Dr. Robinson where he was employed. In the melee Sheriff Powers was fatally injured. Mr. Newton did not know of murder and robbery until following day.*

*Witnessed the lynching of two Negroes accused of raping white women. One was hung from a tree on the banks of Spadra Creek in Clarksville (1880) the other at the town of Spadra (1881). Both Negroes was dead before being hung as they were dragged several hundred feet. The names of victims cannot be recalled.<sup>36</sup>*

48. Tell of Civil War days, giving the fullest detail possible.  
*Was a Private in Colonel Bashams regiment which saw service in 1863 at Marks Mill located on the Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana borders.<sup>37</sup> No injuries. Froze while on horses back and was rescued by one of his owners sons, Henry Newton. Did not suffer from hunger as the members of regiment would slaughter cattle and hogs. One Texan caught them cleaning one of his pigs and they had to chip in and pay for animal.*
49. Tell of any battles, skirmishes, forays, etc., witnessed.  
*Witnessed and participated in skirmishes at Marks Mill. Few fatalities.*
50. Tell of Reconstruction, the Carpetbaggers, scalawags, etc.  
*The only time his owners, (Newtons) ever failed to have plenty was during the Reconstruction period. No trouble was had with carpet baggers but Negroes was kept confined to home during the reign of Ku Klux Klan. No Negroes in neighborhood was molested.*

<sup>36</sup>The *Arkansas Gazette* reported that a man named Neely was lynched on Spadra Creek in 1878 and that Charles Jones was hanged in the town of Spadra in 1881. *Arkansas Gazette*, November 8, 1878, p. 1 (column 7), November 1, 1881, p. 1 (column 8).

<sup>37</sup>In his ex-slave narrative, Newton said, "When the war got so hot my boss was afraid the 'Feds' would get us. He sent my mammy to Texas and sent me in the army with Col. Bashom to take care of his horses. I was about eleven or twelve years old." Rawick, *The American Slave* (1972), 10A: 216.

*Lands which had grown up during the absence of men folks to serve in army was cleaned up and in a few years the family was again prosperous*

51. Get all information possible regarding the original Ku Klux Klan or similar organizations.

*Nothing on this.*

52. Tell of any participation in the establishment of any religious or fraternal organizations.

*Helped in organization of "United Brothers of Love" a fraternal insurance and benevolent organization of the Negro race. Was an active participant in organizing St. Johns A. M. E. Church, Clarksville. Moulded all concrete blocks used in constructing churches edifice.<sup>38</sup>*

53. Tell of any military affiliations.

*Private in battalion of Colonel Basham, Civil War, 1863. No other military connections.*

54. Tell of any Indian mounds, cliff dwellings, caves, etc., that may be recalled. Get as accurate information as possible regarding artifacts, particularly such things as calendar stones, mortars, pottery, baskets, etc.

*Nothing on this.*

55. Tell of any other historic sites.

*1) Low Gap Springs North of his birth place which has been famous as a health resort as far back as he can recall.*

*Spadra Bluff— a river landing as early as 1800.*

57. What is total number of descendants?

*Originally had 13 children. 3 now living. 22 living grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren. Total living descendants, 37.*

<sup>38</sup>A 1940 history of this church lists Rachel Newton (same name as informant's wife in question 7 above) as superintendent of the Sunday School and treasurer of the Missionary Society. It also states that the church "of concrete blocks is a very attractive building" and that the "congregation . . . gives credit for its construction to William Perry, Wilson Brown, Tom Clark, Ulysses Newton and Sye Justice." Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records Inventory Files, 1936-1942, Group H-Church Records, box 435, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The name Ulysses Newton does not appear in the 1930 census or 1920 census. The man mentioned may be Pate Newton..

58. What are names and addresses of sons and daughters?

*Susan May, Clarksville, Ark.*

*Jess Newton, Somerdale, Texas*

*Lindy Wilson, Clarksville.*

59. Name some of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren, if any.

*Susan May, Jim May, Joe Wilson, Clarksville, Ark.*

*22 grand, 8 great grand, 1 great-great-great grand child.*

60. Tell of any books, diaries, journals, sketches, or newspaper articles the individual has written. Give details.

*None.*

*Miscellaneous:*

*The outstanding event in this man's memory was the hanging of the bandits, George Durham and Fred Underwood for the murder of Sheriff John Powers. This event occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of February 1903, in the town of Clarksville exactly one (1) year after Mr. Powers was slain in attempting to capture the desperadoes who had robbed the Johnson County Bank. Mr. Newton states this event brought out the largest gathering of people ever seen in the county.*

The above questionnaire is intended solely as a skeleton outline to assist the interviewer in giving his subject leads. It is improbable that any one individual can answer all the questions fully but it is advisable to ask them all anyway. Record the answers on plain paper numbering the answers to correspond with the above questions, if possible.

AT THE TOP OF THE PAPER ON WHICH YOU RECORD THE ANSWERS BE CERTAIN TO PUT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, DATE AND REFER TO ARKANSAS HRS FORM J.

Do not limit yourself to the above questions. If the subject goes off on any tangent follow it to see if it is of historical interest. Remember to get Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why on every possible question. As regards matters of location, such as Indian sites, early buildings, tombstones, etc., be as definite and detailed as possible. Give pertinent data i.e., whether or not buildings are now occupied and if so by what or whom, and in either case, in what state of preservation and repair.

AH/gm-9/13/38

Of the remaining Early Settler interviews with African Americans, only the one with Adeline Blakeley is as lengthy as Pate Newton's. Nevertheless, some of the others offer rich detail. For example, the three-page report of an interview with Ike May, who was one of the six Early Settler interviewees identified as an African American but not as a former slave, includes information about slave experiences of his family members:

Just prior to the Civil War his mother and father were living in Pope County at or near a settlement known as Dwight's Mission. They had three children when a band of slave traders came through, kidnapped the mother and three children and carried them to Texas. Luckily the mother was sold to one owner and the man on the adjoining farm bought the children. In the meantime, the father had joined the Union Army and when the war was over a Negro from the farm on which the children were in Texas happened to meet up with the father and told him where his wife and children were. Freed now, he arranged for their passage back to Arkansas, came to Dardanelle and settled.

After the family was reunited, the number of children grew to fourteen.<sup>39</sup>

Harry Parker of Danville "was in Texas when slaves were freed, having been sent there during the war by his master. Was brought back and given freedom." Later, he noted that he was "freed, August 4, 1865," demonstrating both how important the day of jubilee, or date of emancipation, became in the memory of former slaves, as memorable as birthdays and wedding anniversaries, and how late freedom was in coming to certain parts of the trans-Mississippi South.<sup>40</sup>

The Early Settlers' Personal Histories of African Americans, like the WPA ex-slave narratives, offer information about nineteenth and early twentieth-century experiences of African Americans ranging from separation of families, brutal treatment, and lynchings to happier memories of people, places, and events. They raise as many questions as they answer, but they do provide additional pieces for the mosaic we tile together of life in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Arkansas.

<sup>39</sup>Interview with Ike May, September 16, 1940, Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records Inventory Files, 1936-1942, Group A County Archives Inventory, Title 75-Yell County, File F-Questionnaires, box 266.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with Harry Parker, December 12, 1940, Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records Inventory Files, 1936-1942, Group A County Archives Inventory, Title 75-Yell County, File F-Questionnaires, box 266; Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 7.