

Mired in a cynical mood, a historian might sum up his profession in a single thought: a source can be found to prove anything. No other group of scholars has tried so valiantly to prove this point as the students of American slavery

- David Thomas

“Divided Prism: Two Sources of Black Testimony on Slavery”



# **Enabling Access to the Federal Writers' Project Slave Narratives:**

## **A Case Study of Intersectionality in Digital Archive Design**


**Cate Peter (she/her)**

# Outline of Attack

1. Introduction to the FWP Slave Narratives and LOC Digitization
2. Digitization concerns
3. Next steps

The image features a light gray background with decorative circuit-like lines in the corners. These lines are composed of thin, dark gray lines that branch out and terminate in small circles, resembling a stylized circuit board or data network. The lines are located in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners, framing the central text.

# Point of Information



# Introduction to the FWP Slave Narratives and LOC digitization

*Or: why I get cranky at the LOC*

# SLAVE NARRATIVES

*A Folk History of Slavery in the United States  
From Interviews with Former Slaves*

**TYPEWRITTEN RECORDS PREPARED BY  
THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT**

**1936-1938**

**ASSEMBLED BY**

**THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PROJECT  
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**SPONSORED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

## About this Collection

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[Related Resources](#)

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[Rights and Access](#)

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## Teaching Resources

[Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1938 - For Teachers](#)

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## Expert Resources

[Finding Aid - United States Work Projects Administration Records](#)

[Manuscript Reading Room](#)

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[Prints & Photographs Online Catalog](#)

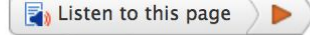
[Prints & Photographs Reading Room](#)

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# About this Collection

*Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938* contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed Work Projects Administration (WPA). At the conclusion of the Slave Narrative project, a set of edited transcripts was assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*. In 2000-2001, with major support from the Citigroup Foundation, the Library digitized the narratives from the microfilm edition and scanned from the originals 500 photographs, including more than 200 that had never been microfilmed or made publicly available. This online collection is a joint presentation of the Manuscript and Prints and Photographs divisions of the Library of Congress.

## The Volumes

The published volumes containing edited slave narratives are arranged alphabetically by the state in which the interviews took place and thereunder by the surname of the informant. Administrative files for the project are bound at the beginning of Volume 1. These files detail the instructions and other information supplied to field workers as well as subjects of concern to state directors of the Federal Writers' Project.

### Vol. 1

[Administrative Files](#)

[Alabama, Aarons-Young](#)

### Vol. 2, Arkansas

[Part 1, Abbott-Byrd](#)

[Part 2, Cannon-Evans](#)

[Part 3, Gadson-Isom](#)

[Part 4, Jackson-Lynch](#)

[Part 5, McClendon-Prayer](#)

[Part 6, Quinn-Tuttle](#)

[Part 7, Vaden-Young](#)

### Vol. 3, Florida, Anderson-Wilson (with combined interviews of others)

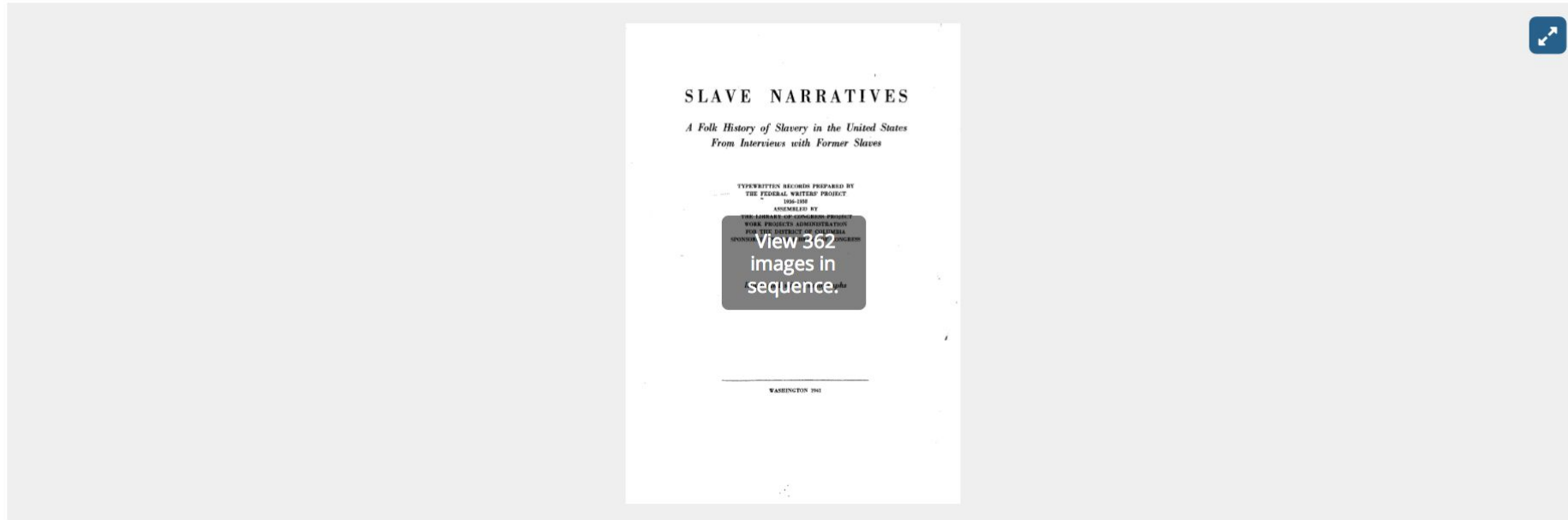
### Vol. 4, Georgia

[Part 1, Adams-Furr](#)

[Part 2, Garey-Jones](#)

[Part 3, Kendricks-Styles](#)

# Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr



Text: PDF

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## About this Item

### Title

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

### Genre

Interviews

### Notes

- Includes narratives by Alec Bostwick, Alice Battle, Alice Bradley and Kizzie Colquitt, Anderson Furr, Arrie Binns, Benny Dillard, Berry Clay, Callie Elder, Carrie Nancy Fryer, Celestia Avery, Della Briscoe, Easter Brown, Ellen Claibourn, Emmaline Heard, George Brooks, George Eason, Georgia Baker, Hannah Austin, Henry Bland, Ike Derricotte, Jack Atkinson, James Bolton, Jasper Battle, John Cole, Julia (Aunt Sally) Brown, Julia Bunch, Julia Cole, Lewis Favor, Mariah Calloway, Marshal Butler, Martha Colquitt, Martha Everette, Mary Colbert, Mary Ferguson, Minnie Davis, Mose Davis, Nancy Boudry, Pierce Cody, Rachel Adams, Rev. W. B. Allen, Rias Body, Sarah Byrd, Susan Castle, Washington Allen, Willis Cofer.

### Part of...

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1938 (603)

Manuscript Division (142,330)

### Format

Manuscript/Mixed Material

### Dates

1936 to 1938





Image 1 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

SLAVE NARRATIVES A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves TYPEWRITTEN RECORDS PREPARED BY THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT, 1936-1938 ASSEMBLED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PROJECT...



Image 2 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

- \* VOLUME IV GEORGIA NARRATIVES PART 1 Prepared by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Georgia

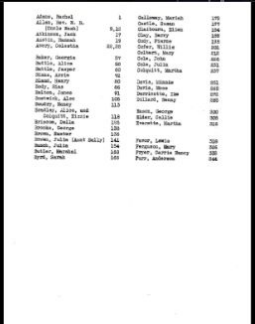


Image 3 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

INFORMANTS Adams, Rachel Allen, Rev. W. B. (Uncle Wash) Atkinson, Jack Austin, Hannah Avery, Celestia Baker, Georgia Battle, Alice Battle, Jasper Binns, Arrie Bland, HenryBody, Rias Bolton, James Bostwick, Alec Boudry, Nancy...

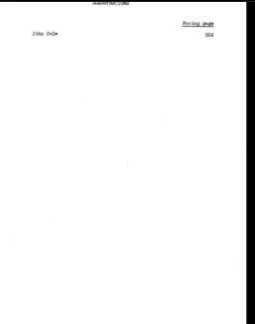


Image 4 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

ILLUSTRATIONS Facing page John Cole 226



Rachel Adams, Athens, Georgia

00075 PLANTATION- LIFE RACHEL ADAMS 300 ODD STREET ATHENS, GEORGIA Written by: Edited by: Sadie B. Hornsby C^fed^ Athens - and John N. Booth District Supervisor Federal Writers\*...



Image 6 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

100075 RACHEL ADAMS x-Slave - Age 78, Rachel Adamsf two-room, frame bouse is perched on the side of a steep hill where peach trees and bamboo form dense shade. Stalks of corn...

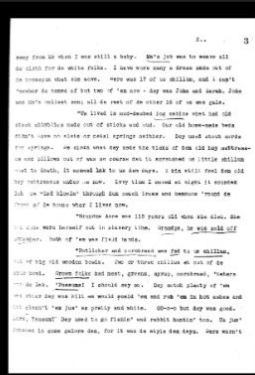


Image 7 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

away from Ma when I was still a baby. de' cloth for de white folks. de homespun what she wove. Mafs job was to weave all I have wore many a dress...

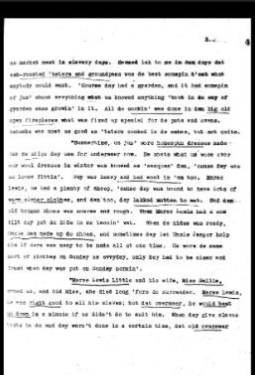


Image 8 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

3 > \* & - no market meat i arlavery d#ye\* ieeAe\* la&to pe:4 ^ 4M4tqv^:Mt ash-roasted ^taters and groindpeas was de best somepin ^fima^ wit \* anybody could want\* f oua\*se dey...

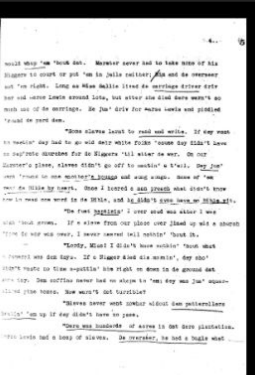


Image 9 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

would whup feit about dat. Niggers to court or put sot ferm right. Marster never had to take lidle of his f em in jails neither; Jlim and do overseer Long as...

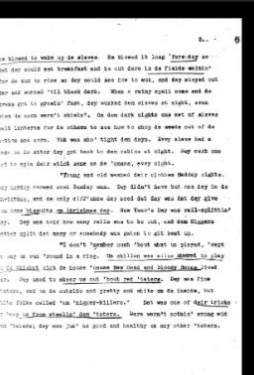


Image 10 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr

he blowed to wake up de alavga- Se blowed it long y fervid ay se dst dey could eat breakfast -andi he out dere in de f i -l&a^inifein^ r for de...

3... 4

no market meat in slavery days. Seemed lak to me in dem days dat ash-roasted 'taters and groundpeas was de best sompin t'eat what anybody could want. 'Course dey had a gyarden, and it had somepin of jus' about evvrything what us knowed anything 'bout in de way of gyarden sass growin' in it. All de oookin' was done in dem big old open fireplaces what was fixed up special for de pots and ovens. Ashoke was most as good as 'taters ooked in de ashes, but not quite.

"Summertime, us jus' wore homespun dresses made lak de slips dey use for underwear now. De coats what us wore over our wool dresses in winter was knowed as 'esques' den, 'cause dey was so loose fittin'. Dey was heavy and had wool in 'em too. Marse Lewis, he had a plenty of sheep, 'cause dey was bound to have lots of warm winter clothes, and den too, dey lakked mutton to eat. Oh! dem old brogan shoes was coarse and rough. When Marse Lewis had a cow kilt dey put de hide in de tannin' vat. When de hides was ready, Uncle Ben made up de shoes, and sometimes dey let Uncle Jasper help him if dere was many to be made all at one time. Us wore de same sort of clothes on Sunday as evvryday, only dey had to be clean and fresh when dey was put on Sunday mornin'.

"Marse Lewis Little and his wife, Miss Sallie, owned us, and Old Mis, she died long 'fore de surrender. Marse Lewis, he was right good to all his slaves; but dat overseer, he would beat us down in a minute if us didn't do to suit him. When dey give slaves tasks to do and dey warn't done in a certain time, dat old overseer

**Image 8 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr**

3 > \*& - no market meat in slavery days. Seemed lak to me in dem days dat ash-roasted 'taters and groundpeas was de best somtpin ^fiM^ wit \* anybody could want\* f oua\*se dey...

5

would whup 'em 'bout dat. Marster never had to take none of his Niggers to court or put 'em in jails neither; Jim and de overseer sot 'em right. Long as Miss Sallie lived de carriage driver driv her and Marse Lewis around lots, but after she died dere warn't so much use of de carriage. He jus' driv for Marse Lewis and piddled 'round de yard den.

"Some slaves learnt to read and write. If dey went to meetin' dey had to go wid deir white folks 'cause dey didn't have no sep'rate churches for de Niggers 'til after de war. On our Marster's place, slaves didn't go off to meetin' a t'all. Dey jus' went 'round to one another's houags and sung songs. Some of 'em read de Bible by heart. Once I heard a man preach what didn't know how to read one word in de Bible, and he didn't even have no Bible wit.

"De fust baptizin' I ever seed was after I was nigh 'bout grown. If a slave from our place ever jined up wid a church 'fore de war was over, I never heard tell nothin' 'bout it.

"Lordy, Miss! I didn't know nothin' 'bout what a funeral was dem days. If a Nigger died dis mornin', dey sho' didn't waste no time a-puttin' him right on down in de ground dat same day. Dem coffins never had no shape to 'em; dey was jus' square-plank pine boxes. Now warn't dat turrible?

"Slaves never went nowhar widout dem patterollers beatin' 'em up if dey didn't have no pass.

"Dere was hundreds of acres in dat dere plantation. Marse Lewis had a heap of slaves. De overseer, he had a bugle what

**Image 9 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr**

would whup feit fbout dat. N \*\*\* to court or put sot fem right. Marster never had to take lidle of his f em in jails neither; Jiim and do overseer Long as...

6

he blowed to wake up de slaves. He blowed it long 'fore dey so dat dey could eat breakfast and be out dere in de fields waitin' for de sun to rise so dey could see how to wuk, and dey stayed out dar and wukked 'til black dark. When a rainy spell come and de grass got to growin' fast, dey wukked dem slaves at night, even when de moon warn't ahinin'. On dem dark nights one set of slaves held lanterns for de others to see how to chop de weeds out of de cotton and corn. Wuk was sho' tight dem days. Evvry slave had a task to do after dey got back to dem cabins at night. Dey each one had to spin deir stint same as de 'omans, evvry night.

"Young and old washed deir clothes Saddy nights. Dey hardly knowed what Sunday was. Dey didn't have but one day in de Christmas, and de only diff'unce dey seed dat day was dat dey give 'em some biguirts on Christmas day. New Year's Day was rail-splittin' day. Dey was told how many rails was to be cut, and dem Niggers better split dat many or somebody was guine to git beat up.

"I don't 'member much 'bout what us played, 'cept de way us run 'round in a ring. Us chillun was allus skeered to play in de thicket nigh de house 'cause Saw Head and Bloody Bones lived dar. Dey used to skeer us out 'bout red 'taters. Dey was fine 'taters, red on de outside and pretty and white on de inside, but white folks called 'em 'nigger-killers.' Dat was one of deir tricks to keep us from stealin' dem 'taters. Dere warn't nothin' wrong wid dem 'taters; dey was jus' as good and healthy as any other 'taters.

**Image 10 of Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1, Adams-Furr**

he blowed to wake up de slaves. He blowed it long y fervid ay se dst dey could eat breikfist -andi he out dere in de f i- l&a^inifein^ r for de...



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# Collection Items

View

Sort By



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

## Old Aunt Julia Ann Jackson, age 102 and the corn crib where she lives

1 photographic print : gelatin silver ; 3 1/4 x 5 in.

**Date:** 1937



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

## Present day mother and child ... not pure Negro

1 photographic print : gelatin silver ; 10 x 8 in.

**Date:** 1937



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

## [House and steamboat at West Point, Arkansas]

2 photographic prints : gelatin silver.

**Date:** 1937



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

## [House and steamboat at West Point, Arkansas]

2 photographic prints : gelatin silver ; 3 1/4 x 5 in. on 8 1/2 x 11 in. sheet.

**Date:** 1937

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PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

### Bill McRay, ex-slave, Beaumont

1 photographic print : gelatin silver ; 5 x 3 1/4 in.

**Date:** 1937



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

### Bill McRay, ex-slave, Beaumont

1 photographic print : gelatin silver ; 5 x 3 1/4 in.

**Date:** 1937



PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

### Bill McRay, Age 86

**Date:** 1936-00-00

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# Collection Items

View

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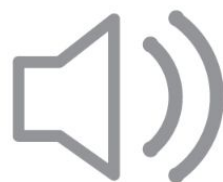
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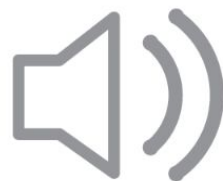
AUDIO

#### AUDIO RECORDING

### Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935 (part 1 of 2)

**Contributor:** Lomax, Alan - Barnicle, Mary Elizabeth - Quarterman, Wallace - Hurston, Zora Neale

**Date:** 1935-06-00



AUDIO

#### AUDIO RECORDING

### Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935 (part 2 of 2)

**Contributor:** Lomax, Alan - Barnicle, Mary Elizabeth - Quarterman, Wallace - Hurston, Zora Neale

**Date:** 1935-06-00

#### AUDIO RECORDING

### Interview with Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, 1940 (part 1 of 2)



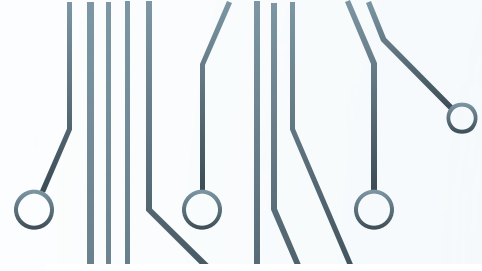
# Digitization Concerns

*Or: the 1930s were super racist*



John A. Lomax





Enclosed is a memorandum of Mr. Lomax with suggestions for simplifying the spelling of certain recurring dialect words. This does not mean that the interviews should be entirely in "straight English" -- simply, that we want them to be more readable to those uninitiated in the broadest N\*\* speech.



Letter to FWP State Directors from  
George Cronyn, FWP Associate Director

WPA WRITERS' PROGRAM RECORDS  
Appraisal Sheet

1. Title: Story of Isabell Henderson, N \*\*\* (I Stayed Home All My Life)
2. Place and date of origin: Wilmington, N.C. Undated.
3. Compiler or field worker: Edith S. Hibbs.
4. Editor: Mrs. W.N. Harriss.
5. Description:
  - (a) number of pages: 3
  - (b) condition of manuscript: Edited at North Carolina Writers' Project.
  - (c) purpose: Proposed book of ex-slave narratives based upon a questionnaire designed "to get the N \*\*\* to thinking and talking about the days of slavery."
  - (d) status of the study: Approximately 2,000 interviews collected.  
Dormant since 1938.
6. Sources: Interview with Isabell Henderson at 1121 Rankin Street, Wilmington,  
N. C.

7. Reliability and value of material: Based on first-hand experience with slight and vague slavery data and personal history of an undistinguished kind. The tone of the statements is honest, but the narrative contains ~~nothing~~ <sup>little</sup> of value.

8. Method of handling material: First-person narration elicited by the interviewer's questions, one recorded, the others unnoted.


9. Style: Realistic dialect.

10. Suggested revisions and corrections: None. <sup>dit</sup> Not recommended for publication or ~~deposit.~~

11. Suggested uses or developments: None.


*study of slavery*

*some material for a social*



**“Based on first-hand experience with slight and vague slavery data and personal history of an indistinguishable kind. The tone of the statements is honest, but the narrative contains ~~nothing~~ of value.”**

**little**




Questions:


1. Where and when were you born?

2. Give the names of your father and mother. Where did they come from? Give names of your brothers and sisters. Tell about your life with them and describe your home and the "quarters." Describe the beds and where you slept. Do you remember anything about your grandparents or any stories told you about them?


3. What work did you do in slavery days? Did you ever earn any money? How? What did you buy with this money?


4. What did you eat and how was it cooked? Any possums? Rabbits? Fish? What food did you like best? Did the slaves have their own gardens?





13. What games did you play as a child? Can you give the words or sing any of the play songs or ring games of the children? Riddles? Charms? Stories about "Raw Head and Bloody Bones" or other "hants" of ghosts? Stories about animals? What do you think of voodoo? Can you give the words or sing any lullabies? Work songs? Plantation hollers? Can you tell a funny story you have heard or something funny that happened to you? Tell about the ghosts you have seen.






18. What do you think of Abraham Lincoln? Jefferson Davis? Booker Washington? Any other prominent white man or N\*\*\* you have known or heard of?

19. Now that slavery is ended what do you think of it? Tell why you joined a church and why you think all people should be religious.


20. Was the overseer "poor white trash"? What were some of his rules?





# Santa Clara University



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a network of light blue lines and circles resembling a circuit board or a neural network, set against a dark blue background.

**ETHICAL RISK SWEEPING:** Ethical risks are **choices that may cause significant harm** to persons or other entities with a moral status, or are likely to spark acute moral controversy for other reasons. **Failing to anticipate and respond to such risks can constitute ethical negligence.** Just as scheduled penetration testing and risk sweeping are standard tools of good cybersecurity practice, ethical risk sweeping is an essential tool for good design and engineering practice.



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University**

**EXPANDING THE ETHICAL CIRCLE:** In most cases where a technology company has caused significant moral harm due to ethical negligence, the scope of the harm was not anticipated or well-understood due, at least in part, to forms of cognitive error that lead designers and engineers to ignore or exclude key stakeholder interests. To mitigate these common errors, design teams need a tool that requires them to ‘expand the ethical circle’ and **invite stakeholder input and perspectives beyond their own.**”




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University**

## THINK ABOUT THE TERRIBLE PEOPLE:

- - Who will want to abuse, steal, misinterpret, hack, destroy, or weaponize what we built?
- - Who will use it with alarming stupidity/irrationality?
- - What rewards/incentives/openings has our design inadvertently created for those people?
- - How can we remove those rewards/incentives?



**Santa Clara  
University**



*“Dr. Waters had a good heart. He didn’t call us slaves. He call us servants.”*

*“Marse Lewis, he was right good to all his slaves.”*

*“I ain't never forget when Mistress died—she had been so good to every nigger on our plantation.”*

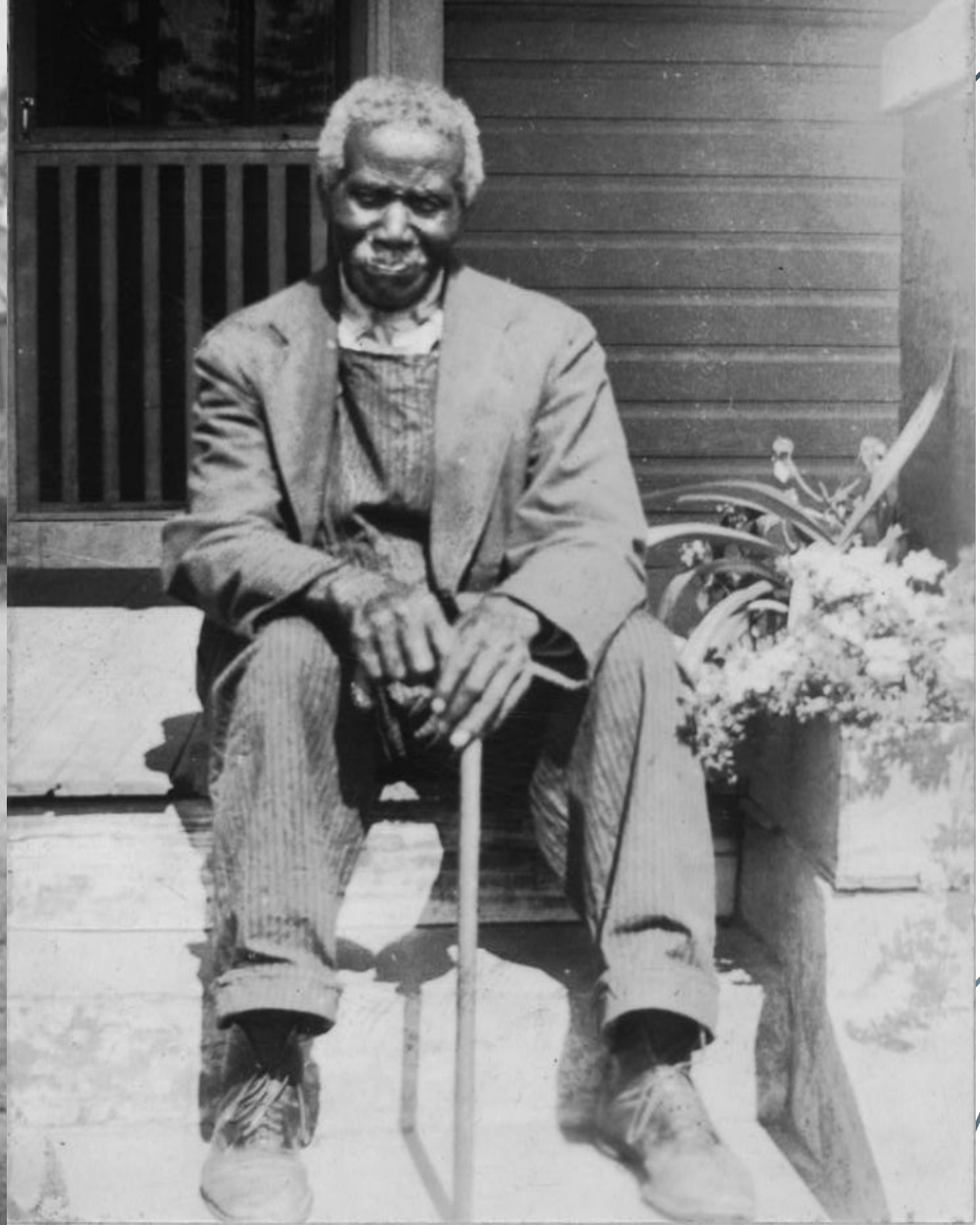
*“I loved young Marster John, and he loved me.”*

*“My white folks was so good to me.”*



**Next Steps**


*Or: how do I do this???*





# Cate Peter

*Masters Student in Digital Humanities*



**cdpeter@ualberta.ca**

# Select Bibliography

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