

Uncle Sabe Rutledge

(Testimony given by old man born 1861, The Ark Plantation, Horry County - owned by Mr. John Tillman)

"Fust thing I realize to remember, I muster cry to go to the old boss - old Massa - for sugar. Massa say:

"'Martha, what Newman (he call me that) crying for?'
Ma say, 'Wanter come to you for sugar!'

"'Bring the boy here, Martha!'

"He gie me sugar.

"Boil salt? Pump! Pump! Pump it! Had a tank. Run from hill to sea. Had a platform similar to wharf. And pump on platform. Fetch good high. Go out there on platform. Force pump. My Grandmother boil salt way after Freedom. We tote water. Tote in pidgin and keeler - make out of cedar and cypress. No 'ting to crove 'em (groove 'em) compass. Dog-wood and oak rim. Give it a lap. (This was his description, with pantomime, of way pidgin and keelers were made by plantation carpenters)

"My Grandmother had two pots going. Boil all day and all night. Biling. Boil till he ticken (thicken) Cedar paddles stir with. Chillun eat with wooden spoons. Clay pot? Just broken piece. Indian had big camping ground on beach near the Ark. After big blow you can find big piece of pot there. I see Indian. Didn't see

wild one; see tame one.

"Indigo? Old man Lashie Tillman nuster plant indigo. Seed lak a flax. Put myrtle seed in with indigo to boil. Gather and boil for the traffic. All the big folksee plant that fore the rice. Rice come in circulation, do way with indigo. Nuster (used to) farm indigo just like we work our corn. Didn't have nothing but ox. And the colored folks - they came next to the ox - Hill keep advancing out. Reckon you wouldn't believe it, but I ken cummember (Uncle Sabe stutters a bit) when all that beach been cultivate field. Must be nature for sand hill to move. Time most got too fast now for the people to live.

"Storm? Oh my Lord! Flagg Storm? Sea naturally climb right over that hill like it wasn't nothing. Water come to King Road. Reckon it would a come further if the wind didn't shift.

"Calls this 'The Ridge.' Why? I first man settle here. Oak Ridge. (It is the highest land between the Waccamaw river and the ocean.) Just name it so.

"Member the shipwreck. Two men and lady come to the Ark. Stormy time. Massa take them to town. Old anchor there now. Come a blow you kin see it. Water rise over it high tide.

"Ma tell me bout they had the to-do. Blockade at Inlet. Had 'em out to drill (The Yankees came to shore

to drill.) Old man John Tillman lose all he China-a-way!
(chinaware.) Every bit of his china and paints (panes of
glass) out the window. Yankee gun boat sojer (soldier)
to Magnolia to drill. They tack 'em (attacked 'em) to
cut 'em off. When Rebs tack 'em, small boats gone back.
She had to brace 'em. Shoot dem shell to brace. (Gun
boat fired to frighten Rebs who were cutting Yankees off
from escape) I hear old man Frank Norris - lived right
beyond Wettrill Deas - I hear him (nuster come home to
the Ark and trap) - I hear him say lot of 'em bog.
(Ella, Agnes and Johnnie Johnson fadder been there) Bomb
shell hit the hill and bury them in the sand. Had to dig
out.

"Old man John Tillman my boss. Sho treat his people
good. Don't see why his folks (slaves) went to blockade
(tried to escape and join Yankee gun-boats). Sho treat
his colored folks good. My Grandfather, Rodrick Rutledge,
driver from a boy. Time he big nuff to handle it till
Freedom.

"Couldn't marry widout consent of boss." (Remark
from Uncle Sabe's sister, Mom Jane, who is quite acid.
All her information inherited - she Freedom child)
Mom Jane: "Been to devil and come back now!"

(Comparing slavery to the lower regions)

Uncle Sabe - continuing:

"Have sick house; have chillun house." (All in this section tell great tales of the 'chillun house.' Sounds a lot like the nurse houses in Russia to-day. All the babies were in this day nursery in care of the older women, too old for field work.) Corn. Meat - pig, beef, fish - plenty milk." (Some cow 'coffee cow' - that is give just enough milk for the coffee.)

"Any rice?"

Aunt Jane: (interrupting) "Pick you teet (teeth) to find the rice! Great God! Now I can buy my rice!"

Uncle Sabe: "Could plant up-land rice to Ark. (This on coast away from fresh water)

"Ash cake? Meal, salt, water. Not a grease! Not a grease! See Mudder cook it many a hundred day!"

Mom Jane: "Put it in the stove today, - nothing!

Rather have it any day!"

Sabe : "Wrap it in brown paper, mostly. Cows free in woods. Alligator tail good. Snail built up just like a conch (whelk). They eat good. Worms like a conch. Bile conch. Git it out shell. Grind it sausage grinder. Little onion. Black pepper. Rather eat conch than any kind of nourishment out of salt water."

Mom Jane: "Conjur? Wouldn't turn a hucks bread for 'em. (Give a crust.)

Sabe: "What God got lot out for a man he'll get it."

"Flat boat full up (with slaves trying to escape) gone down Waccamaw. Uncle Andrew Aunt the one got he eye shoot out (by patrollers) took 'em to camp on North Island. Never see so much a button and pin in my life! Small-pox in camp. Had to leave 'em.

"Captain Ben and Captain Tom fadder - look how he die! Looker the blood! Looker the people! Looker the blood! His boat call 'The Bull River.' Up and down Pee Dee river. Meet flat! Bore hole in flat and women and chillun go down! Take men off. HE COME TO THIS COUNTRY. (Came down from North before Civil War) Them darnish Yankee very percruel. (Peculiar?)

"My Great-grandmother Veenia, pirate captured and took all they money in English war. (Revolution) Den day Ladies wear bodkin fastened to long gold chain on shoulder - needle in 'em and thimble and ting. Coming down from New York to get away from English. My great grandmother little chillun. Pirate come to her Missus. Take all they money - come cut bodkin off her shoulder. Grandmother ma gone on the boat and twiss herself in Missus' skirt. Pirate put 'em off to Wilmington. Come on down settle to Pitch Landing near Socastee. Keep on till they get to Ark.

"My Great-Grandma Veenia didn't have a teet in

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her head - one hundred ten years old and could eat hard
a bread as any we."

Uncle Sabe Rutledge
Burgess, S. C. - P.O.
Horry County
Age 76 (Born 1861)
Ark Plantation.

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 Georgetown County, S. C.

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UNCLE SABB RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

" They call him Rogerick Rutledge for shortness. My Grandpa REAL name Jim. First time I big enough to relect (recollect) him he have on no pants but something built kinder like overall and have a apron. Apron button up here where my overall buckle and can be let down. All been dye with indigo. Have weave shirt --- dye with blue indigo boil with myrtle seed. Myrtle seed must-a-did put the color in. Old brogan shoe on he foot. Old beaver hat on he head. Top of crown wear out and I member he have paste-board cover over with cloth and sew in he hat crown. My Grandmother wear these here gingham cloth call gingham twill.

" Now the chillun! I member I was a big boy grown when I get my first pants. All boy chillun wear a shirt ----- long down to knee and lower. Have belt round the middle --- just like you belt to hold 'em. Chillun have not a shoe! Not a shoe for chillun on us plantation to the Old Ark. First shoe I have, Pa get a cow hide and tan it. And a man name Stalvey make my first pair of shoes. I was way near bout grown. Make the sole out the thickness of the cow hide. Short quarter. No eye --- just make the hole. Last! Yes man! Yes man! Yes man! Keep 'em grease! Them shoe never wear out!

" We raise all we get to eat. Hominy, cornbread, peas, potatoes, rice. Moresst we plant this here yellow corn. I cry many a day bout that yellow corn!

UNCLE SABB RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

We say, 'Pa, this here yellow corn make hominy look like he got egg cook in 'em; red corn look like hominy cook in red molasses!'

"But yellow corn stronger feed! Stronger feed! And Pa know 'em.

" Sunday come go to church in that same blue shirt! Little old pole church --- (gone now) --- call ' Dick Green Bay Church'. (Named for a local character.) When we go to church before freedom, Mudder and them have to have the ticket.

" Old man John Tilghman at the Ark Plantation have no overseer --- have 'Driver'. Most folks on Waccamaw have overseer and 'Driver'. My Pa been the Ark 'Driver.'

" Old man Zachariah Duncen been the preacher. That the same man build the first 'Heaven Gate' church after freedom. He got drift lumber on the river and on the beach. Flat 'em --- make a raft and float 'em over to the hill and the men haul 'em to 'Heaven Gate' with ox. Yes, 'Heaven Gate' built outer pick up lumber.

" Before freedom Parson Glennie --- he was piscopal --- he would come give us a service once a month on the plantation --- so mother said.

" Patches of indigo all through the woods. You know cow eat indigo. Us have too much ox! Have to haul rail all the time keep up the old fence.

UNCLE SABB RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

Woods full up with cow. Cattle loose --- free. When you want beef have to hunt for 'em like we hunts deer now. I member some ox I helped broke. Pete, Bill, Jim, David. Faby was a brown. David kinder mouse color. We always have the old ox in the lead going to haul rail. Hitch the young steer on behind. Sometimes they 'give up' and the old ox pull 'em by the neck! Break ox all the time. Fun for us boys --- breaking ox. So much of rail to haul!

("You can't tell me bout this pension? Look like to me somebody trying to smother something. Letters come. Cards come. My name on outside alright. Tell me to put my name on cards and hand 'em out to my friends. Say send twenty-five cents. Next time say 'Send thirty-five cents'. He cool off then and another man --- Mr. Pope come in. Got two letter from him and he tell me be still till I hear from him again. J. E. Pope. Last blank I got from Mr. Pope he say not to look for more than thirty or thirty-two dollars a month. Say there ain't going to be no two hundred a month.)

" How come I know all these Buh Rabbit story, Mudder spin you know. Have the great oak log, iron fire dog. Have we chillun to sit by the fire-place put the light-wood under --- blaze up. We four chillun have to pick seed out the cotton. Work till ten o'clock at night and rise early! Mudder

UNCLE SABLE RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

and Pather tell you story to keep you eye open! Pick out cotton seed be we job every night in winter time --- cept Sunday! When we grow bigger, Mudder make one card. One would spin and then Mudder go to knitting. Night time picking these cotton seed out; day time in winter getting wood!

" Fall ---- harvest peanut, peas, 'tater!

" I member all them Buh Rabbit story! Mudder tell 'em and we laugh and wake up! They was one bout Buh Rabbit and Buh Patridge. You know Buh Patridge the onliest one get the best of Buh Rabbit!

" Buh Rabbit bet Buh Patridge (Buh Rabbit think he so sharp you know!) He bet Buh Patridge if he fly off down the road a piece and lit Buh Rabbit can find 'em. --- Buh Patridge bet him he can't! So Buh Patridge take off and fly down the road a piece and lit --- like a Patridge will do --- lit and turn up on he back and rake the leaves over him and kiver (cover) his body all cept he two foots sticking up like stick!

" Now Buh Rabbit come! He hunt and he hunt and he hunt! Couldn't find 'em and he get so hot he take off he coat and hang it on Buh Patridge foots!

" He go on hunting and after while he call out,

" ' Well I can't find Buh Patridge! Can't find Buh Patridge! '

" And Buh Patridge sing out,

UNCLE SABE RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

" Well, Buh Rabbit, here I is! You hang you coat on my feet!"

" Buh Rabbit have to pay the bet! (I don't member what the bet was). So Buh Patridge was the onliest one I ever hear bout could get the best of Buh Rabbit!

" When Father and Mudder tell them story we chillun noddin'! Some cackle out and all jump up and go back to picking out cotton seed!

" There is another one bout Buh Bear. They goes out my head. I'll think them Buh Rabbit up fore you come back Missus!"

And Uncle Sabe, who was sitting on the 'LOOK OUT' at the Floral Beach Fishery, continued to let his eyes play all over the sea like searchlights, ready to wave the black flag and march down toward the fishery holding it aloft keeping himself in a line with the fish if fish were sighted. Since way before what he called 'the big war' he and his people have eaten mullet and rice for the three fall months. His home was visited before Uncle Sabe was located and children and grand-children, wife, sister and neighbors were found seated and standing all over the kitchen floor and piazza floor and steps ---- each one with a generous tin plate of rice and fresh, brown, hot 'spot' ---- a fish not so valuable in summer but choice in fall and winter. Two hounds and a large cat worked around among the feasters for their well chewed bones.

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UNCLE SABE RUTLEDGE

(EX-SLAVE STORY)

SOURCE: Uncle Sabe Rutledge, The Ridge, Burgess, S. C., (Horry County)
Born first year of the Civil War.

(He owns his house and land, ----- some twenty-five acres under cultivation. This is located on what appears to be a 'height of land' lying between the Waccamaw and the Atlantic. Locally it is known as 'The Sand Ridge'.)