Teaching Enslaved People's History

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The histories of enslaved people have come a long way over the past several decades. Jim Crow-era thinking dominated mainstream scholarship for the first half of the twentieth century, and scholars often dismissed the historical significance of Black people, particularly those who were enslaved. Contemporary scholars have not only integrated the study of slavery into mainstream history but also encouraged us to view enslaved individuals in new, more insightful ways.

No longer assuming that legal social status has ever been a valid predictor of one's humanity, historians now recognize what slaveholders had known all along: that enslaved people were powerful historical actors, agents of change no less than the free people around them. Enslaved people, this new scholarship tells us, laid the groundwork for today's nation, sometimes literally when we think in terms of railroad lines or the levees that tame the lower Mississippi River. It is a cognitive and interpretive shift that works to educators' advantage. Rather than teaching about a category called "slaves" and the institution that enthralled them, abstractions that distance our students from the lived realities of human bondage, we are now free to teach about a people: women and men, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and foes, all of whom were, at their core, irrepressibly human with all that status entails.

Much of this interpretive shift has occurred since the 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement forced us to reassess Black Americans' roles in creating and shaping our nation. At first, this scholarship asserted that Black Americans had a past worth examining. In short order, historians were branching out, using ideas and questions developed in other academic fields to better understand enslaved people's histories. Among the first of these branches began the work of distinguishing Black women's experiences in bondage from those of Black men, a strand of scholarship that has further developed into nuanced investigations into the gendered lives of enslaved people. A more recent example of scholarship from this subfield includes Thavolia Glymph's *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* published in 2008.

Inspired, in part, by economic and technological events during the early 2000s, many historians have also been digging into the records of slave traders. As they unraveled a commercial system that became the model for today's integrated supply-chain management practices, they discovered that enslaved people flatly refused to play the part of a commodity. Instead, as demonstrated in Walter Johnson's *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (2000) and Calvin Schermerhorn's *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (2011), enslaved Americans weaponized the slave market whenever they could. Some played sick while standing on the auction block, hoping to lower their appeal and maybe avoid sale altogether. Others, like Solomon Northup, met and made friends and even plotted rebellion while chained together on coffle lines or locked inside slave traders' jails.[1] Maria Perkins, whose letter is accessible online, seized an opportunity in 1852. She attempted to use the existing market dynamics to her advantage by urging her husband to persuade his owner to purchase her and their youngest child. In this situation, she viewed the market as a potential way to keep her immediate family together.[2]

[1] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html.

[2] "'My Master Has Sold Albert to a Trader': Maria Perkins Writes to Her Husband, 1852," History Matters, George Mason University, accessed July 13, 2023, https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6380/.

Some of the most exciting scholarship has resulted from a late twentieth-century effort to draw together histories of economics and enslavement. It has long been understood that cotton of the kind enslaved people produced on plantations from the Carolinas to Texas drove the antebellum national and global economies. A driving force in a tightly integrated system that raises its own questions about the antebellum existence of a "North" pitted against a "South," New England textile mills and tool makers, New York clothiers, shipping companies, insurance companies, and banks both domestic and foreign, raked in enormous profits from the cultivation and sale of cotton. In turn, southern planters used their cotton profits to purchase finished products from North American and European merchants.

What we only more recently have come to see is that those same enslaved people who could wreck enslavers' sales by holding their bellies and feigning sickness could just as easily wreck a year's crop. Exploring this reality has revolutionized the study of American slavery. No longer casting enslaved people as prisoners pinned to plantations by the weight of a slaveholder's oppression (and the always looming threat of the whip), historians are beginning to understand that enslaved people did much more than simply produce the cotton that filled their owners' coffers—and the nation more generally. They drove the wagons, crewed the boats, ran endless errands, and, in a sense, functioned as the primary gears in a vast global machinery. American planters needed enslaved labor, and enslaved laborers knew it.

None of these observations are meant to say that enslaved people had garnered enough power to revolt against and forcibly squash the system of human bondage, at least not yet. But it did mean they had the means to interfere with and sometimes upset the plans of their enslavers. Shelling out a part of cotton's profits to purchase runaway advertisements in regional newspapers was not an expense slaveholders liked to pay, neither did losing a part of a crop to a wave of runaways or having a teamster return to their home full of news gathered while they were depositing the cotton in a nearby city. Enslaved people, their owners knew, had the means to change the rules of what was always an awful game. Ira Berlin was among the first American historians to put this tension and its consequences into words when, in his magisterial study, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (2000), he likened the relationship between enslaver and enslaved to the "meanest of all contests," one in which slaveholders held the best cards, but never held *all* the cards. "Slaves held cards of their own," Berlin reminds us, and they were never averse to using them.

Berlin's analogy plays right into educators' hands. In inviting our students to search the historical record for the "cards" or forms of leverage that enslaved people had at their disposal, we can raise a host of subsequent questions. When answered, these questions can continue to open new understandings about the practice of human bondage on U.S. soil. Did women, for instance, hold different cards than men? Did the kind of crop enslaved people made or the work they were ordered to do outside of the field affect what and who they knew and what they could do to advance their interests? How about marital status? What difference did marriage make? And what about urban workers and factory workers of the kind Calvin Schermerhorn studies? Did these two groups share aspirations, or did life experiences give them different sets of priorities and different means to achieve them? We know from her letter that Maria Perkins was literate and that she used those skills in a desperate attempt to protect her small and vulnerable family. But since she and her remaining child were so close to the free states, why didn't she just run away? What does it mean that she found her solution in the same slave market that otherwise threatened to fracture her family? And how did she learn to read and write in the first place? Such questions drive our scholarship as well as that of our students, helping us all better understand our national past.

All this asking and answering questions about the experiences of enslavement has never been easier. Because few enslaved people left their own written record, studying their history has always demanded a lot of digging and heavy applications of critical thought as we fight through a labyrinth of primary sources, a wide range of perspectives, competing priorities, and more than a little prejudice. While we still must ask those basic critical questions about authorship, agenda, perspective, and purpose, the proliferation of digital archives eases our work considerably. Going to the archives now often means going no farther than the nearest tablet or computer. But as is the case with all historical research, the quality of our primary sources determines the quality of our finished projects.

Archives maintained by federal, state, and educational institutions remain our best bets. Like the highly acclaimed Southern Historical Collection (library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/) at the University of North Carolina (now largely digitized), government and educational archives are staffed by librarians and archivists who know how to manage their collections without altering the content or meaning of the primary sources they contain.

Most of the sources we have that pertain to the history of enslavement and enslaved people have not been transcribed, making them a little more challenging for students to use. But reading sources in the original is not all that difficult. As my students are quick to figure out, the alphabet has only 26 letters, and between a process of elimination and an eye to context (historical and within the document itself), most original sources can be made to yield their secrets.

For instance, I routinely assign Prince Woodfin's 1853 letter to his owner because it challenges many of the preconceived ideas students (and adults) have about enslaved people and slavery.[3] Writing from Tuolumne County, California, at the height of the gold rush, Woodfin, an enslaved man, reports to his master about how he has been getting along since the latter returned to North Carolina. After filling his master in on the latest gold mining news, Woodfin commands the man to "State to me whether you had rather I would Send you what gold dust I make between now and next winter or if you reather [*sic*] I sell the gold and bring you the money." Once my students "crack the code" (which usually does not take more than a few minutes), they are off and running, asking those questions that yield the most information, not least of which is "What happened out West that made an enslaved person believe and behave as though they were equal to an owner?" and "What's going on that Woodfin didn't tell his owner how much gold was actually in his pocket?"

As much as my own historical work depends on original copies of my sources, any transcriptions that can be found make our teaching much easier. Please feel free to use them. But as is the case when working with originals, ensure that historically literate specialists have produced the transcriptions your students use. Distinguishing between an "a" and a "c" is often an intellectual decision that requires a level of contextual knowledge that, once again, only comes from years of study. Similarly, a misplaced comma can turn the meaning of a sentence, or even a document, inside out and upside down. Even names can be tricky. "Judy" is commonly a woman's name today; that was not necessarily the case in the antebellum era. And imagine the damage to our understanding if the transcriber got the dates wrong! With that in mind, the same advice applies to transcriptions as to the originals: work only with those that come from reliable institutions and were produced by knowledgeable scholars. George Mason University's digital archive, *Many Pasts* (historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/manypasts/), is one of many that meets that criteria and is replete with accurately rendered primary sources that cover the length and breadth of the American past, including its history of slavery.

[3] Letter, Prince Woodfin to his master, April 25, 1853. Nicholas Washington Woodfin Papers, 1795–1919, 1950 (folder 4), Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina, https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/01689/#folder_4.

Antebellum slave narratives are another fine source. Nowhere near as problematic as those collected under the auspices of the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s, this earlier set of narratives was written by people who lived in enslavement for decades and whose memories had not been distorted by time. Many are available on Google Books. Many more have been made available at *Documenting the American South* (docsouth.unc.edu/), a vast library of nineteenth-century narratives maintained by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. On this site, you will find the familiar: works by Frederick Douglass, including *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, *My Bondage and My Freedom*,[4] Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl*,[5] and William Wells Brown's *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave*.[6] You will also find hundreds of more obscure but no less insightful and compelling life stories there, including Benjamin Drew's compilation of mini-narratives that he assembled from interviews conducted among the fugitives who made their way to Canada in the 1840s and 1850s.[7] These narratives draw us into the lives of enslaved Americans. When read against one another, they also underscore the complexity of the experiences of enslavement. There was no single slavery, just as there is no single freedom, a realization that invites a deeper consideration of historical context and change over space and time.

Many university and government archives have developed primary sources for classroom and public use. Sometimes, these materials take the form of complete lessons.[8] In other instances, archives transcribe and digitize individual documents that they think have classroom applications, such as Vilet Lester's 1857 letter to her mistress, which you can find on the Duke University library website.[9] Other institutions digitize around a theme, and though the primary sources found on the *Freedmen and Southern Society Project* (freedmen.umd.edu/sampdocs.htm) webpage were produced during or shortly after the Civil War, they can be read backwards into an era in which the system of slavery was alive and well. For instance, the letter Maryland resident John Boston sent to his wife in January 1862 raises questions about how, as an enslaved man, he came to know that the shortest path to personal freedom ran south, not north.[10] Savvy students can mine another post-Civil War digital archive, *Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery* (informationwanted.org), to gain a deeper understanding of enslaved people's families, what those families looked like, how they were constituted, how often they were broken apart by sale, and the lengths to which people in slavery, as well as freedom, went to keep them intact. Personally, I'm itching for an opportunity to ask my students to transfer information from these ads into a spreadsheet where they could then sort them by region, date, years since last seen, etc. Analysis like this almost always pays off in new insights and new understandings.

Local newspapers in the antebellum era, primarily accessible through *Chronicling America* (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) and state and university library websites, contain a wealth of information. They cover a wide range of local news, including grand jury reports that shed light on the activities of enslaved individuals, advertisements for slave labor, and accounts of legislative efforts to control the enslaved workforce, which was crucial for generating profits.

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[4] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself,* Documenting the American *South*. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html and Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html.

[5] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html.

[6] William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown47/brown47.html.

[7] Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery . . .*, Documenting the American South, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html.

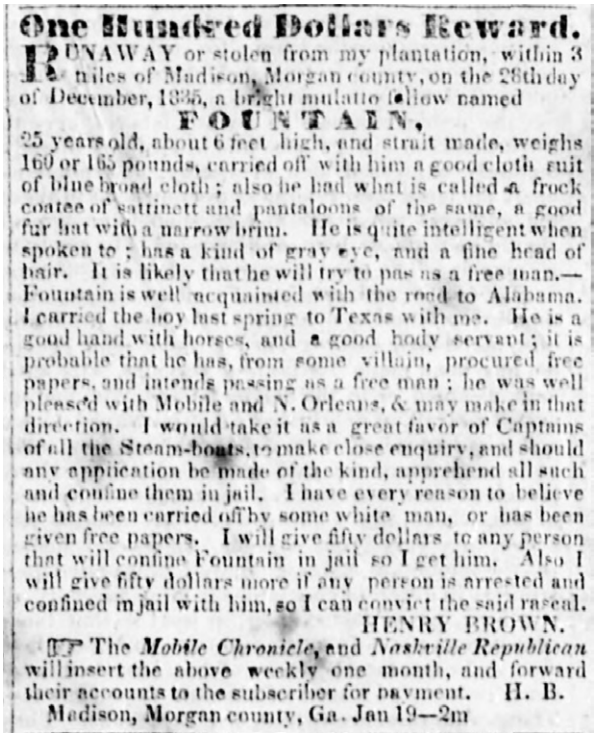
[8] "The Making of African American Identity," National Humanites Center, accessed July 13, 2023, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm.

[9] Vilet Lester Letter, 1857, Joseph Allred Papers, Duke University, https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/lester/.

[10] "Maryland Fugitive Slave to His Wife," Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland, http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/boston.htm.

Enslavers turned to newspapers to communicate that the people they held in bondage ran away, and every issue of every local and regional paper contained at least one runaway slave advertisement, a wide assortment of which are featured on the Cornell University website, *Freedom on the Move* (freedomonthemove.org/). Typically straightforward pieces of historical evidence, advertisements provide information about a person's physical characteristics, age, dates of departure, and thoughts about where the so-called "fugitive" may have gone. However, some offer a good deal more. Reading like miniature biographies, they lay out the fugitive's past, their skills, their family connections, and their ambitions.

The advertisement that slaveholder Henry Brown took out in *The Georgia Journal* when his enslaved worker, Fountain, ran away is a good example of the latter.[11] In it, we learn Fountain's age, weight, and posture, the clothes he wore when he absconded, and the color of his eyes. We learn that Fountain was a skilled horseman and a personal servant. Most importantly, we learn something about the places Fountain had been and the things he had seen. Fountain, the advertisement tells us, was a well-traveled man who, in accompanying his owner from Georgia to Texas and back again, had developed a fondness for big city life. "He was well pleased with Mobile and N. Orleans, & may make in that direction," Brown cautioned those who read the advertisement.



One Hundred Dollars Reward.

RUNAWAY or stolen from my plantation, within 3 miles of Madison, Morgan county, on the 28th day of December, 1835, a bright mulatto fellow named

FOUNTAIN,

25 years old, about 6 feet high, and strait made, weighs 160 or 165 pounds, carried off with him a good cloth suit of blue broad cloth; also he had what is called a frock coatee of sattinett and pantaloons of the same, a good fur hat with a narrow brim. He is quite intelligent when spoken to; has a kind of gray eye, and a fine head of hair. It is likely that he will try to pas as a free man.—Fountain is well acquainted with the road to Alabama. I carried the boy last spring to Texas with me. He is a good hand with horses, and a good body servant; it is probable that he has, from some villain, procured free papers, and intends passing as a free man; he was well pleased with Mobile and N. Orleans, & may make in that direction. I would take it as a great favor of Captains of all the Steam-boats, to make close enquiry, and should any application be made of the kind, apprehend all such and confine them in jail. I have every reason to believe he has been carried off by some white man, or has been given free papers. I will give fifty dollars to any person that will confine Fountain in jail so I get him. Also I will give fifty dollars more if any person is arrested and confined in jail with him, so I can convict the said rascal.

HENRY BROWN.

☞ The *Mobile Chronicle*, and *Nashville Republican* will insert the above weekly one month, and forward their accounts to the subscriber for payment. H. B.

Madison, Morgan county, Ga. Jan 19—2m

***The Georgia Journal*, Milledgeville, Georgia, January 26, 1836.**

Finally, there are countless volumes of published collections of primary sources, planter journals, and travelers' memoirs, all of which can shed additional light on enslaved people's pasts. Not quite as accessible to today's students (conducting research in books may require a trip to the library!), they are nonetheless invaluable sources of information that no historian of the enslaved past would dare ignore. Frederick Law Olmsted's *A Journey through the Southern Backcountry* and James Redpath's *The Roving Editor: Or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* are both antebellum travel memoirs, and they both include accounts of long conversations between the authors and the enslaved people they encountered, conversations that nearly always included probing questions about the enslaved person's experiences in bondage and their hopes for the future.[12] The Freedmen and Southern Society Project (freedmen.umd.edu/fssppubs.htm) has produced six main volumes of primary sources to date along with several smaller collections, all of which, like John Boston's letter to his wife, say as much about slavery as they do freedom. Another source that requires a trip to the library is a searchable microfilm collection (dlas.uncg.edu/petitions/) created by the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, historian Loren Schweninger. The result of years spent mining courthouse collections across the former slaveholding states, the *Race and Slavery Petitions Project* brings together more than 18,000 legislative and county petitions on virtually any subject related to enslaved people, slaveholders, and slavery. If detail is what you want, detail is what you'll get when you dive into this collection!

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[11] "One Hundred Dollar Reward," *The Georgia Journal* [Milledgeville, Georgia], January 26, 1836, https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn82014251/1836-01-26/ed-1/seq-4/.

[12] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (Boston: Harvard University, 1860), https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Journey_in_the_Back_Country/aHIYAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0 and James Redpath, *The Roving Editor Or, Talks with Slaves in Southern States* (Boston: Harvard University, 1859), https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Roving_Editor/qfKuKEPr8u0C?hl=en&gbpv=0.

Finding enslaved people's history is no longer the hard part. Neither, frankly, is teaching it. In starting our studies with an acknowledgment of our shared humanity, the job becomes far less fraught. Anyone who is a part of a family today can relate to Maria Perkins's fear of losing hers. Anyone who has traveled for work or vacation can relate to Fountain's careful study of the places he saw. In starting our studies at the level of people (something easily achieved with our ever-growing access to primary sources), it becomes clear that people are people, no matter the horrors inflicted upon them. We are no longer confined to studying a faceless, nameless, generic "slave." We can now study individual women, men, children, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, workmates, and friends. We can ask what they did, where, when, with whom, why, for how long, and under what kind of conditions—questions that lie at the heart of any attempt to do social history. In asking and then finding answers to these questions, students' understanding of a people who played a significant role in the making of this nation can only deepen. But please tell your students to expect to be surprised. Studying history from the bottom up often changes and challenges the conventional story. We see the past through a different set of eyes, a shift in perspective that almost invariably leads us to new knowledge. This is, of course, the whole purpose of studying the past: to get to know that foreign land from which we all arose.

To learn more about National History Day's Inclusive History Initiative,go to nhd.org/inclusivehistory.

Slavery and Emancipation: A Complex Comparison

AUTHOR: Al Wheat, Director of Education, Mississippi Department of Archives and History

GUIDING QUESTION: According to formerly enslaved people, what were the hardships faced not only during enslavement but also after emancipation?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will use three oral histories to compare the experiences of three people who experienced enslavement, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow era. Students will compare and contrast the perspectives of these three people and discuss how the realities led to the Great Migration.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- Explain how enslaved African Americans showed resilience while enslaved and during Reconstruction;
- Analyze the realities of how African Americans had their freedoms stripped away after Reconstruction ended; and
- Compare and contrast the realities of life during and after enslavement.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- D2.His.8.9-12 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Ebenezer Brown, August 16, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Amite County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/amite/436/brown-ebenezer

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/washington/436/oliver-mark

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/panola/436/jones-susan

SECONDARY SOURCES

Article, Neil R. McMillen, "WPA Slave Narratives," February 2005
Mississippi History Now, Mississippi Department of History and Archives
https://mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/wpa-slave-narratives

Video, "Historical Context: The End of Reconstruction," 2024 [6:34]
National History Day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPZU6x_2NZo

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- Oral History Comparison Chart
- Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- Read the article "WPA Slave Narratives" for background information.
- Preview all primary sources to determine appropriateness for your students.
- Print one copy of the Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key for teacher use.
- Make one copy of the Oral History Comparison Chart for each student.
- Provide copies of the primary and secondary sources.
- Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- Arrange the classroom for group work.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTION (20 MINUTES)

- Introduce the WPA Slave Narratives to students. Teachers may choose to have students read the article or summarize the key points. Ask students:
  - *Why are these oral histories valuable to our understanding of the time period (1850s to 1930s)?* (This collection preserves the stories of enslaved people from their perspective; they show a variety of perspectives.)
  - *What are some of the limitations of these sources?* (Told by elderly people many years after the event happened; most were children during the events; they were recorded by people who could stereotype or look down on the interview subjects.)
  - *What was happening in the 1930s that might have influenced the perspective of the people being interviewed?* (Jim Crow segregation, sharecropping, Great Depression, severe poverty, high unemployment.)
- Explain to students how the interviews they will read were written (reconstructed from notes, they attempted to use phonetic spelling to capture accents and speech patterns, interviewers lacked training and recording equipment, etc.)

ACTIVITY TWO: RESEARCH (45 MINUTES)

- Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- Play the video "Historical Context: The End of Reconstruction" [6:34] to help set the oral histories into historical context.

Teacher Notes:

- Remind students that whenever possible, we want to listen to people in history and use primary sources to learn about the experiences of those who lived during that time.
- When conducting lessons about enslavement, take time to teach your students how to use proper terminology (using terms like enslaved people, enslaved laborers, and not "slaves"). Read the article "What's in a Word? Being Thoughtful about Terminology in Historical Writing" in this resource for additional support.
- Read the article "Teaching Enslaved People's History" in this resource to learn more approaching teaching this topic.
- While this material is not graphic, it does describe violent actions and traumatic situations. Read the article "Navigating Sensitive Content While Meeting Students' Needs" in this resource for suggestions on teaching material with graphic or violent content.
- Preview all content in this lesson to ensure it is appropriate for your students. Consider using the redacted version of the primary sources.
- Remind students that formerly enslaved people (just like all groups of people) had very different experiences and a range of reactions to the same events.

- Distribute the Oral History Comparison Chart and assign students to read one of the three oral histories.
  - **Teacher Tip:** The three primary sources can be used to differentiate instruction. Ebenezer Brown's account is the longest and includes the highest level of phonetic spelling. Mark Oliver's account is slightly shorter and written in a clearer transcript. Susan Jones's account is the shortest and clearest to understand. Teachers may choose to assign student groups one, two, or all three interviews. Teachers may also choose to pair students on the more difficult reading (if appropriate).
  - **Editor's Note:** This lesson includes two versions of these sources. The second one is a version of the sources with a particularly offensive word blacked out after the first letter.
- Give students time to read and complete the appropriate column in the chart. Circulate and provide support as needed. Use the Oral History Comparison Chart Answer Key as a resource.

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- **Enslavement in America (1619–1865)**
- **Reconstruction (1865–1877)**
- **Black Codes (1865–1866)**
- **The Mississippi Plan (1875)**
- **Works Progress Administration (1935–1943)**

- Give students time to summarize their oral histories with their group members. If appropriate, review with the class and complete the chart on the board.

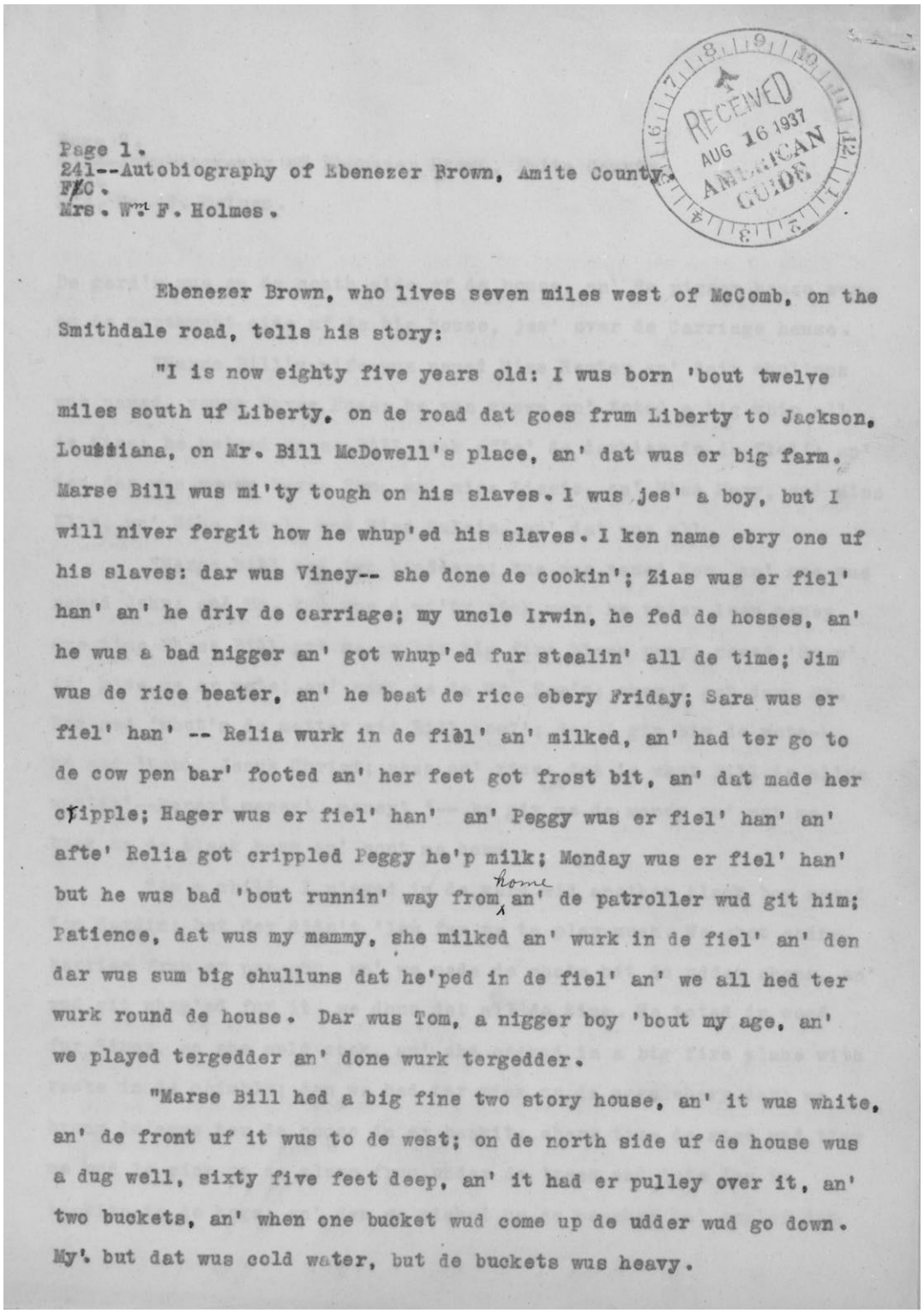
ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Students can submit their Oral History Comparison Chart.
- Students can complete a three-part Venn diagram to compare and contrast the experiences of Ebenezer Brown, Mark Oliver, and Susan Jones.
- Students can develop a list of questions that students would like to ask Ebenezer Brown, Mark Oliver, and Susan Jones to get a better understanding of their lives both during and after enslavement.
- Students can use oral histories to develop a list of why many African Americans chose to leave the southern states during the Great Migration. What factors pushed them out? What factors pulled them to move North and West?

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to nhd.org/inclusivehistory.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Ebenezer Brown, August 16, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Amite County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/amite/436/brown-ebenezer



RECEIVED AUG 16 1937 AMERICAN GUIDE

Page 1.
241--Autobiography of Ebenezer Brown, Amite County.
FWC.
Mrs. W^m F. Holmes.

Ebenezer Brown, who lives seven miles west of McComb, on the Smithdale road, tells his story:

"I is now eighty five years old: I wus born 'bout twelve miles south uf Liberty, on de road dat goes frum Liberty to Jackson, Louisiana, on Mr. Bill McDowell's place, an' dat wus er big farm. Marse Bill wus mi'ty tough on his slaves. I wus jes' a boy, but I will niver fergit how he whup'ed his slaves. I ken name ebry one uf his slaves: dar wus Viney-- she done de cookin'; Zias wus er fiel' han' an' he driv de carriage; my uncle Irwin, he fed de hosses, an' he wus a bad nigger an' got whup'ed fur stealin' all de time; Jim wus de rice beater, an' he beat de rice ebery Friday; Sara wus er fiel' han' -- Relia wurk in de fiel' an' milked, an' had ter go to de cow pen bar' footed an' her feet got frost bit, an' dat made her cripple; Hager wus er fiel' han' an' Peggy wus er fiel' han' an' afte' Relia got crippled Peggy he'p milk; Monday wus er fiel' han' but he wus bad 'bout runnin' way from home an' de patroller wud git him; Patience, dat wus my mammy, she milked an' wurk in de fiel' an' den dar wus sum big chulluns dat he'ped in de fiel' an' we all hed ter wurk round de house. Dar wus Tom, a nigger boy 'bout my age, an' we played tergedder an' done wurk tergedder.

"Marse Bill hed a big fine two story house, an' it wus white, an' de front uf it wus to de west; on de north side uf de house wus a dug well, sixty five feet deep, an' it had er pulley over it, an' two buckets, an' when one bucket wud come up de udder wud go down. My' but dat wus cold water, but de buckets wus heavy.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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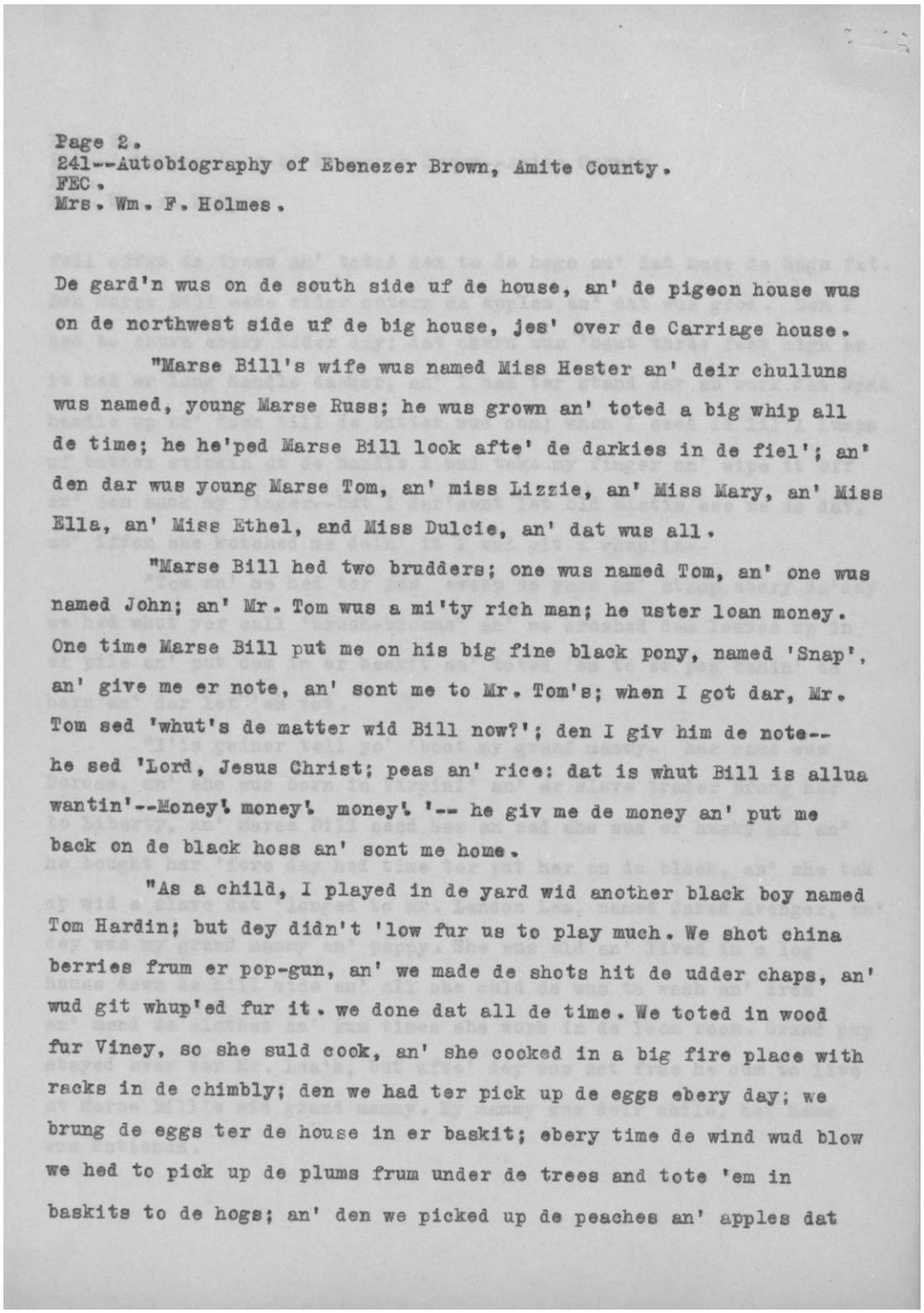

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De gard'n wus on de south side uf de house, an' de pigeon house wus on de northwest side uf de big house, jes' over de Carriage house.

"Marse Bill's wife wus named Miss Hester an' deir chulluns wus named, young Marse Russ; he wus grown an' toted a big whip all de time; he he'ped Marse Bill look afte' de darkies in de fiel'; an' den dar wus young Marse Tom, an' miss Lizzie, an' Miss Mary, an' Miss Ella, an' Miss Ethel, and Miss Dulcie, an' dat wus all.

"Marse Bill hed two brudders; one wus named Tom, an' one wus named John; an' Mr. Tom wus a mi'ty rich man; he uster loan money. One time Marse Bill put me on his big fine black pony, named 'Snap', an' give me er note, an' sont me to Mr. Tom's; when I got dar, Mr. Tom sed 'whut's de matter wid Bill now?'; den I giv him de note-- he sed 'Lord, Jesus Christ; peas an' rice: dat is whut Bill is allua wantin'--Money', money', money', '-- he giv me de money an' put me back on de black hoss an' sont me home.

"As a child, I played in de yard wid another black boy named Tom Hardin; but dey didn't 'low fur us to play much. We shot china berries frum er pop-gun, an' we made de shots hit de udder chaps, an' wud git whup'ed fur it. we done dat all de time. We toted in wood fur Viney, so she suld cook, an' she cooked in a big fire place with racks in de chimbly; den we had ter pick up de eggs ebery day; we brung de eggs ter de house in er baskit; ebery time de wind wud blow we hed to pick up de plums frum under de trees and tote 'em in baskits to de hogs; an' den we picked up de peaches an' apples dat

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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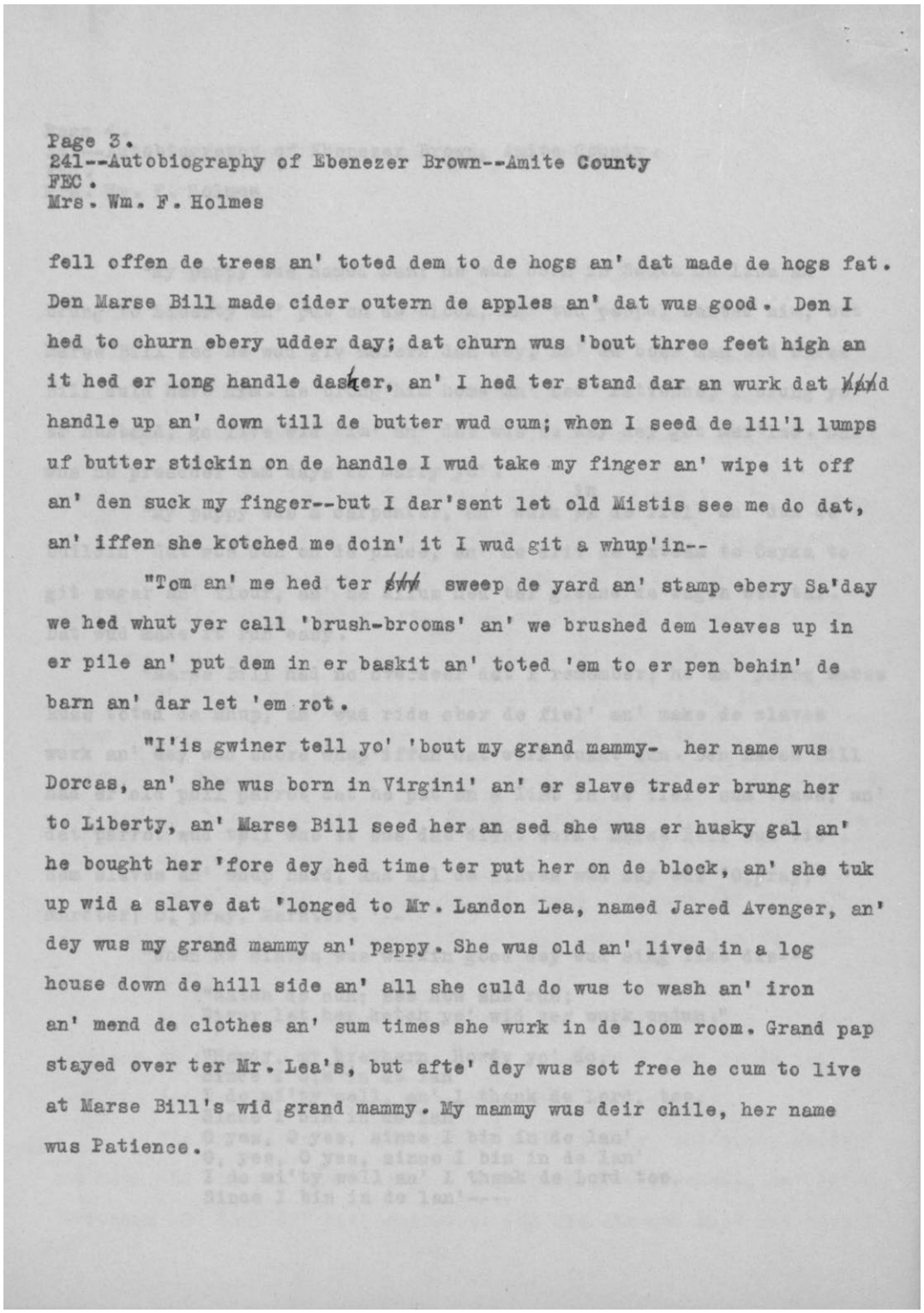

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fell offen de trees an' toted dem to de hogs an' dat made de hogs fat. Den Marse Bill made cider outern de apples an' dat wus good. Den I hed to churn ebery udder day; dat churn wus 'bout three feet high an it hed er long handle dasher, an' I hed ter stand dar an wurk dat hand handle up an' down till de butter wud cum; when I seed de lil'l lumps uf butter stickin on de handle I wud take my finger an' wipe it off an' den suck my finger--but I dar'sent let old Mistis see me do dat, an' iffen she kotched me doin' it I wud git a whup'in--

"Tom an' me hed ter sweep de yard an' stamp ebery Sa'day we hed whut yer call 'brush-brooms' an' we brushed dem leaves up in er pile an' put dem in er baskit an' toted 'em to er pen behin' de barn an' dar let 'em rot.

"I'is gwiner tell yo' 'bout my grand mammy- her name wus Dorcas, an' she wus born in Virgini' an' er slave trader brung her to Liberty, an' Marse Bill seed her an sed she wus er husky gal an' he bought her 'fore dey hed time ter put her on de block, an' she tuk up wid a slave dat 'longed to Mr. Landon Lea, named Jared Avenger, an' dey wus my grand mammy an' peppy. She wus old an' lived in a log house down de hill side an' all she culd do wus to wash an' iron an' mend de clothes an' sum times she wurk in de loom room. Grand pap stayed over ter Mr. Lea's, but afte' dey wus sot free he cum to live at Marse Bill's wid grand mammy. My mammy wus deir chile, her name wus Patience.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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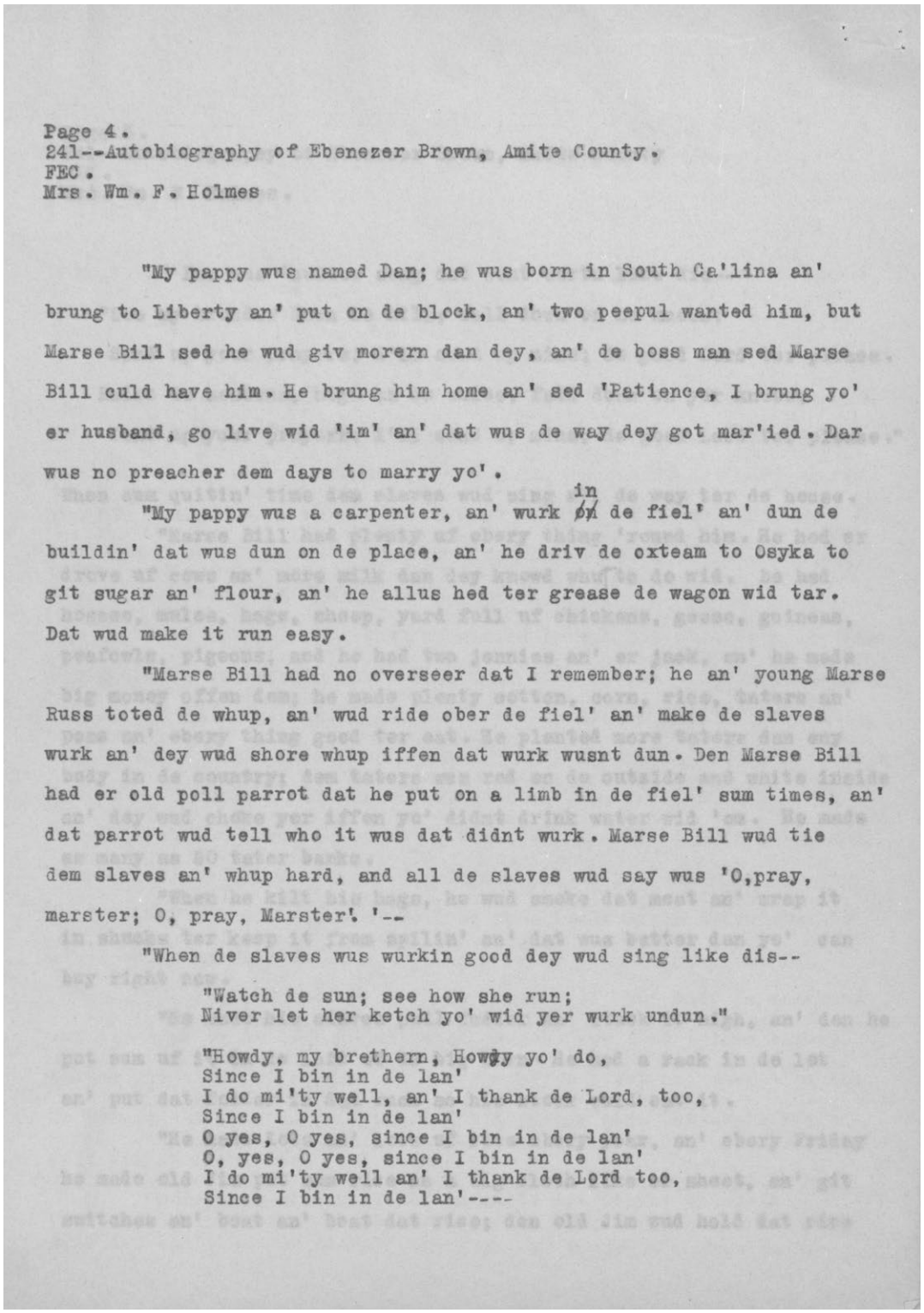

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"My pappy wus named Dan; he wus born in South Ca'lina an' brung to Liberty an' put on de block, an' two peepul wanted him, but Marse Bill sed he wud giv morern dan dey, an' de boss man sed Marse Bill culd have him. He brung him home an' sed 'Patience, I brung yo' er husband, go live wid 'im' an' dat wus de way dey got mar'ied. Dar wus no preacher dem days to marry yo'.

"My pappy wus a carpenter, an' wurk in de fiel' an' dun de buildin' dat wus dun on de place, an' he driv de oxteam to Osyka to git sugar an' flour, an' he allus hed ter grease de wagon wid tar. Dat wud make it run easy.

"Marse Bill had no overseer dat I remember; he an' young Marse Russ toted de whup, an' wud ride ober de fiel' an' make de slaves wurk an' dey wud shore whup iffen dat wurk wusnt dun. Den Marse Bill had er old poll parrot dat he put on a limb in de fiel' sum times, an' dat parrot wud tell who it wus dat didnt wurk. Marse Bill wud tie dem slaves an' whup hard, and all de slaves wud say wus 'O,pray, marster; O, pray, Marster'. '--

"When de slaves wus wurkin good dey wud sing like dis--

"Watch de sun; see how she run;
Niver let her ketch yo' wid yer wurk undun."

"Howdy, my brethern, Howdy yo' do,
Since I bin in de lan'
I do mi'ty well, an' I thank de Lord, too,
Since I bin in de lan'
O yes, O yes, since I bin in de lan'
O, yes, O yes, since I bin in de lan'
I do mi'ty well an' I thank de Lord too,
Since I bin in de lan'----

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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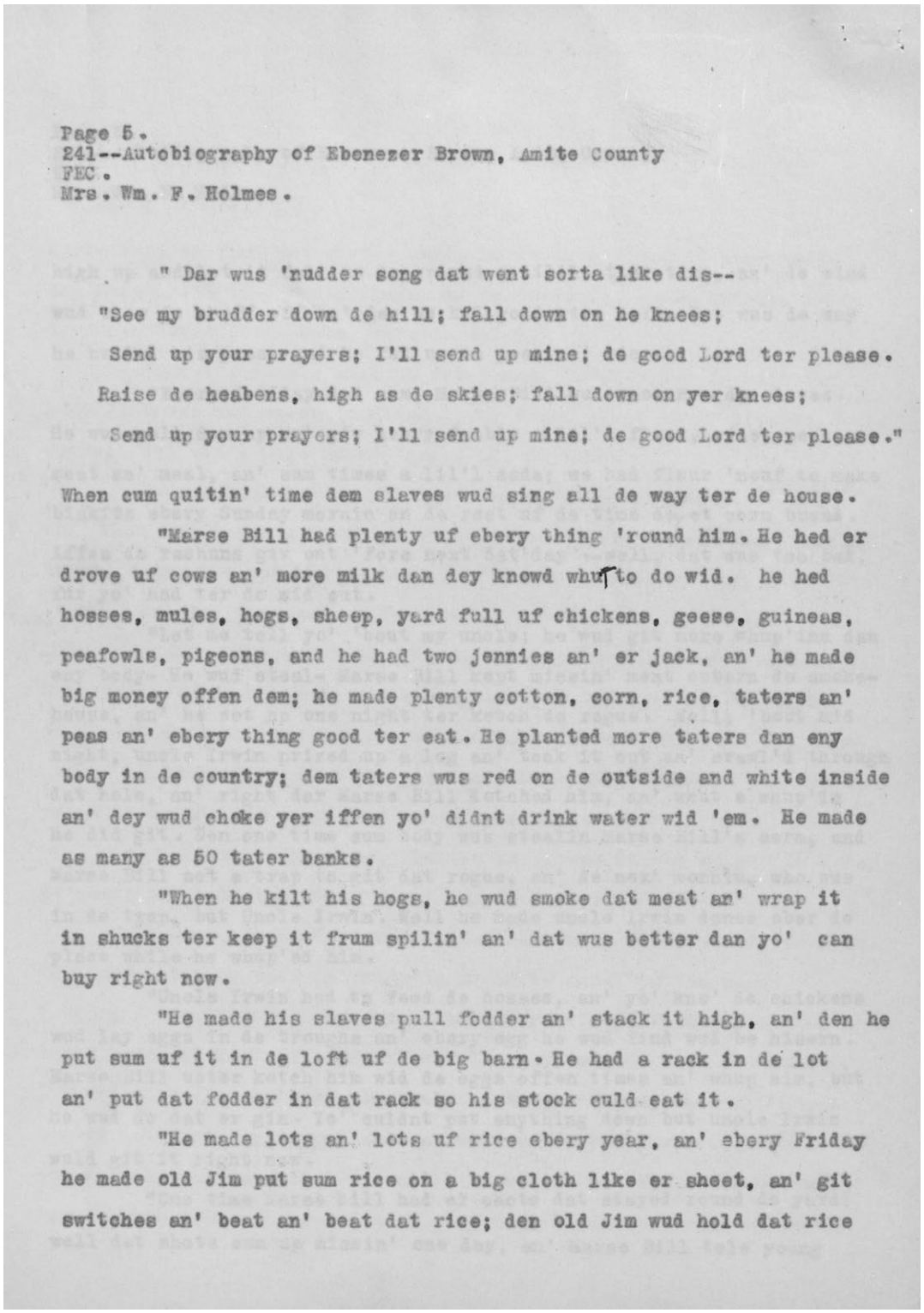

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" Dar wus 'nudder song dat went sorta like dis--

"See my brudder down de hill; fall down on he knees;
Send up your prayers; I'll send up mine; de good Lord ter please.
Raise de heabens, high as de skies; fall down on yer knees;
Send up your prayers; I'll send up mine; de good Lord ter please."

When cum quitin' time dem slaves wud sing all de way ter de house.

"Marse Bill had plenty uf ebery thing 'round him. He hed er drove uf cows an' more milk dan dey knowd whut to do wid. he hed hosses, mules, hogs, sheep, yard full uf chickens, geese, guineas, peafowls, pigeons, and he had two jennies an' er jack, an' he made big money offen dem; he made plenty cotton, corn, rice, taters an' peas an' ebery thing good ter eat. He planted more taters dan eny body in de country; dem taters wus red on de outside and white inside an' dey wud choke yer iffen yo' didnt drink water wid 'em. He made as many as 50 tater banks.

"When he kilt his hogs, he wud smoke dat meat an' wrap it in shucks ter keep it frum spilin' an' dat wus better dan yo' can buy right now.

"He made his slaves pull fodder an' stack it high, an' den he put sum uf it in de loft uf de big barn. He had a rack in de lot an' put dat fodder in dat rack so his stock culd eat it.

"He made lots an' lots uf rice ebery year, an' ebery Friday he made old Jim put sum rice on a big cloth like er sheet, an' git switches an' beat an' beat dat rice; den old Jim wud hold dat rice

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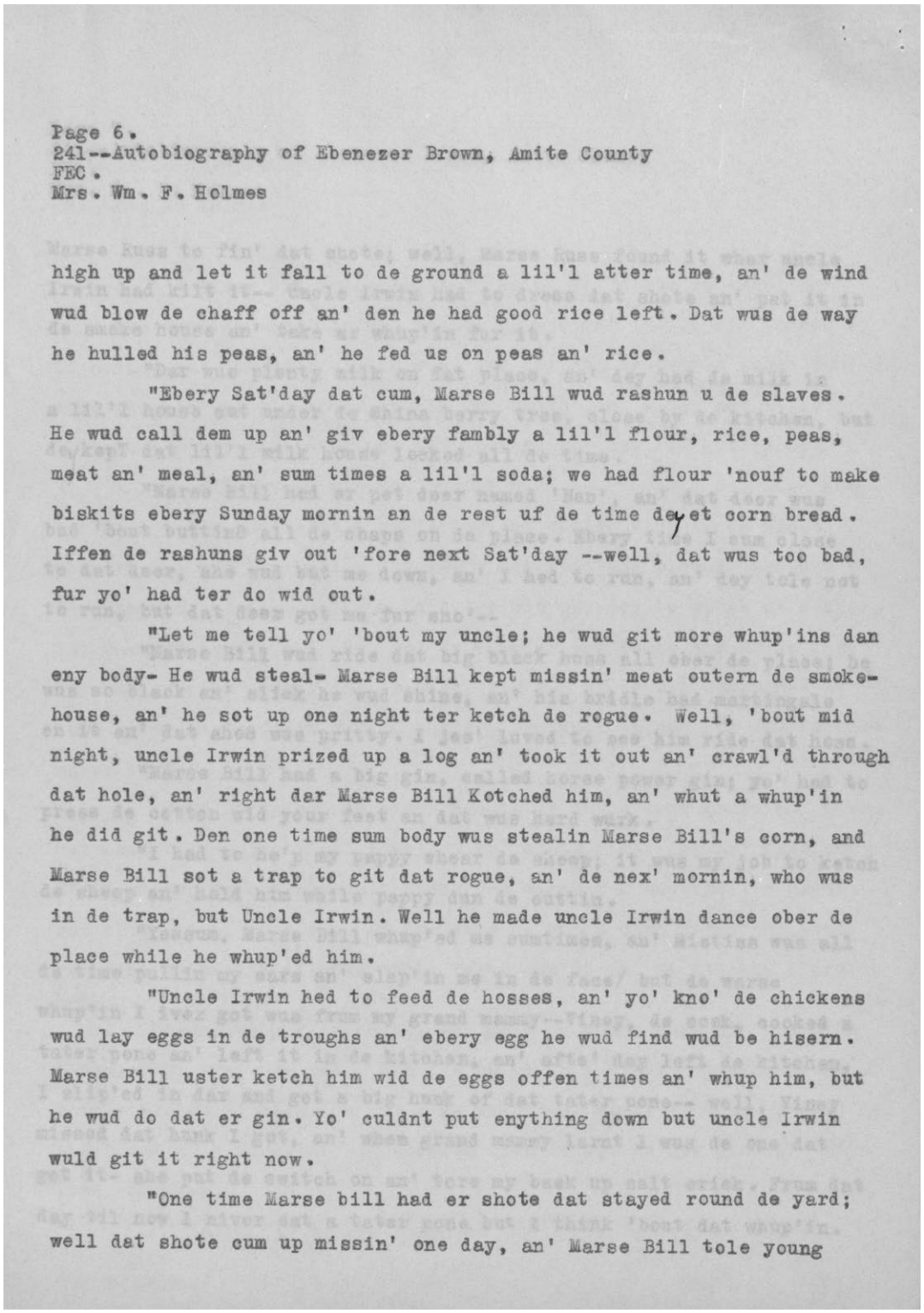

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high up and let it fall to de ground a lil'l atter time, an' de wind wud blow de chaff off an' den he had good rice left. Dat wus de way he hulled his peas, an' he fed us on peas an' rice.

"Ebery Sat'day dat cum, Marse Bill wud rashun u de slaves. He wud call dem up an' giv ebery fambly a lil'l flour, rice, peas, meat an' meal, an' sum times a lil'l soda; we had flour 'nouf to make biskits ebery Sunday mornin an de rest uf de time dey et corn bread. Iffen de rashuns giv out 'fore next Sat'day --well, dat wus too bad, fur yo' had ter do wid out.

"Let me tell yo' 'bout my uncle; he wud git more whup'ins dan eny body- He wud steal- Marse Bill kept missin' meat outern de smoke-house, an' he sot up one night ter ketch de rogue. Well, 'bout mid night, uncle Irwin prized up a log an' took it out an' crawl'd through dat hole, an' right dar Marse Bill Kotched him, an' whut a whup'in he did git. Den one time sum body wus stealin Marse Bill's corn, and Marse Bill sot a trap to git dat rogue, an' de nex' mornin, who wus in de trap, but Uncle Irwin. Well he made uncle Irwin dance ober de place while he whup'ed him.

"Uncle Irwin hed to feed de hosses, an' yo' kno' de chickens wud lay eggs in de troughs an' ebery egg he wud find wud be hisern. Marse Bill uster ketch him wid de eggs offen times an' whup him, but he wud do dat er gin. Yo' culdnt put enything down but uncle Irwin wuld git it right now.

"One time Marse bill had er shote dat stayed round de yard; well dat shote cum up missin' one day, an' Marse Bill tole young

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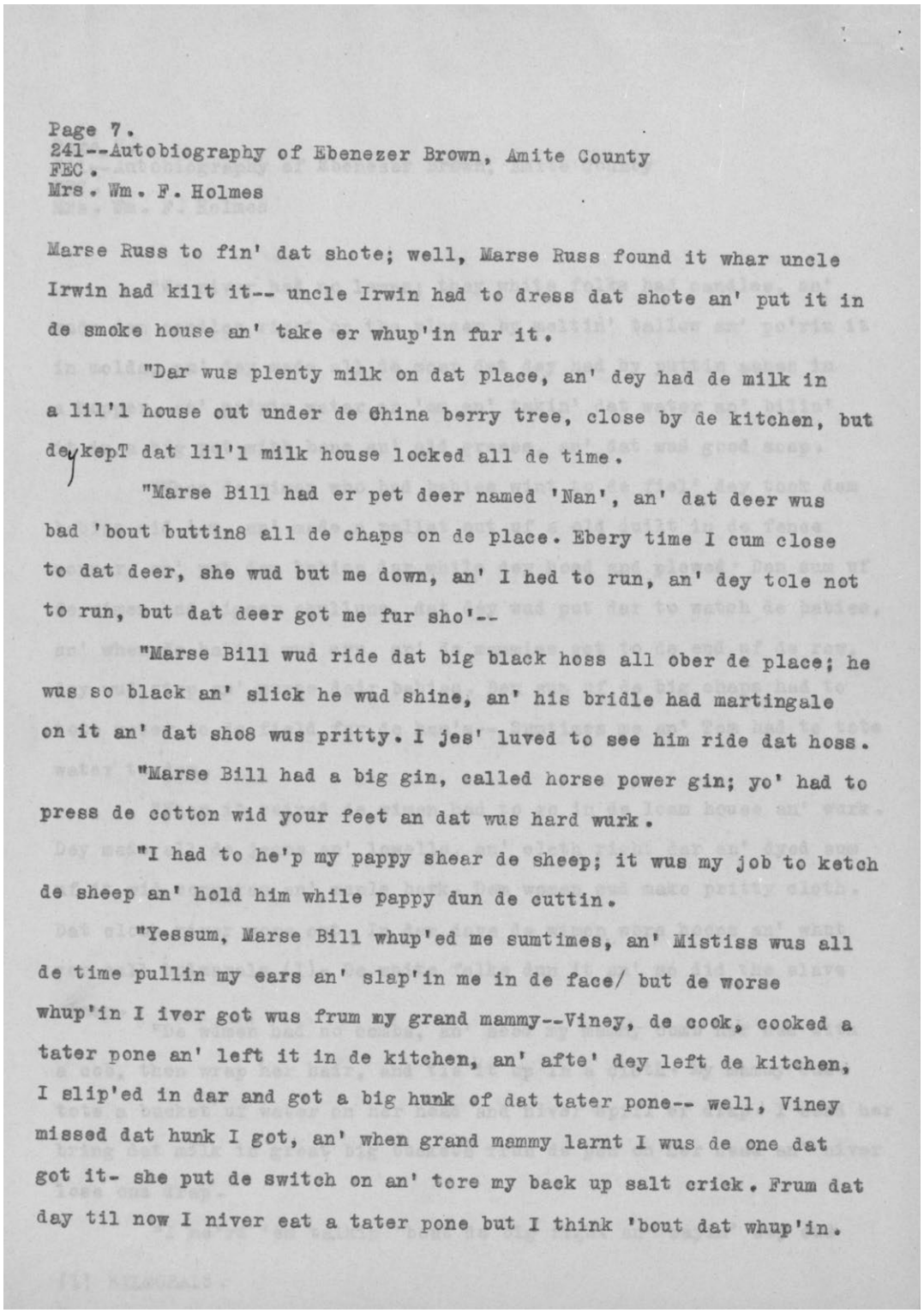

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Marse Russ to fin' dat shote; well, Marse Russ found it whar uncle Irwin had kilt it-- uncle Irwin had to dress dat shote an' put it in de smoke house an' take er whup'in fur it.

"Dar wus plenty milk on dat place, an' dey had de milk in a lil'l house out under de China berry tree, close by de kitchen, but dey kept dat lil'l milk house locked all de time.

"Marse Bill had er pet deer named 'Nan', an' dat deer wus bad 'bout buttin8 all de chaps on de place. Ebery time I cum close to dat deer, she wud but me down, an' I hed to run, an' dey tole not to run, but dat deer got me fur sho'--

"Marse Bill wud ride dat big black hoss all ober de place; he wus so black an' slick he wud shine, an' his bridle had martingale on it an' dat sho8 wus pritty. I jes' luved to see him ride dat hoss.

"Marse Bill had a big gin, called horse power gin; yo' had to press de cotton wid your feet an dat wus hard wurk.

"I had to he'p my pappy shear de sheep; it wus my job to ketch de sheep an' hold him while pappy dun de cuttin.

"Yessum, Marse Bill whup'ed me sumtimes, an' Mistiss wus all de time pullin my ears an' slap'in me in de face/ but de worse whup'in I iver got wus frum my grand mammy--Viney, de cook, cooked a tater pone an' left it in de kitchen, an' afte' dey left de kitchen, I slip'ed in dar and got a big hunk of dat tater pone-- well, Viney missed dat hunk I got, an' when grand mammy larnt I wus de one dat got it- she put de switch on an' tore my back up salt crick. Frum dat day til now I niver eat a tater pone but I think 'bout dat whup'in.

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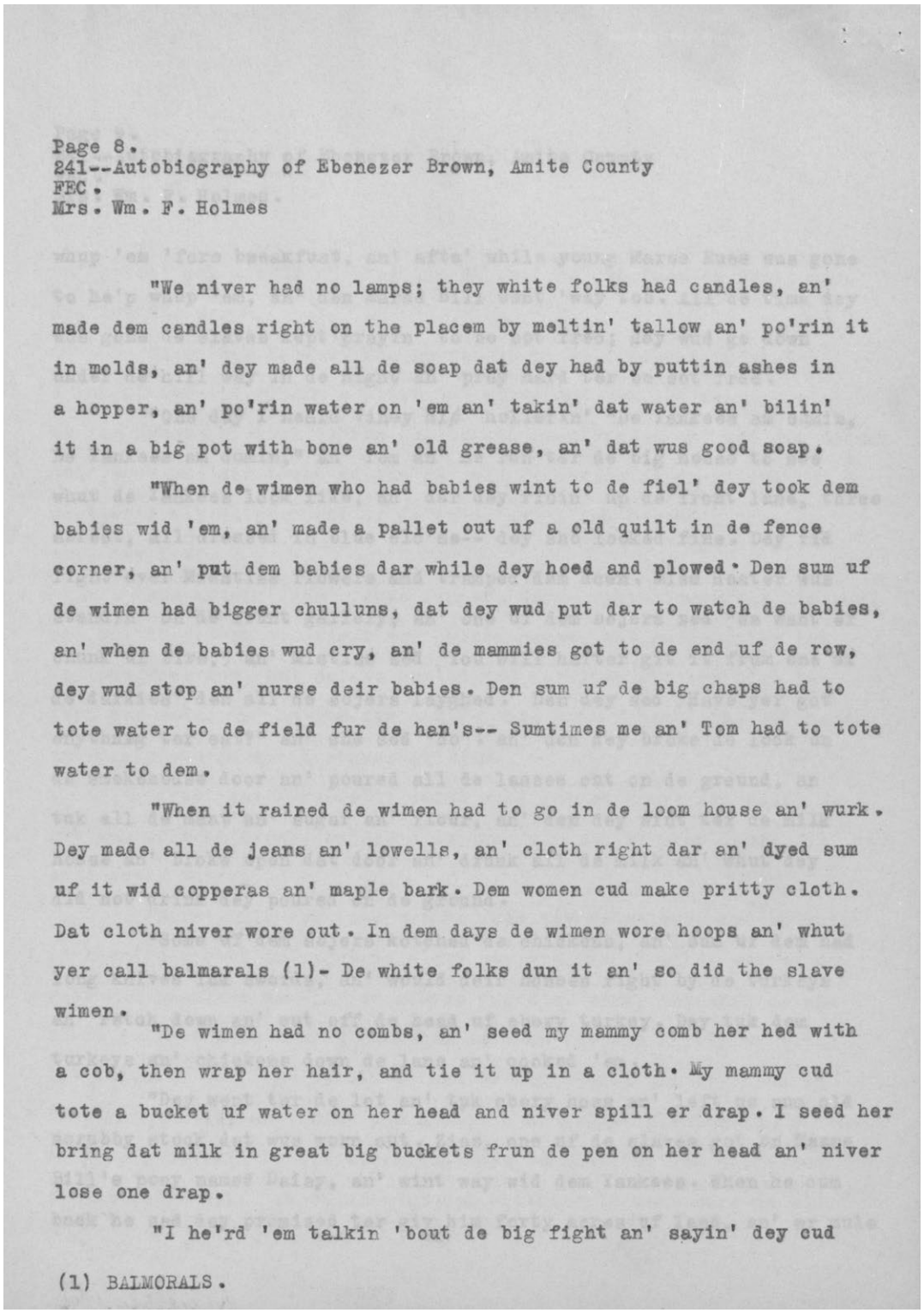

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"We niver had no lamps; they white folks had candles, an' made dem candles right on the placem by meltin' tallow an' po'rin it in molds, an' dey made all de soap dat dey had by puttin ashes in a hopper, an' po'rin water on 'em an' takin' dat water an' bilin' it in a big pot with bone an' old grease, an' dat wus good soap.

"When de wimen who had babies wint to de fiel' dey took dem babies wid 'em, an' made a pallet out uf a old quilt in de fence corner, an' put dem babies dar while dey hoed and plowed. Den sum uf de wimen had bigger chulluns, dat dey wud put dar to watch de babies, an' when de babies wud cry, an' de mammies got to de end uf de row, dey wud stop an' nurse deir babies. Den sum uf de big chaps had to tote water to de field fur de han's-- Sumtimes me an' Tom had to tote water to dem.

"When it rained de wimen had to go in de loom house an' wurk. Dey made all de jeans an' lowells, an' cloth right dar an' dyed sum uf it wid copperas an' maple bark. Dem women cud make pritty cloth. Dat cloth niver wore out. In dem days de wimen wore hoops an' whut yer call balmarals (1)- De white folks dun it an' so did the slave wimen.

"De wimen had no combs, an' seed my mammy comb her hed with a cob, then wrap her hair, and tie it up in a cloth. My mammy cud tote a bucket uf water on her head and niver spill er drap. I seed her bring dat milk in great big buckets frun de pen on her head an' niver lose one drap.

"I he'rd 'em talkin 'bout de big fight an' sayin' dey cud

(1) BALMORALS.

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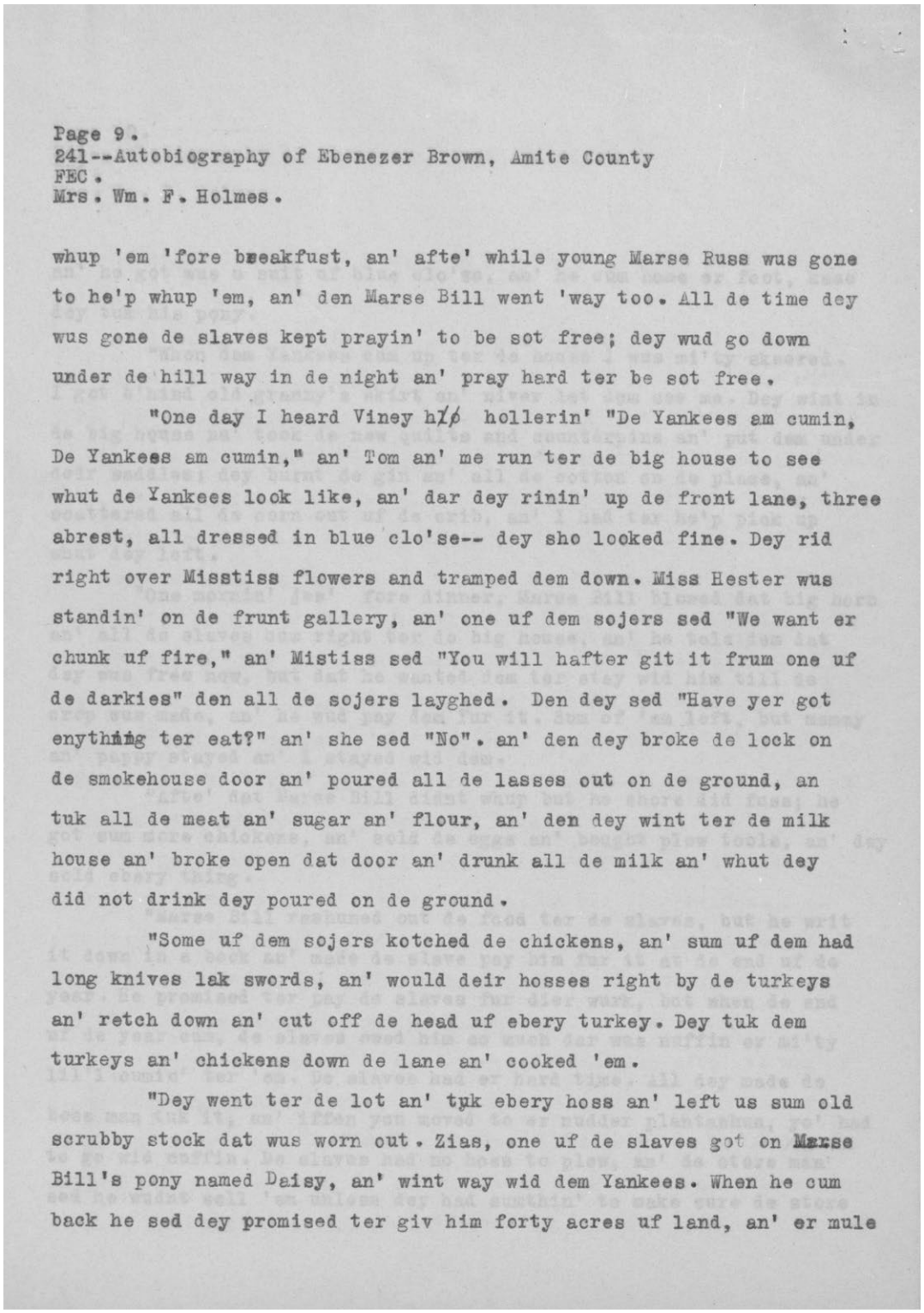

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whup 'em 'fore breakfust, an' afte' while young Marse Russ wus gone to he'p whup 'em, an' den Marse Bill went 'way too. All de time dey wus gone de slaves kept prayin' to be sot free; dey wud go down under de hill way in de night an' pray hard ter be sot free.

"One day I heard Viney holler hollerin' "De Yankees am cumin, De Yankees am cumin," an' Tom an' me run ter de big house to see whut de Yankees look like, an' dar dey rinin' up de front lane, three abrest, all dressed in blue clo'se-- dey sho looked fine. Dey rid right over Misstiss flowers and tramped dem down. Miss Hester wus standin' on de frunt gallery, an' one uf dem sojers sed "We want er chunk uf fire," an' Mistiss sed "You will hafter git it frum one uf de darkies" den all de sojers layghed. Den dey sed "Have yer got enything ter eat?" an' she sed "No". an' den dey broke de lock on de smokehouse door an' poured all de lasses out on de ground, an tuk all de meat an' sugar an' flour, an' den dey wint ter de milk house an' broke open dat door an' drunk all de milk an' whut dey did not drink dey poured on de ground.

"Some uf dem sojers kotched de chickens, an' sum uf dem had long knives lak swords, an' would deir hosses right by de turkeys an' retch down an' cut off de head uf ebery turkey. Dey tuk dem turkeys an' chickens down de lane an' cooked 'em.

"Dey went ter de lot an' tuk ebery hoss an' left us sum old scrubby stock dat wus worn out. Zias, one uf de slaves got on Marse Bill's pony named Daisy, an' wint way wid dem Yankees. When he cum back he sed dey promised ter giv him forty acres uf land, an' er mule

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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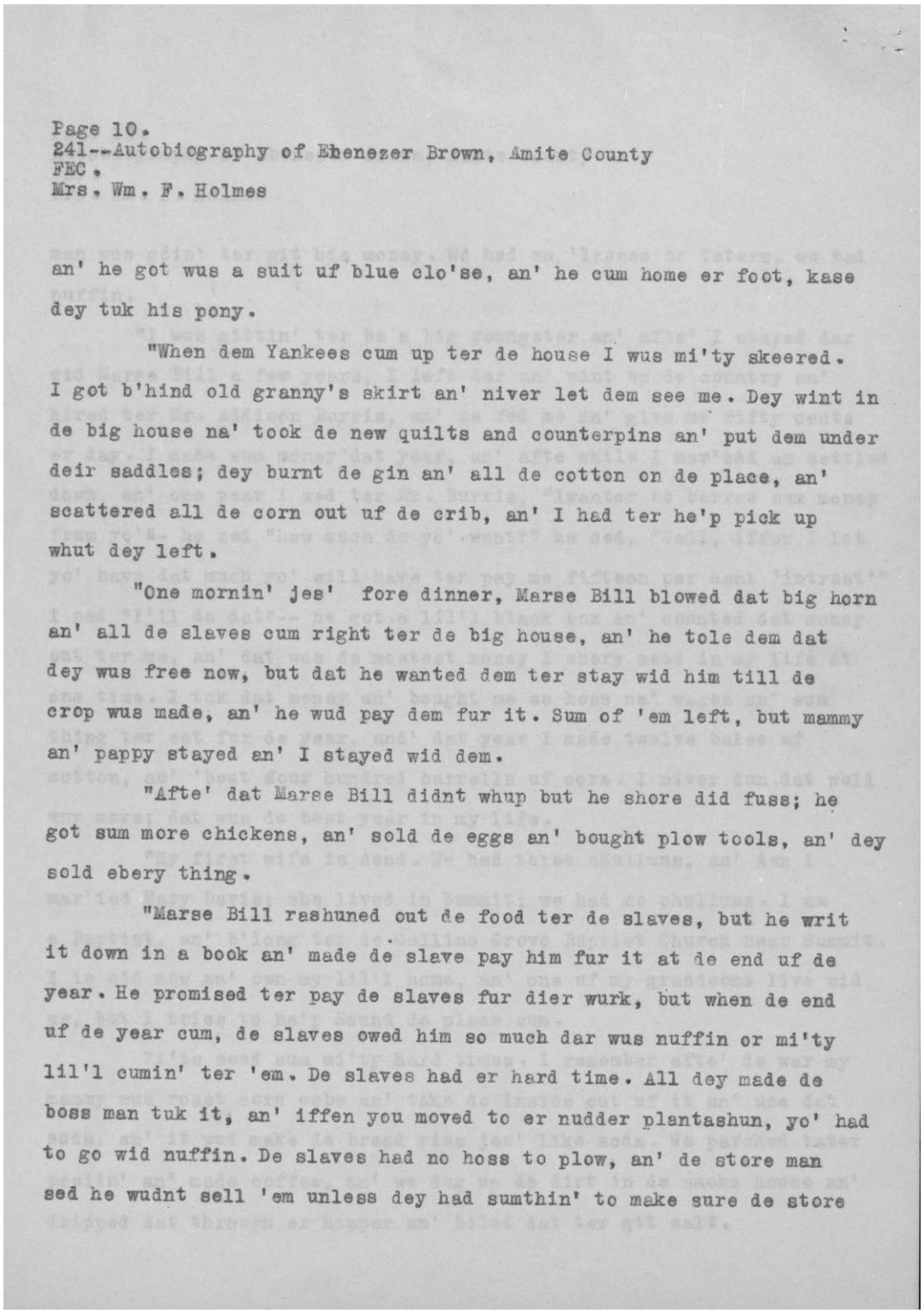

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an' he got wus a suit uf blue clo'se, an' he cum home er foot, kase dey tuk his pony.

"When dem Yankees cum up ter de house I wus mi'ty skeered. I got b'hind old granny's skirt an' niver let dem see me. Dey wint in de big house na' took de new quilts and counterpins an' put dem under deir saddles; dey burnt de gin an' all de cotton on de place, an' scattered all de corn out uf de crib, an' I had ter he'p pick up whut dey left.

"One mornin' jes' fore dinner, Marse Bill blowed dat big horn an' all de slaves cum right ter de big house, an' he tole dem dat dey wus free now, but dat he wanted dem ter stay wid him till de crop wus made, an' he wud pay dem fur it. Sum of 'em left, but mammy an' pappy stayed an' I stayed wid dem.

"Afte' dat Marse Bill didnt whup but he shore did fuss; he got sum more chickens, an' sold de eggs an' bought plow tools, an' dey sold ebery thing.

"Marse Bill rashuned out de food ter de slaves, but he writ it down in a book an' made de slave pay him fur it at de end uf de year. He promised ter pay de slaves fur dier wurk, but when de end uf de year cum, de slaves owed him so much dar wus nuffin or mi'ty lil'l cumin' ter 'em. De slaves had er hard time. All dey made de boss man tuk it, an' iffen you moved to er nudder plantashun, yo' had to go wid nuffin. De slaves had no hoss to plow, an' de store man sed he wudnt sell 'em unless dey had sumthin' to make sure de store

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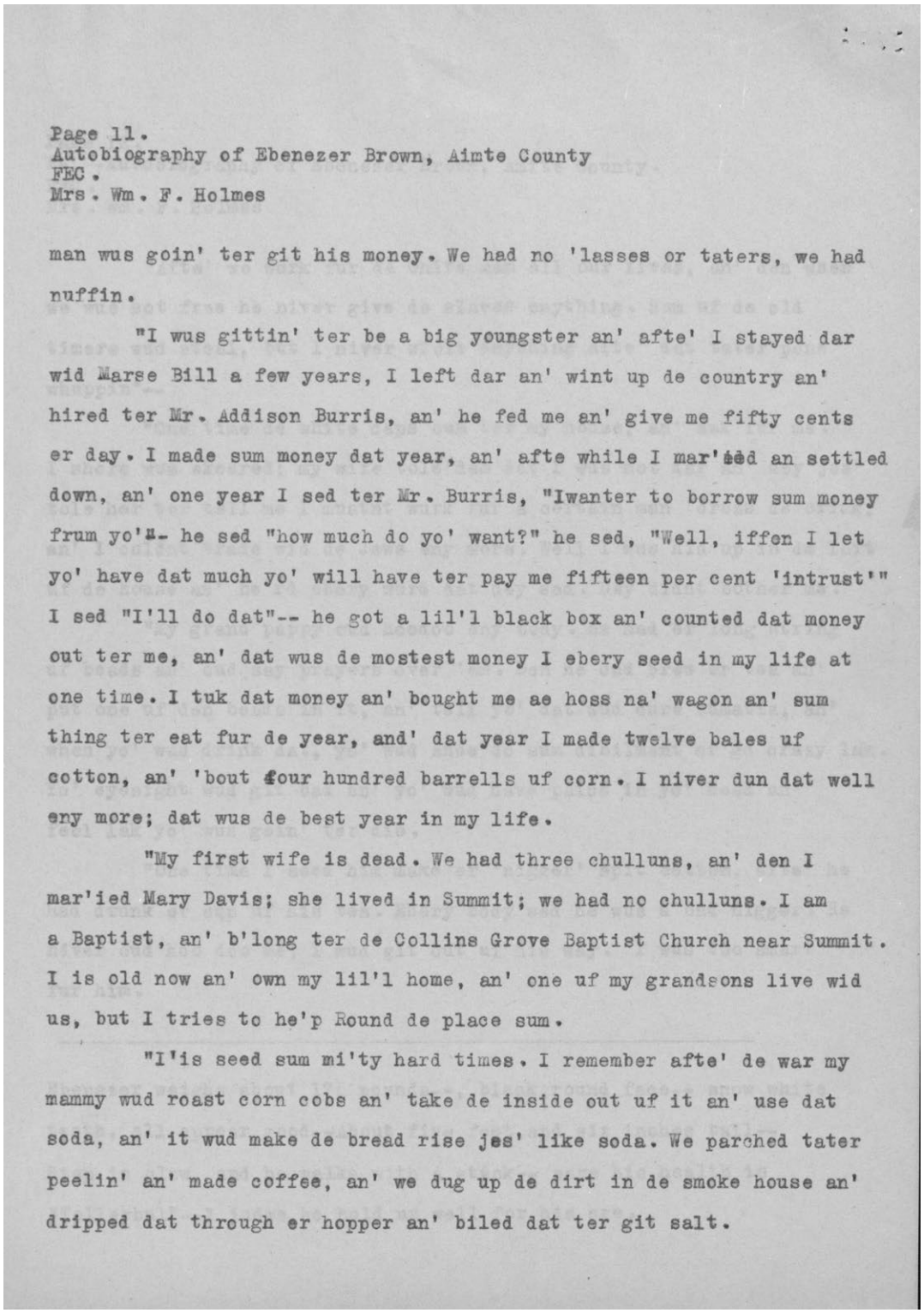

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man wus goin' ter git his money. We had no 'lasses or taters, we had nuffin.

"I wus gittin' ter be a big youngster an' afte' I stayed dar wid Marse Bill a few years, I left dar an' wint up de country an' hired ter Mr. Addison Burris, an' he fed me an' give me fifty cents er day. I made sum money dat year, an' afte while I mar'ied an settled down, an' one year I sed ter Mr. Burris, "Iwanter to borrow sum money frum yo'"- he sed "how much do yo' want?" he sed, "Well, iffen I let yo' have dat much yo' will have ter pay me fifteen per cent 'intrust'" I sed "I'll do dat"-- he got a lil'l black box an' counted dat money out ter me, an' dat wus de mostest money I ebery seed in my life at one time. I tuk dat money an' bought me ae hoss na' wagon an' sum thing ter eat fur de year, and' dat year I made twelve bales uf cotton, an' 'bout four hundred barrells uf corn. I niver dun dat well ery more; dat wus de best year in my life.

"My first wife is dead. We had three chulluns, an' den I mar'ied Mary Davis; she lived in Summit; we had no chulluns. I am a Baptist, an' b'long ter de Collins Grove Baptist Church near Summit. I is old now an' own my lil'l home, an' one uf my grandsons live wid us, but I tries to he'p Round de place sum.

"I'is seed sum mi'ty hard times. I remember afte' de war my mammy wud roast corn cobs an' take de inside out uf it an' use dat soda, an' it wud make de bread rise jes' like soda. We parched tater peelin' an' made coffee, an' we dug up de dirt in de smoke house an' dripped dat through er hopper an' biled dat ter git salt.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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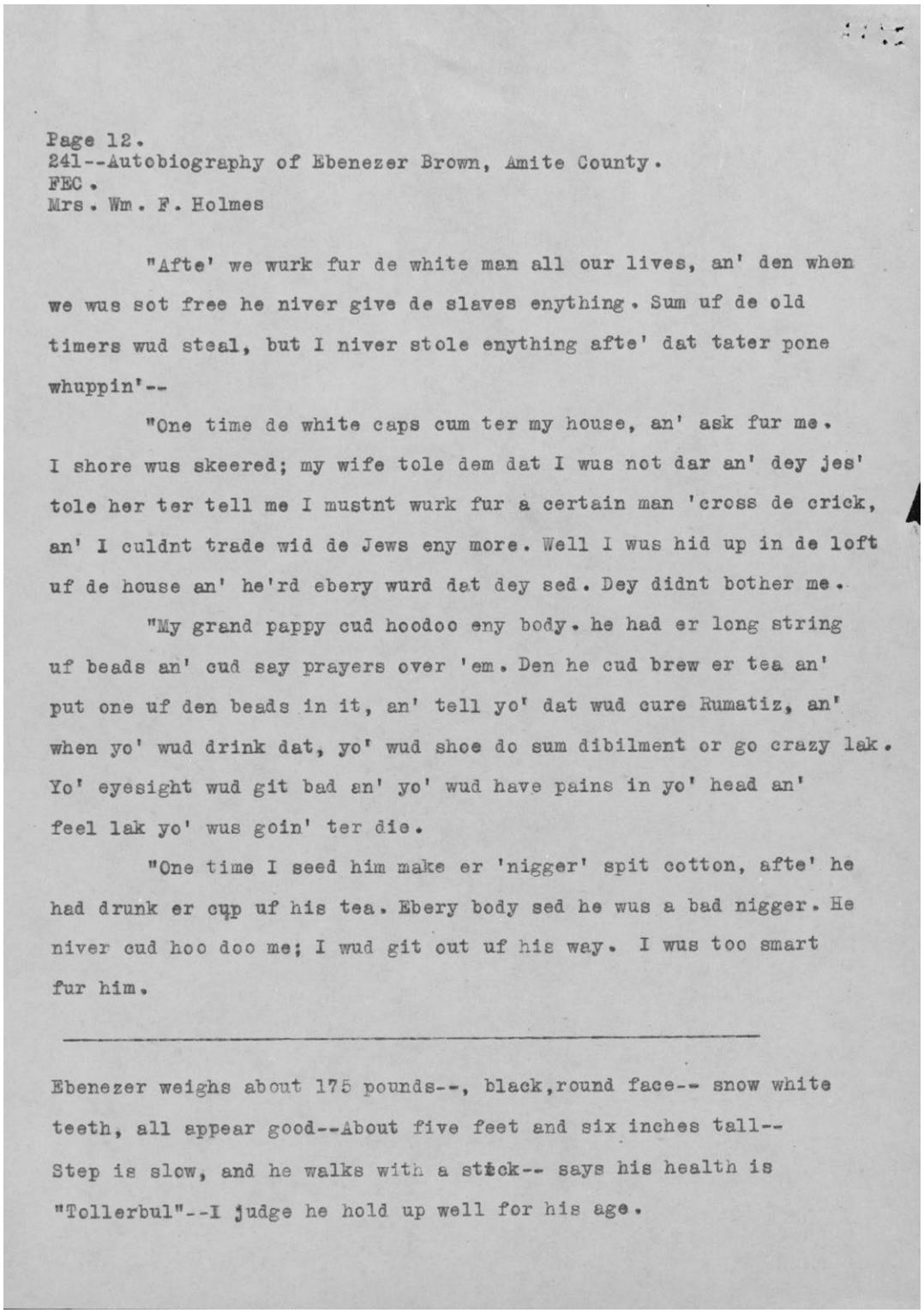

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Mrs. Wm. F. Holmes

"Afte' we wurk fur de white man all our lives, an' den when we wus sot free he niver give de slaves enything. Sum uf de old timers wud steal, but I niver stole enything afte' dat tater pone whuppin'--

"One time de white caps cum ter my house, an' ask fur me. I shore wus skeered; my wife tole dem dat I wus not dar an' dey jes' tole her ter tell me I mustnt wurk fur a certain man 'cross de crick, an' I culdnt trade wid de Jews eny more. Well I wus hid up in de loft uf de house an' he'rd ebery wurd dat dey sed. Dey didnt bother me.

"My grand pappy cud hoodoo eny body. he had er long string uf beads an' cud say prayers over 'em. Den he cud brew er tea an' put one uf den beads in it, an' tell yo' dat wud cure Rumatiz, an' when yo' wud drink dat, yo' wud shoe do sum dibilment or go crazy lak. Yo' eyesight wud git bad an' yo' wud have pains in yo' head an' feel lak yo' wus goin' ter die.

"One time I seed him make er 'nigger' spit cotton, afte' he had drunk er cup uf his tea. Ebery body sed he wus a bad nigger. He niver cud hoo doo me; I wud git out uf his way. I wus too smart fur him.

Ebenezer weighs about 175 pounds--, black,round face-- snow white teeth, all appear good--About five feet and six inches tall-- Step is slow, and he walks with a stick-- says his health is "Tollerbul"--I judge he hold up well for his age.

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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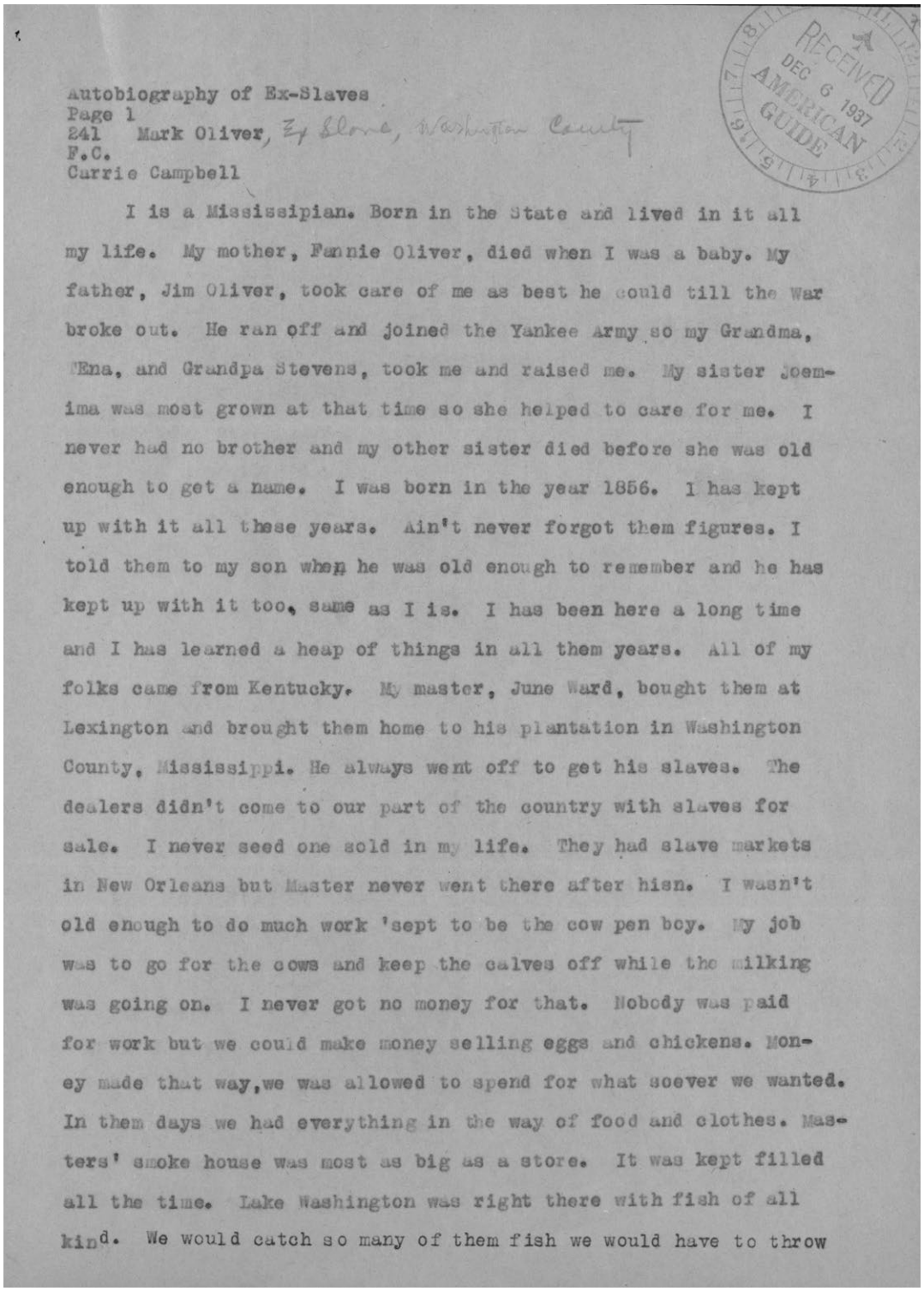

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Autobiography of Ex-Slaves
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F.C.
Carrie Campbell

I is a Mississipian. Born in the State and lived in it all my life. My mother, Fannie Oliver, died when I was a baby. My father, Jim Oliver, took care of me as best he could till the War broke out. He ran off and joined the Yankee Army so my Grandma, 'Ena, and Grandpa Stevens, took me and raised me. My sister Joemima was most grown at that time so she helped to care for me. I never had no brother and my other sister died before she was old enough to get a name. I was born in the year 1856. I has kept up with it all these years. Ain't never forgot them figures. I told them to my son when he was old enough to remember and he has kept up with it too, same as I is. I has been here a long time and I has learned a heap of things in all them years. All of my folks came from Kentucky. My master, June Ward, bought them at Lexington and brought them home to his plantation in Washington County, Mississippi. He always went off to get his slaves. The dealers didn't come to our part of the country with slaves for sale. I never seed one sold in my life. They had slave markets in New Orleans but Master never went there after hisn. I wasn't old enough to do much work 'sept to be the cow pen boy. My job was to go for the cows and keep the calves off while the milking was going on. I never got no money for that. Nobody was paid for work but we could make money selling eggs and chickens. Money made that way, we was allowed to spend for what soever we wanted. In them days we had everything in the way of food and clothes. Masters' smoke house was most as big as a store. It was kept filled all the time. Lake Washington was right there with fish of all kind. We would catch so many of them fish we would have to throw

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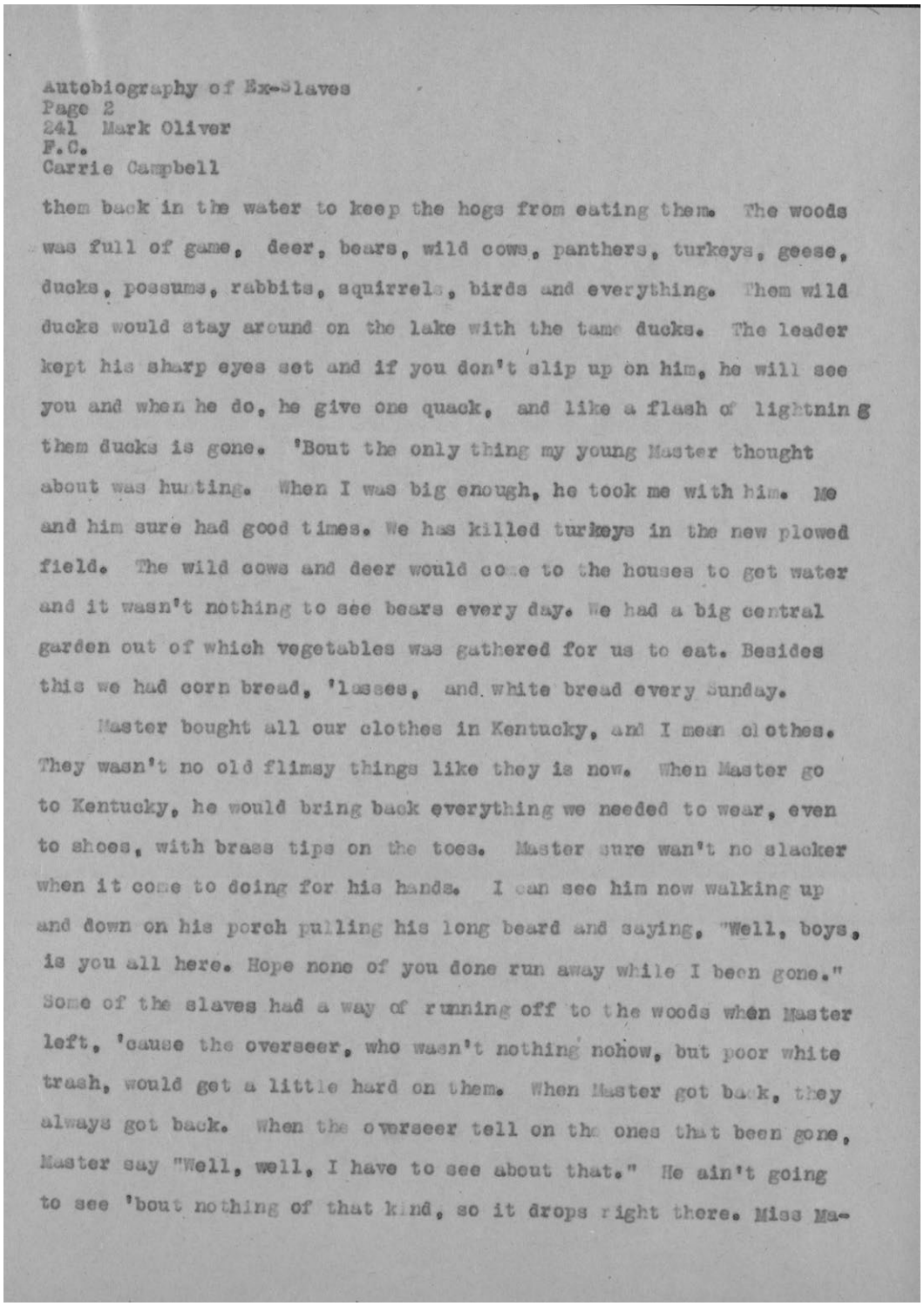

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them back in the water to keep the hogs from eating them. The woods was full of game, deer, bears, wild cows, panthers, turkeys, geese, ducks, possums, rabbits, squirrels, birds and everything. Them wild ducks would stay around on the lake with the tame ducks. The leader kept his sharp eyes set and if you don't slip up on him, he will see you and when he do, he give one quack, and like a flash of lightning them ducks is gone. 'Bout the only thing my young Master thought about was hunting. When I was big enough, he took me with him. Me and him sure had good times. We has killed turkeys in the new plowed field. The wild cows and deer would come to the houses to get water and it wasn't nothing to see bears every day. We had a big central garden out of which vegetables was gathered for us to eat. Besides this we had corn bread, 'lasses, and white bread every Sunday.

Master bought all our clothes in Kentucky, and I mean clothes. They wasn't no old flimsy things like they is now. When Master go to Kentucky, he would bring back everything we needed to wear, even to shoes, with brass tips on the toes. Master sure wan't no slacker when it come to doing for his hands. I can see him now walking up and down on his porch pulling his long beard and saying, "Well, boys, is you all here. Hope none of you done run away while I been gone." Some of the slaves had a way of running off to the woods when Master left, 'cause the overseer, who wasn't nothing nohow, but poor white trash, would get a little hard on them. When Master got back, they always got back. When the overseer tell on the ones that been gone, Master say "Well, well, I have to see about that." He ain't going to see 'bout nothing of that kind, so it drops right there. Miss Ma-

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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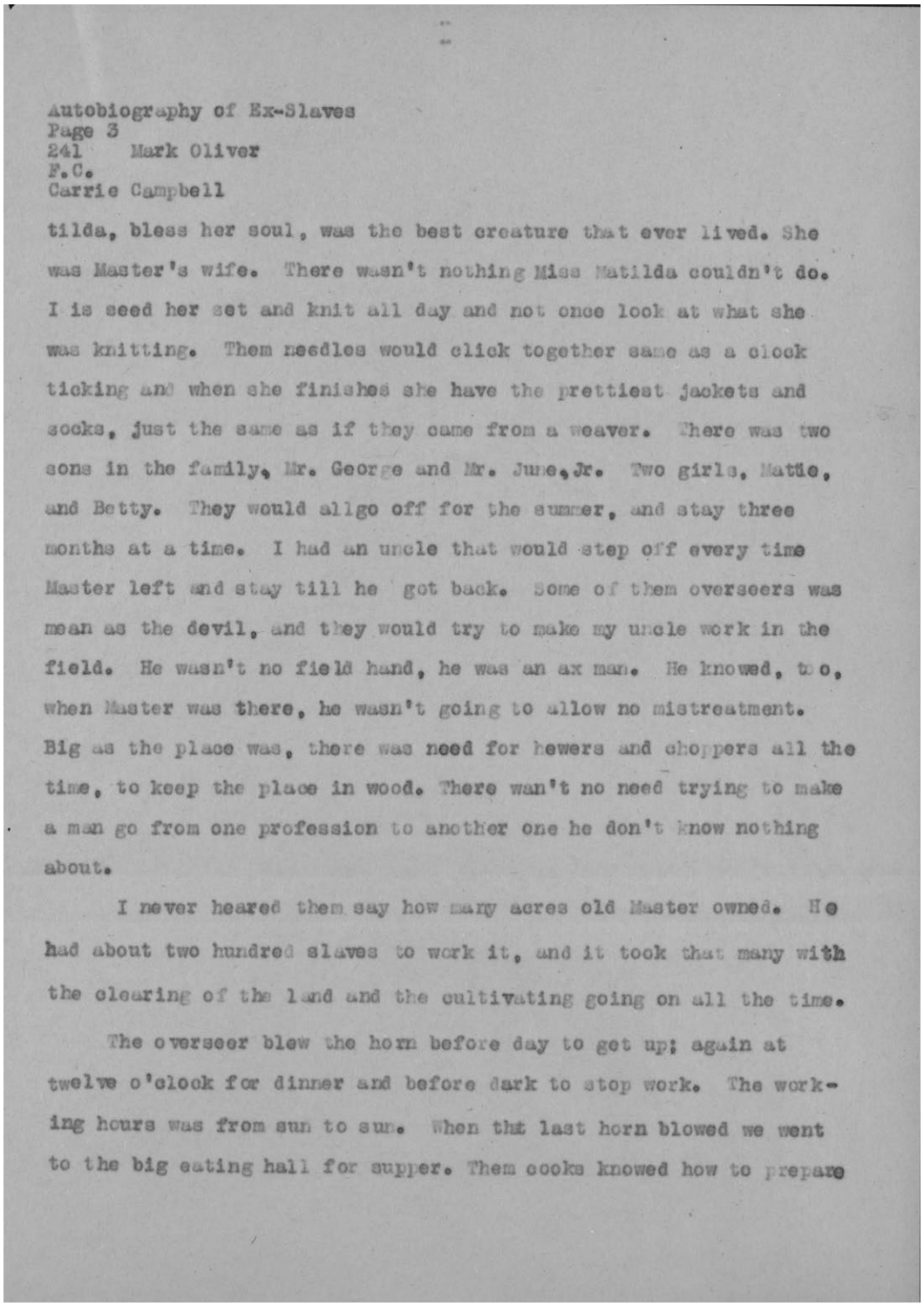

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tilda, bless her soul, was the best creature that ever lived. She was Master's wife. There wasn't nothing Miss Matilda couldn't do. I is seed her set and knit all day and not once look at what she was knitting. Them needles would click together same as a clock ticking and when she finishes she have the prettiest jackets and socks, just the same as if they came from a weaver. There was two sons in the family, Mr. George and Mr. June, Jr. Two girls, Mattie, and Betty. They would allgo off for the summer, and stay three months at a time. I had an uncle that would step off every time Master left and stay till he got back. Some of them overseers was mean as the devil, and they would try to make my uncle work in the field. He wasn't no field hand, he was an ax man. He knowed, too, when Master was there, he wasn't going to allow no mistreatment. Big as the place was, there was need for hewers and choppers all the time, to keep the place in wood. There wan't no need trying to make a man go from one profession to another one he don't know nothing about.

I never heared them say how many acres old Master owned. He had about two hundred slaves to work it, and it took that many with the clearing of the land and the cultivating going on all the time.

The overseer blew the horn before day to get up; again at twelve o'clock for dinner and before dark to stop work. The working hours was from sun to sun. When the last horn blowed we went to the big eating hall for supper. Them cooks knowed how to prepare

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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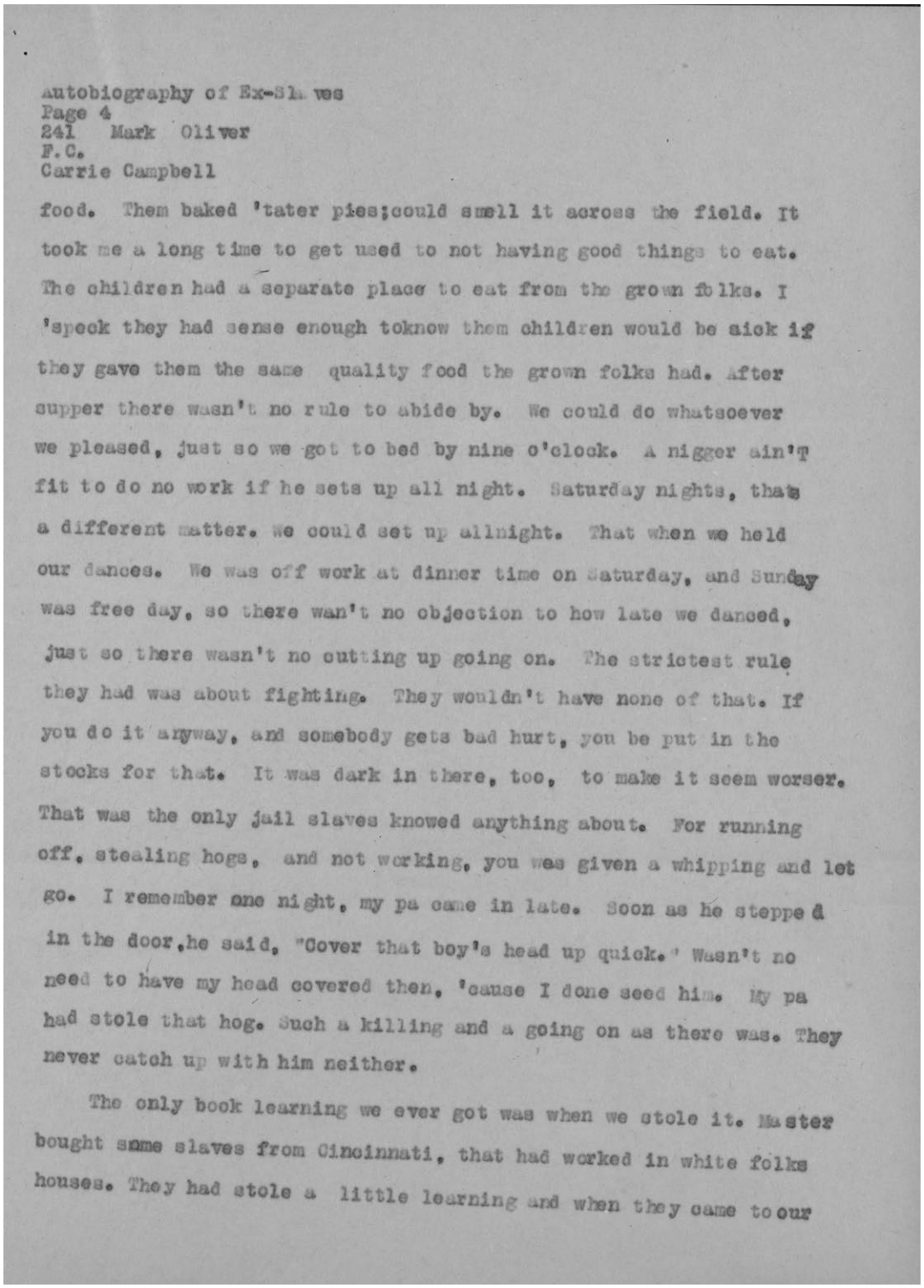

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food. Them baked 'tater pies;could smell it across the field. It took me a long time to get used to not having good things to eat. The children had a separate place to eat from the grown folks. I 'speck they had sense enough toknow them children would be sick if they gave them the same quality food the grown folks had. After supper there wasn't no rule to abide by. We could do whatsoever we pleased, just so we got to bed by nine o'clock. A nigger ain't fit to do no work if he sets up all night. Saturday nights, thats a different matter. We could set up allnight. That when we held our dances. We was off work at dinner time on Saturday, and Sunday was free day, so there wan't no objection to how late we danced, just so there wasn't no cutting up going on. The strictest rule they had was about fighting. They wouldn't have none of that. If you do it anyway, and somebody gets bad hurt, you be put in the stocks for that. It was dark in there, too, to make it seem worser. That was the only jail slaves knowed anything about. For running off, stealing hogs, and not working, you was given a whipping and let go. I remember one night, my pa came in late. Soon as he steppe d in the door,he said, "Cover that boy's head up quick." Wasn't no need to have my head covered then, 'cause I done seed him. My pa had stole that hog. Such a killing and a going on as there was. They never catch up with him neither.

The only book learning we ever got was when we stole it. Master bought some slaves from Cincinnati, that had worked in white folks houses. They had stole a little learning and when they came to our

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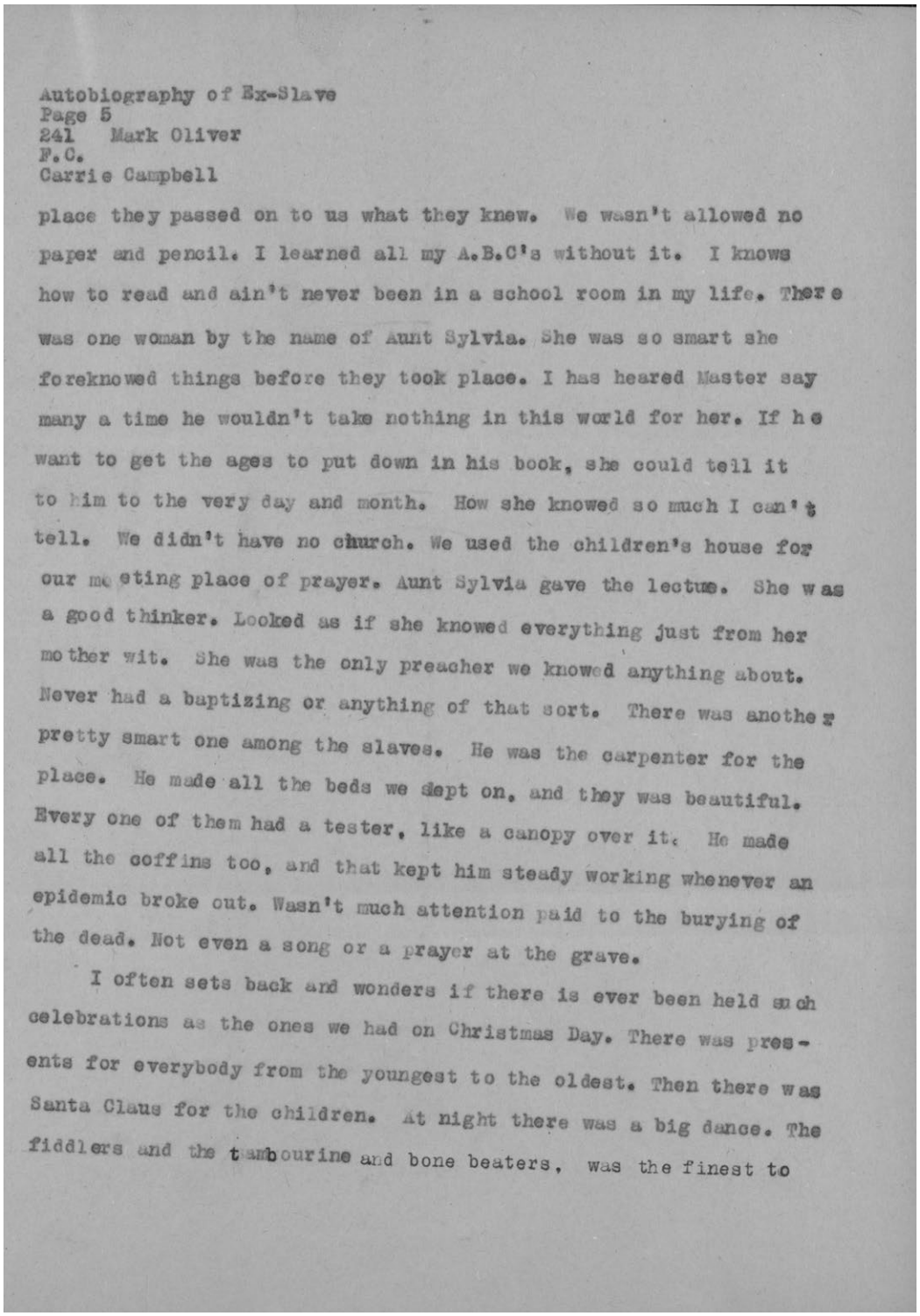

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place they passed on to us what they knew. We wasn't allowed no paper and pencil. I learned all my A.B.C's without it. I knows how to read and ain't never been in a school room in my life. There was one woman by the name of Aunt Sylvia. She was so smart she foreknowed things before they took place. I has heared Master say many a time he wouldn't take nothing in this world for her. If he want to get the ages to put down in his book, she could tell it to him to the very day and month. How she knowed so much I can't tell. We didn't have no church. We used the children's house for our meeting place of prayer. Aunt Sylvia gave the lectue. She was a good thinker. Looked as if she knowed everything just from her mother wit. She was the only preacher we knowed anything about. Never had a baptizing or anything of that sort. There was another pretty smart one among the slaves. He was the carpenter for the place. He made all the beds we slept on, and they was beautiful. Every one of them had a tester, like a canopy over it. He made all the coffins too, and that kept him steady working whenever an epidemic broke out. Wasn't much attention paid to the burying of the dead. Not even a song or a prayer at the grave.

I often sets back and wonders if there is ever been held such celebrations as the ones we had on Christmas Day. There was presents for everybody from the youngest to the oldest. Then there was Santa Claus for the children. At night there was a big dance. The fiddlers and the tambourine and bone beaters, was the finest to

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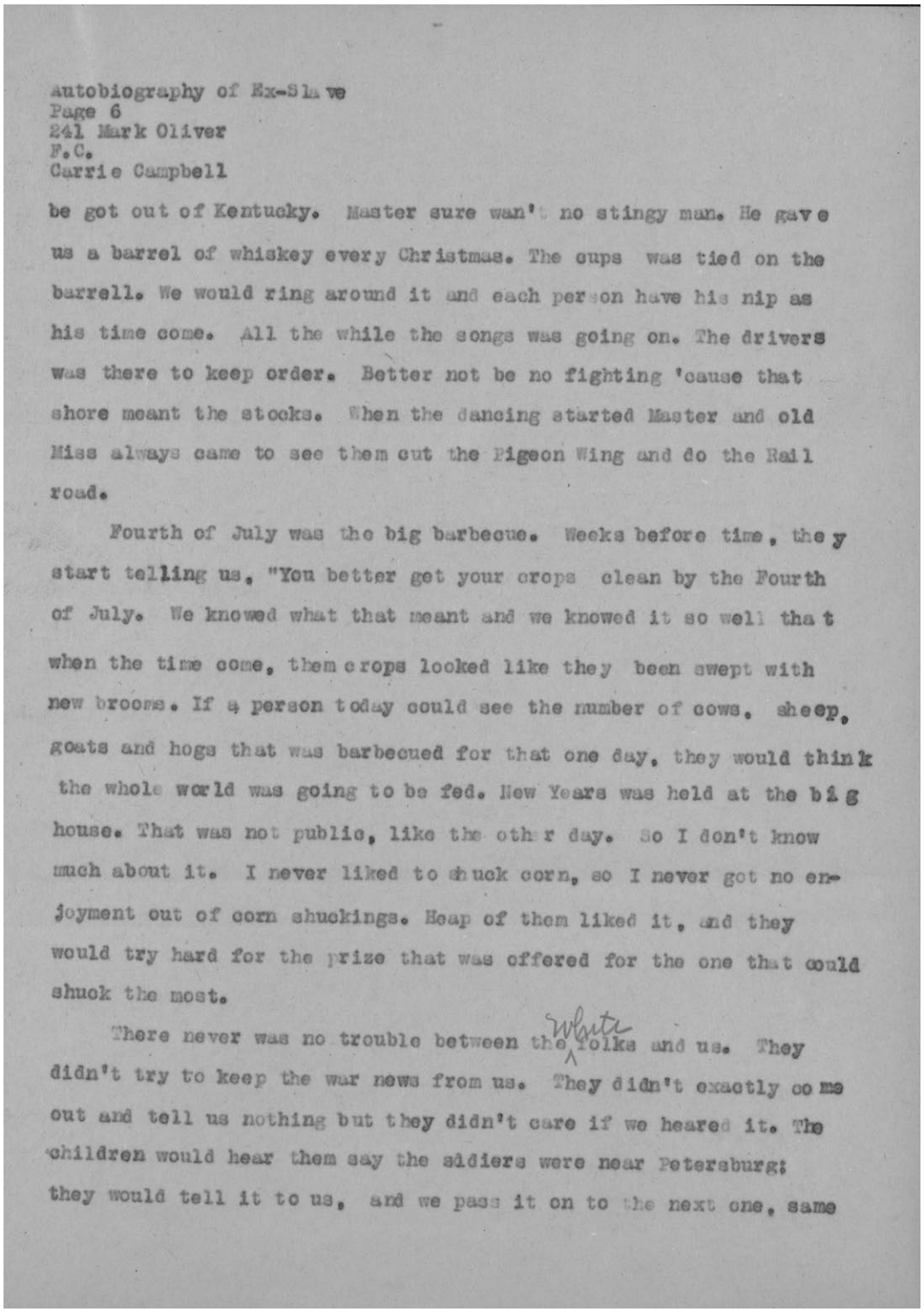

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be got out of Kentucky. Master sure wan't no stingy man. He gave us a barrel of whiskey every Christmas. The cups was tied on the barrell. We would ring around it and each person have his nip as his time come. All the while the songs was going on. The drivers was there to keep order. Better not be no fighting 'cause that shore meant the stocks. When the dancing started Master and old Miss always came to see them cut the Pigeon Wing and do the Rail road.

Fourth of July was the big barbecue. Weeks before time, they start telling us, "You better get your crops clean by the Fourth of July. We knowed what that meant and we knowed it so well that when the time come, them crops looked like they been swept with new brooms. If a person today could see the number of cows, sheep, goats and hogs that was barbecued for that one day, they would think the whole world was going to be fed. New Years was held at the big house. That was not public, like the other day. So I don't know much about it. I never liked to shuck corn, so I never got no enjoyment out of corn shuckings. Heap of them liked it, and they would try hard for the prize that was offered for the one that could shuck the most.

There never was no trouble between the white folks and us. They didn't try to keep the war news from us. They didn't exactly come out and tell us nothing but they didn't care if we heared it. The children would hear them say the sidiers were near Petersburg; they would tell it to us, and we pass it on to the next one, same

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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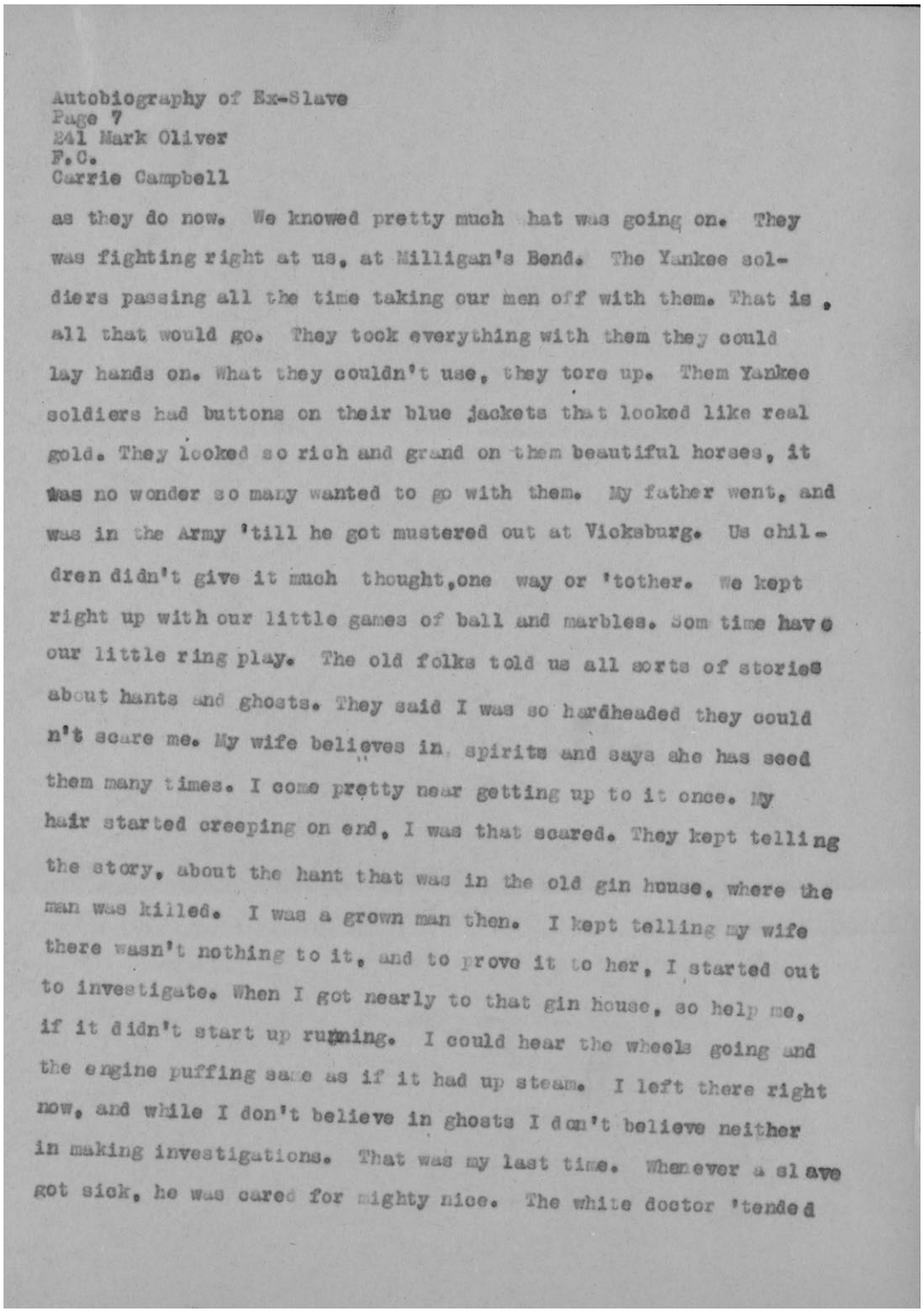

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as they do now. We knowed pretty much hat was going on. They was fighting right at us, at Milligan's Bend. The Yankee soldiers passing all the time taking our men off with them. That is, all that would go. They took everything with them they could lay hands on. What they couldn't use, they tore up. Them Yankee soldiers had buttons on their blue jackets that looked like real gold. They looked so rich and grand on them beautiful horses, it was no wonder so many wanted to go with them. My father went, and was in the Army 'till he got mustered out at Vicksburg. Us children didn't give it much thought, one way or 'tother. We kept right up with our little games of ball and marbles. Som time have our little ring play. The old folks told us all sorts of stories about hants and ghosts. They said I was so hardheaded they could n't scare me. My wife believes in spirits and says she has seed them many times. I come pretty near getting up to it once. My hair started creeping on end, I was that scared. They kept telling the story, about the hant that was in the old gin house, where the man was killed. I was a grown man then. I kept telling my wife there wasn't nothing to it, and to prove it to her, I started out to investigate. When I got nearly to that gin house, so help me, if it didn't start up running. I could hear the wheels going and the engine puffing same as if it had up steam. I left there right now, and while I don't believe in ghosts I don't believe neither in making investigations. That was my last time. Whenever a slave got sick, he was cared for mighty nice. The white doctor 'tended

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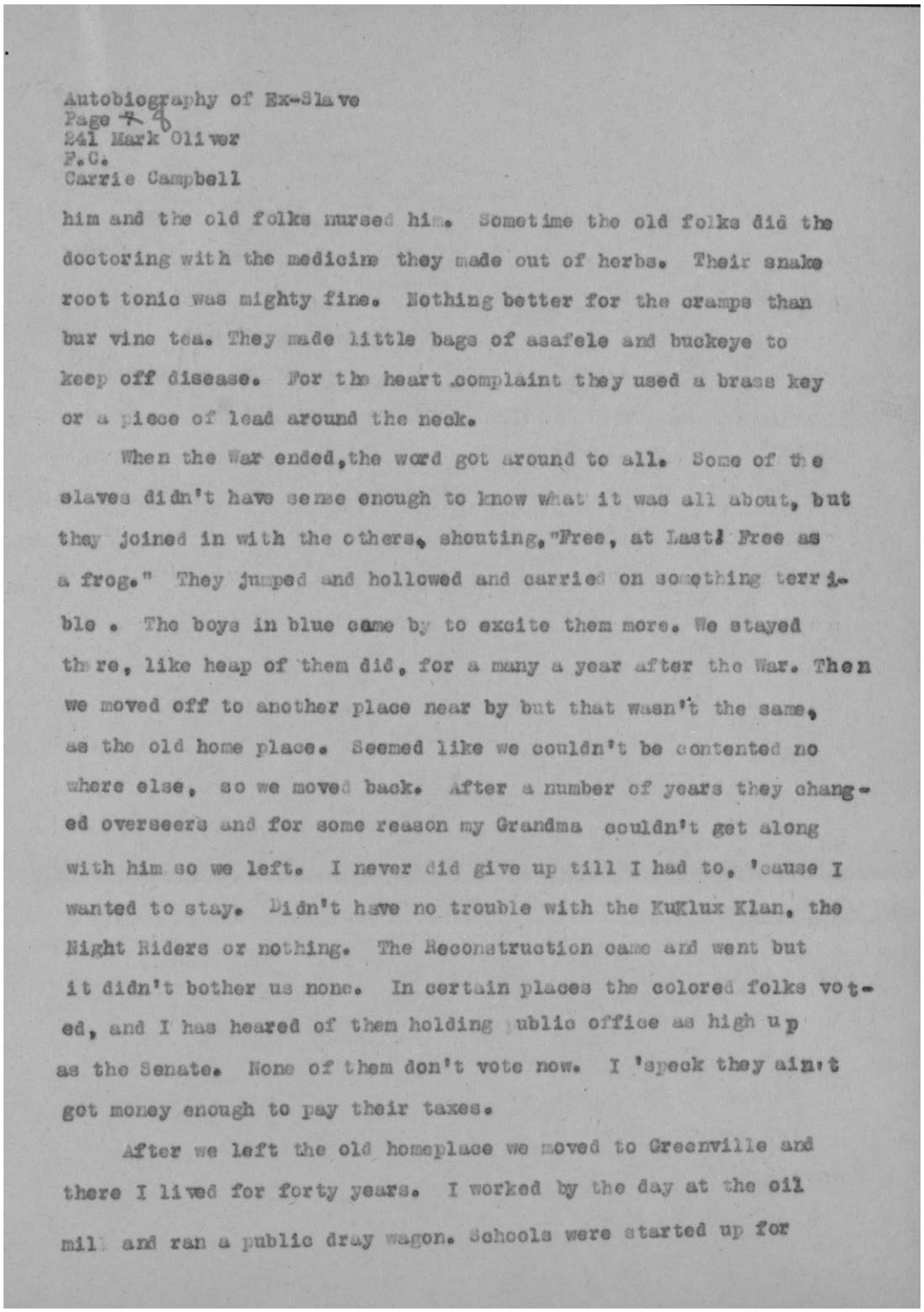

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him and the old folks nursed him. Sometime the old folks did the doctoring with the medicine they made out of herbs. Their snake root tonic was mighty fine. Nothing better for the cramps than bur vine tea. They made little bags of asafele and buckeye to keep off disease. For the heart complaint they used a brass key or a piece of lead around the neck.

When the War ended, the word got around to all. Some of the slaves didn't have sense enough to know what it was all about, but they joined in with the others, shouting, "Free, at Last! Free as a frog." They jumped and hollowed and carried on something terrible. The boys in blue came by to excite them more. We stayed there, like heap of them did, for a many a year after the War. Then we moved off to another place near by but that wasn't the same, as the old home place. Seemed like we couldn't be contented no where else, so we moved back. After a number of years they changed overseers and for some reason my Grandma couldn't get along with him so we left. I never did give up till I had to, 'cause I wanted to stay. Didn't have no trouble with the KuKlux Klan, the Night Riders or nothing. The Reconstruction came and went but it didn't bother us none. In certain places the colored folks voted, and I has heared of them holding public office as high up as the Senate. None of them don't vote now. I 'speck they ain't got money enough to pay their taxes.

After we left the old homeplace we moved to Greenville and there I lived for forty years. I worked by the day at the oil mill and ran a public dray wagon. Schools were started up for

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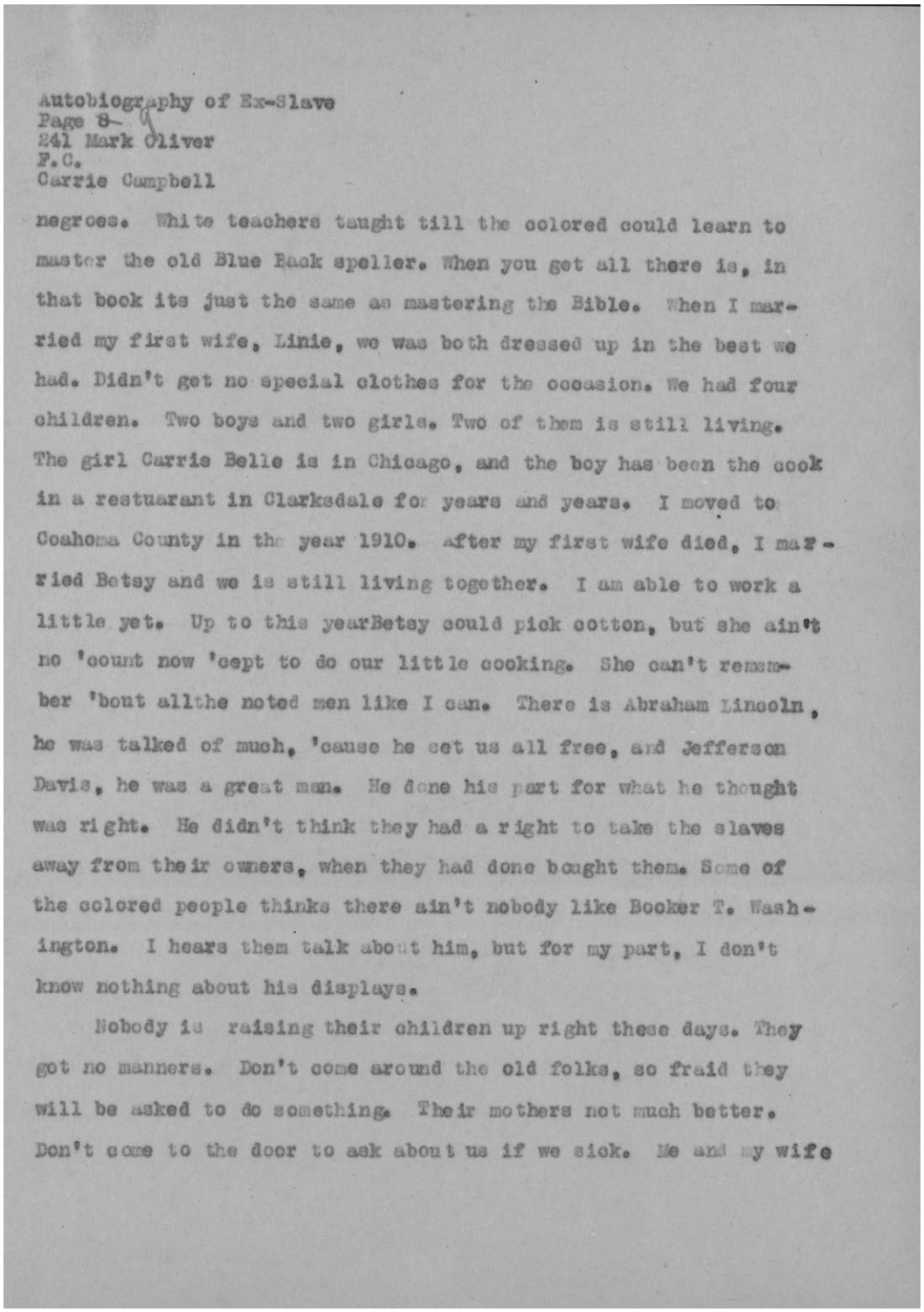

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negroes. White teachers taught till the colored could learn to master the old Blue Back speller. When you get all there is, in that book its just the same as mastering the Bible. When I married my first wife, Linie, we was both dressed up in the best we had. Didn't get no special clothes for the occasion. We had four children. Two boys and two girls. Two of them is still living. The girl Carrie Belle is in Chicago, and the boy has been the cook in a restuarant in Clarksdale for years and years. I moved to Coahoma County in the year 1910. after my first wife died, I married Betsy and we is still living together. I am able to work a little yet. Up to this yearBetsy could pick cotton, but she ain't no 'count now 'cept to do our little cooking. She can't remember 'bout allthe noted men like I can. There is Abraham Lincoln, he was talked of much, 'cause he set us all free, and Jefferson Davis, he was a great man. He done his part for what he thought was right. He didn't think they had a right to take the slaves away from their owners, when they had done bought them. Some of the colored people thinks there ain't nobody like Booker T. Washington. I hears them talk about him, but for my part, I don't know nothing about his displays.

Nobody is raising their children up right these days. They got no manners. Don't come around the old folks, so fraid they will be asked to do something. Their mothers not much better. Don't come to the door to ask about us if we sick. Me and my wife

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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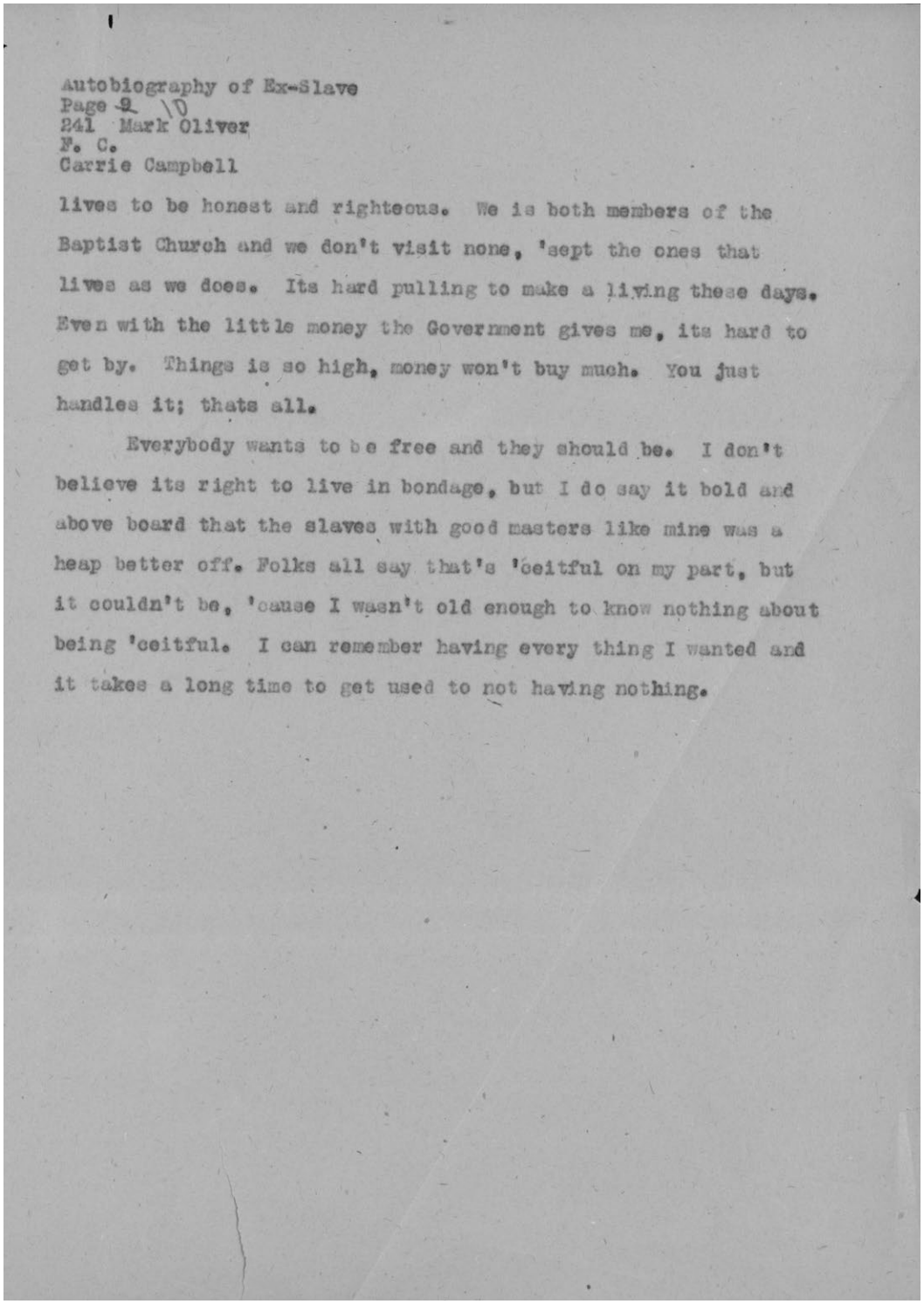

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lives to be honest and righteous. We is both members of the Baptist Church and we don't visit none, 'sept the ones that lives as we does. Its hard pulling to make a living these days. Even with the little money the Government gives me, its hard to get by. Things is so high, money won't buy much. You just handles it; thats all.

Everybody wants to be free and they should be. I don't believe its right to live in bondage, but I do say it bold and above board that the slaves with good masters like mine was a heap better off. Folks all say that's 'ceitful on my part, but it couldn't be, 'cause I wasn't old enough to know nothing about being 'ceitful. I can remember having every thing I wanted and it takes a long time to get used to not having nothing.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
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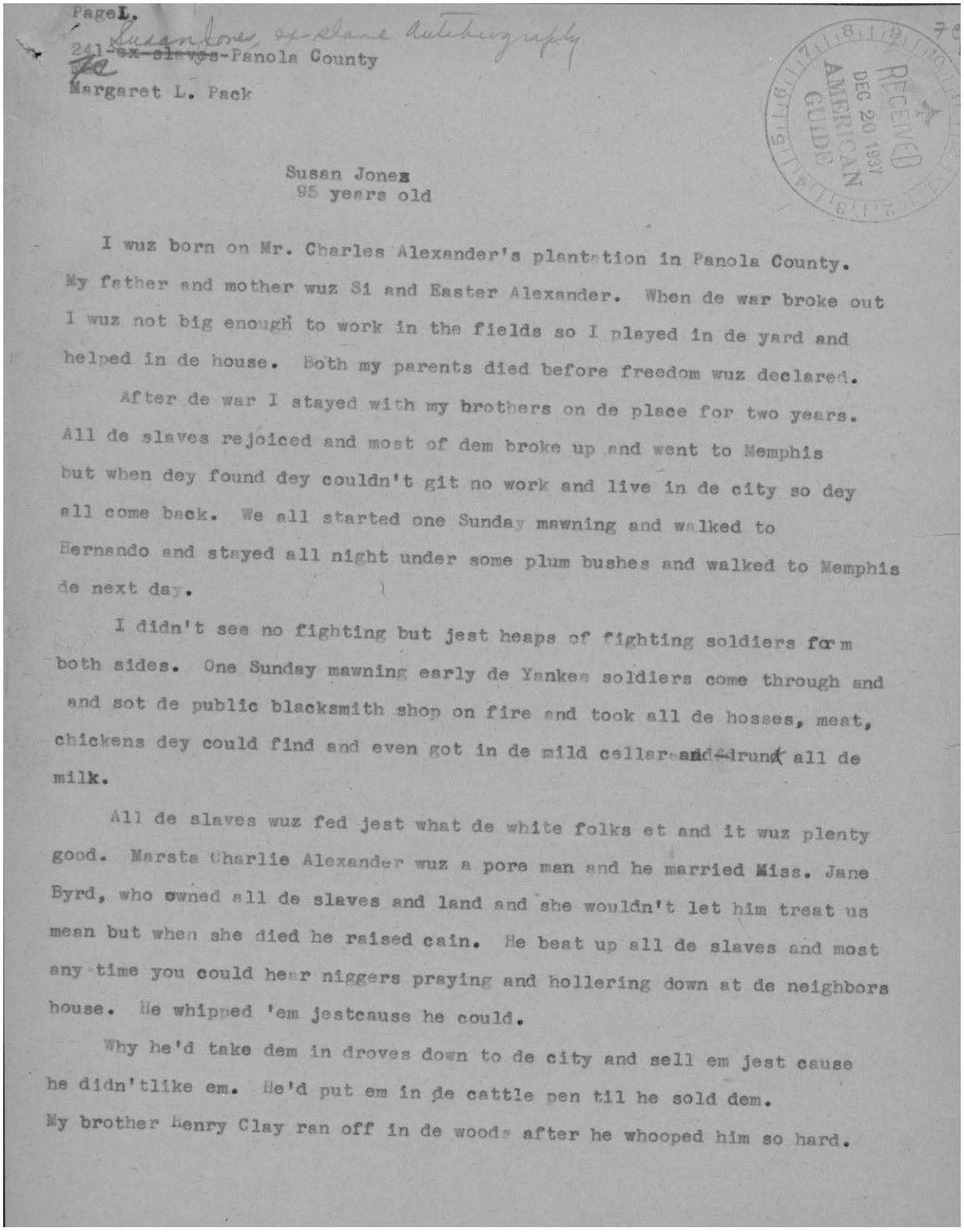

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Susan Jones of Alabama Autobiography
FSC
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Susan Jones
95 years old

I wuz born on Mr. Charles Alexander's plantation in Panola County. My father and mother wuz Si and Easter Alexander. When de war broke out I wuz not big enough to work in the fields so I played in de yard and helped in de house. Both my parents died before freedom wuz declared.

After de war I stayed with my brothers on de place for two years. All de slaves rejoiced and most of dem broke up and went to Memphis but when dey found dey couldn't git no work and live in de city so dey all come back. We all started one Sunday mawning and walked to Hernando and stayed all night under some plum bushes and walked to Memphis de next day.

I didn't see no fighting but jest heaps of fighting soldiers form both sides. One Sunday mawning early de Yankee soldiers come through and and sot de public blacksmith shop on fire and took all de hosses, meat, chickens dey could find and even got in de mild cellar and drunk all de milk.

All de slaves wuz fed jest what de white folks et and it wuz plenty good. Marsta Charlie Alexander wuz a pore man and he married Miss. Jane Byrd, who owned all de slaves and land and she wouldn't let him treat us mean but when she died he raised cain. He beat up all de slaves and most any time you could hear niggers praying and hollering down at de neighbors house. He whipped 'em jestcause he could.

Why he'd take dem in droves down to de city and sell em jest cause he didn'tlike em. He'd put em in de cattle pen til he sold dem. My brother Henry Clay ran off in de woods after he whooped him so hard.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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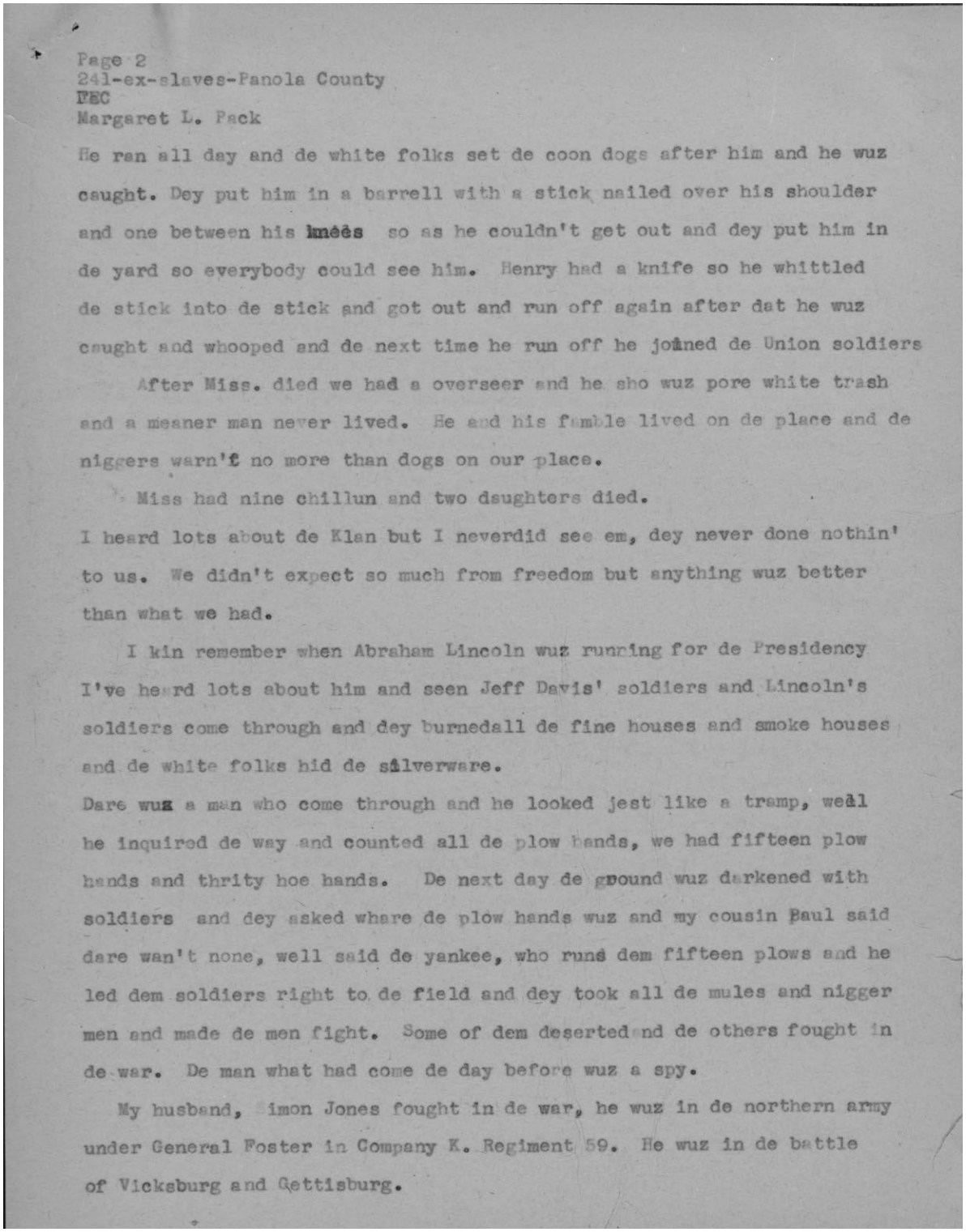

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He ran all day and de white folks set de coon dogs after him and he wuz caught. Dey put him in a barrell with a stick nailed over his shoulder and one between his knees so as he couldn't get out and dey put him in de yard so everybody could see him. Henry had a knife so he whittled de stick into de stick and got out and run off again after dat he wuz caught and whooped and de next time he run off he joined de Union soldiers

After Miss. died we had a overseer and he sho wuz pore white trash and a meaner man never lived. He and his fumble lived on de place and de niggers warn't no more than dogs on our place.

Miss had nine chillun and two dsughters died.

I heard lots about de Klan but I neverdid see em, dey never done nothin' to us. We didn't expect so much from freedom but anything wuz better than what we had.

I kin remember when Abraham Lincoln wuz running for de Presidency I've heard lots about him and seen Jeff Davis' soldiers and Lincoln's soldiers come through and dey burnedall de fine houses and smoke houses and de white folks hid de silverware.

Dare wuz a man who come through and he looked jest like a tramp, well he inquired de way and counted all de plow hands, we had fifteen plow hands and thrity hoe hands. De next day de ground wuz darkened with soldiers and dey asked whare de plow hands wuz and my cousin Paul said dare wan't none, well said de yankee, who runs dem fifteen plows and he led dem soldiers right to de field and dey took all de mules and nigger men and made de men fight. Some of dem deserted and de others fought in de war. De man what had come de day before wuz a spy.

My husband, Simon Jones fought in de war, he wuz in de northern army under General Foster in Company K. Regiment 59. He wuz in de battle of Vicksburg and Gettisburg.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT (CONT.)

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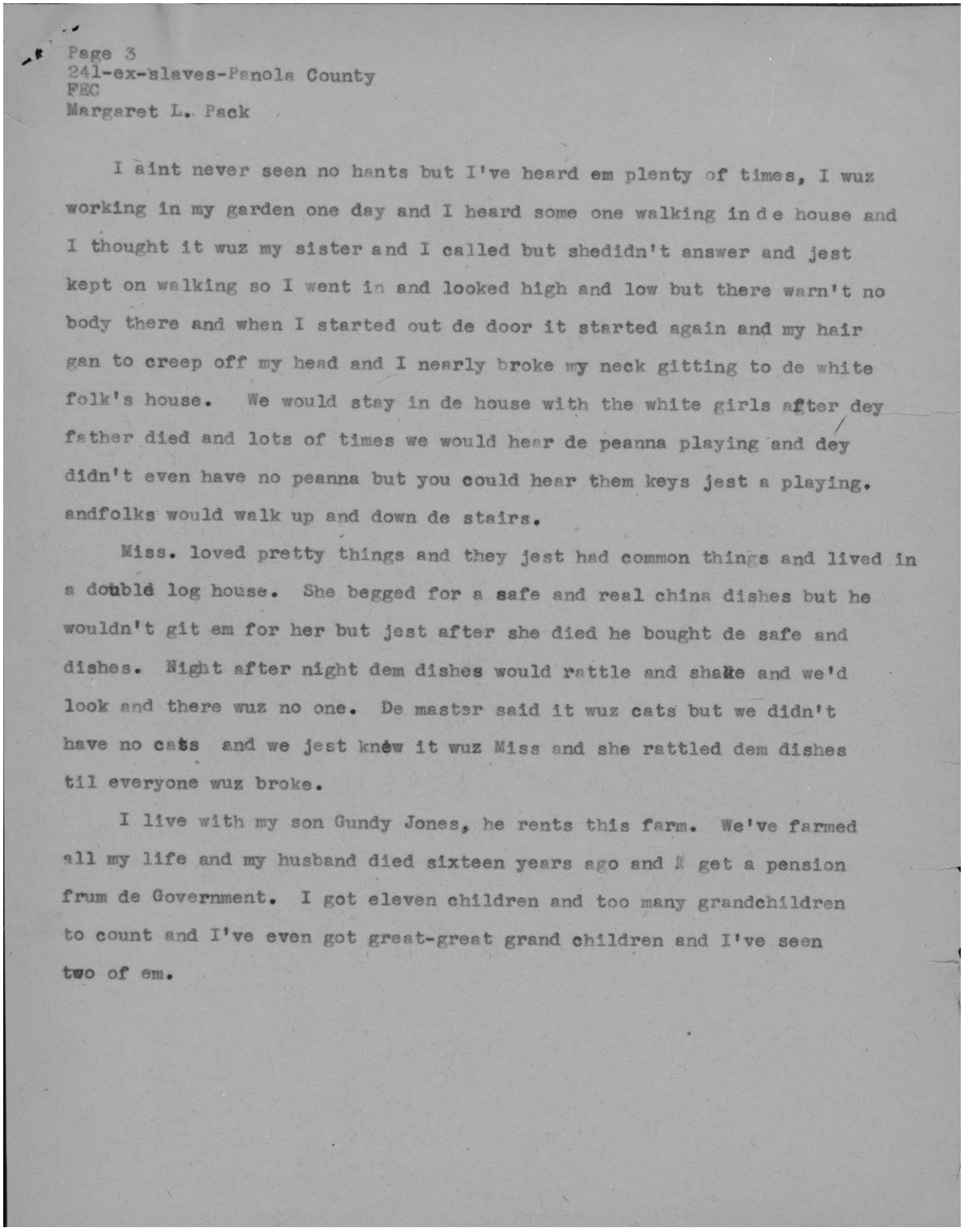

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Margaret L. Pack

I aint never seen no hants but I've heard em plenty of times, I wuz working in my garden one day and I heard some one walking in de house and I thought it wuz my sister and I called but shedidn't answer and jest kept on walking so I went in and looked high and low but there warn't no body there and when I started out de door it started again and my hair gan to creep off my head and I nearly broke my neck gitting to de white folk's house. We would stay in de house with the white girls after dey father died and lots of times we would hear de peanna playing and dey didn't even have no peanna but you could hear them keys jest a playing. andfolks would walk up and down de stairs.

Miss. loved pretty things and they jest had common things and lived in a doubld log house. She begged for a safe and real china dishes but he wouldn't git em for her but jest after she died he bought de safe and dishes. Night after night dem dishes would rattle and shake and we'd look and there wuz no one. De master said it wuz cats but we didn't have no cats and we jest knew it wuz Miss and she rattled dem dishes til everyone wuz broke.

I live with my son Gundy Jones, he rents this farm. We've farmed all my life and my husband died sixteen years ago and I get a pension frum de Government. I got eleven children and too many grandchildren to count and I've even got great-great grand children and I've seen two of em.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION

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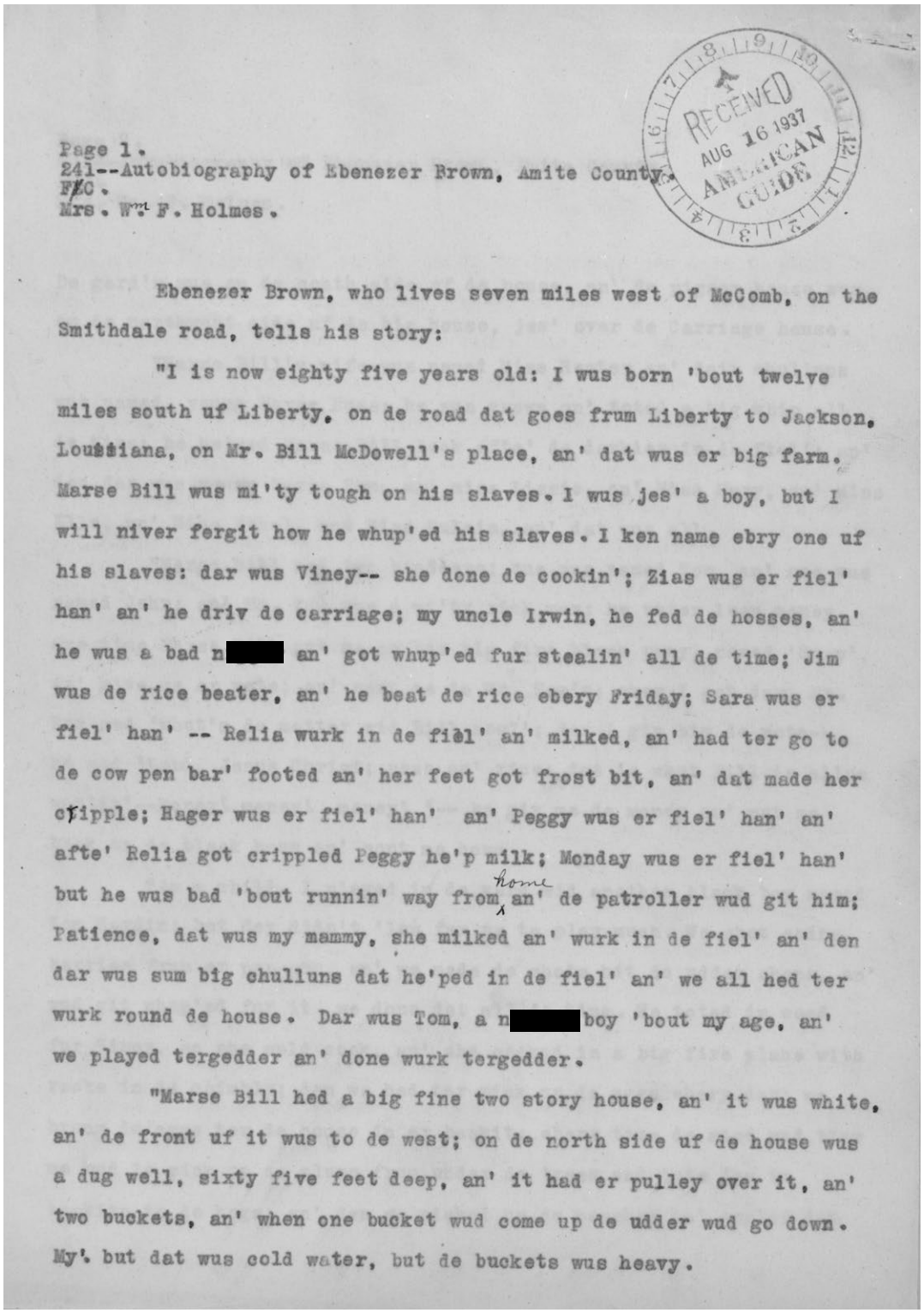

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Page 1.
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Ebenezer Brown, who lives seven miles west of McComb, on the Smithdale road, tells his story:

"I is now eighty five years old: I wus born 'bout twelve miles south uf Liberty, on de road dat goes frum Liberty to Jackson, Louisiana, on Mr. Bill McDowell's place, an' dat wus er big farm. Marse Bill wus mi'ty tough on his slaves. I wus jes' a boy, but I will niver fergit how he whup'ed his slaves. I ken name ebry one uf his slaves: dar wus Viney-- she done de cookin'; Zias wus er fiel' han' an' he driv de carriage; my uncle Irwin, he fed de hosses, an' he wus a bad n[redacted] an' got whup'ed fur stealin' all de time; Jim wus de rice beater, an' he beat de rice ebery Friday; Sara wus er fiel' han' -- Relia wurk in de fiel' an' milked, an' had ter go to de cow pen bar' footed an' her feet got frost bit, an' dat made her cripple; Hager wus er fiel' han' an' Peggy wus er fiel' han' an' afte' Relia got crippled Peggy he'p milk; Monday wus er fiel' han' but he wus bad 'bout runnin' way from home an' de patroller wud git him; Patience, dat wus my mammy, she milked an' wurk in de fiel' an' den dar wus sum big chulluns dat he'ped in de fiel' an' we all hed ter wurk round de house. Dar wus Tom, a n[redacted] boy 'bout my age, an' we played tergedder an' done wurk tergedder.

"Marse Bill hed a big fine two story house, an' it wus white, an' de front uf it wus to de west; on de north side uf de house wus a dug well, sixty five feet deep, an' it had er pulley over it, an' two buckets, an' when one bucket wud come up de udder wud go down. My' but dat wus cold water, but de buckets wus heavy.

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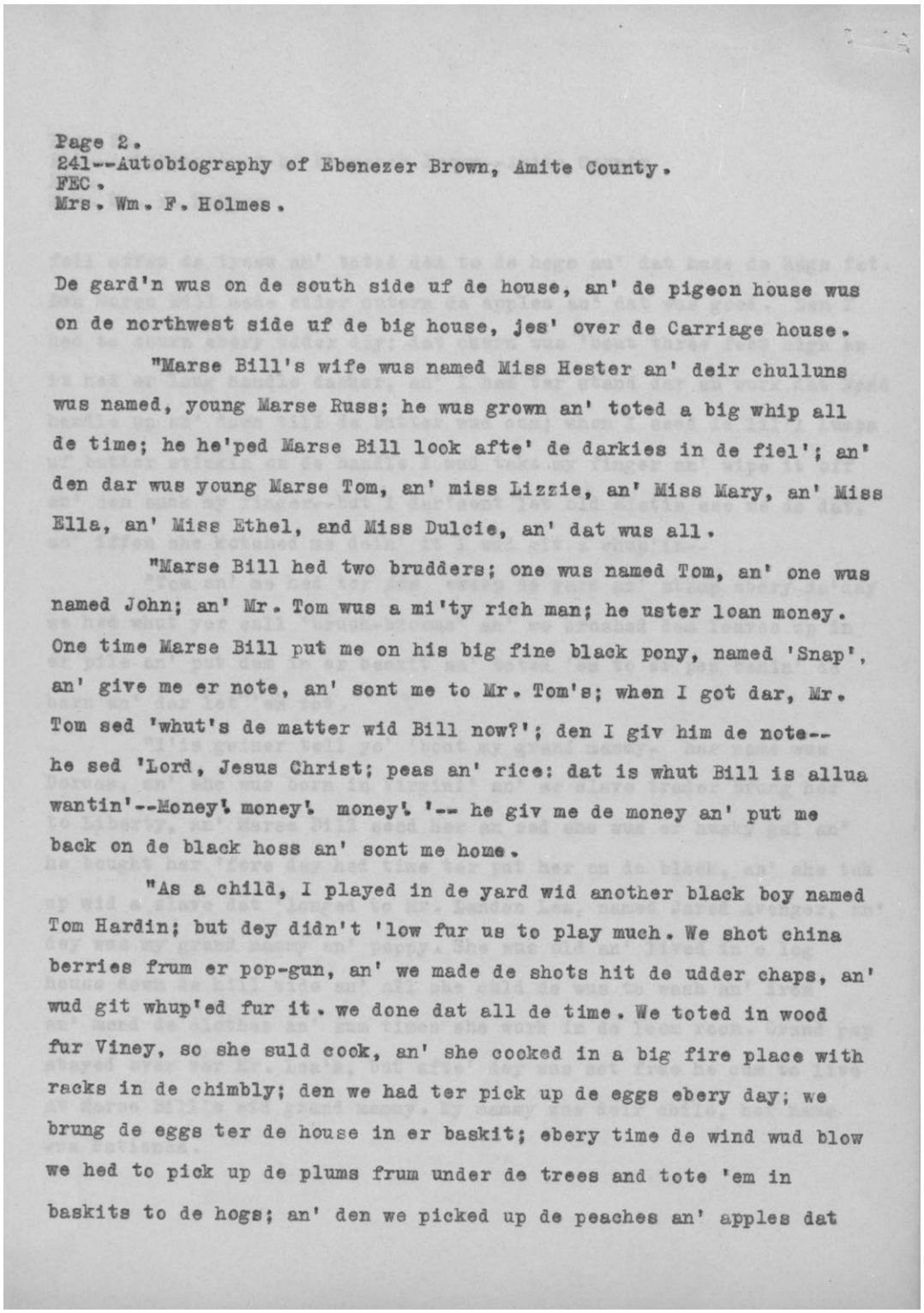

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De gard'n wus on de south side uf de house, an' de pigeon house wus on de northwest side uf de big house, jes' over de Carriage house.

"Marse Bill's wife wus named Miss Hester an' deir chulluns wus named, young Marse Russ; he wus grown an' toted a big whip all de time; he he'ped Marse Bill look afte' de darkies in de fiel'; an' den dar wus young Marse Tom, an' miss Lizzie, an' Miss Mary, an' Miss Ella, an' Miss Ethel, and Miss Dulcie, an' dat wus all.

"Marse Bill hed two brudders; one wus named Tom, an' one wus named John; an' Mr. Tom wus a mi'ty rich man; he uster loan money. One time Marse Bill put me on his big fine black pony, named 'Snap', an' give me er note, an' sont me to Mr. Tom's; when I got dar, Mr. Tom sed 'whut's de matter wid Bill now?'; den I giv him de note-- he sed 'Lord, Jesus Christ; peas an' rice: dat is whut Bill is allua wantin'--Money' money' money' '-- he giv me de money an' put me back on de black hoss an' sont me home.

"As a child, I played in de yard wid another black boy named Tom Hardin; but dey didn't 'low fur us to play much. We shot china berries frum er pop-gun, an' we made de shots hit de udder chaps, an' wud git whup'ed fur it. we done dat all de time. We toted in wood fur Viney, so she suld cook, an' she cooked in a big fire place with racks in de chimbly; den we had ter pick up de eggs ebery day; we brung de eggs ter de house in er baskit; ebery time de wind wud blow we hed to pick up de plums frum under de trees and tote 'em in baskits to de hogs; an' den we picked up de peaches an' apples dat

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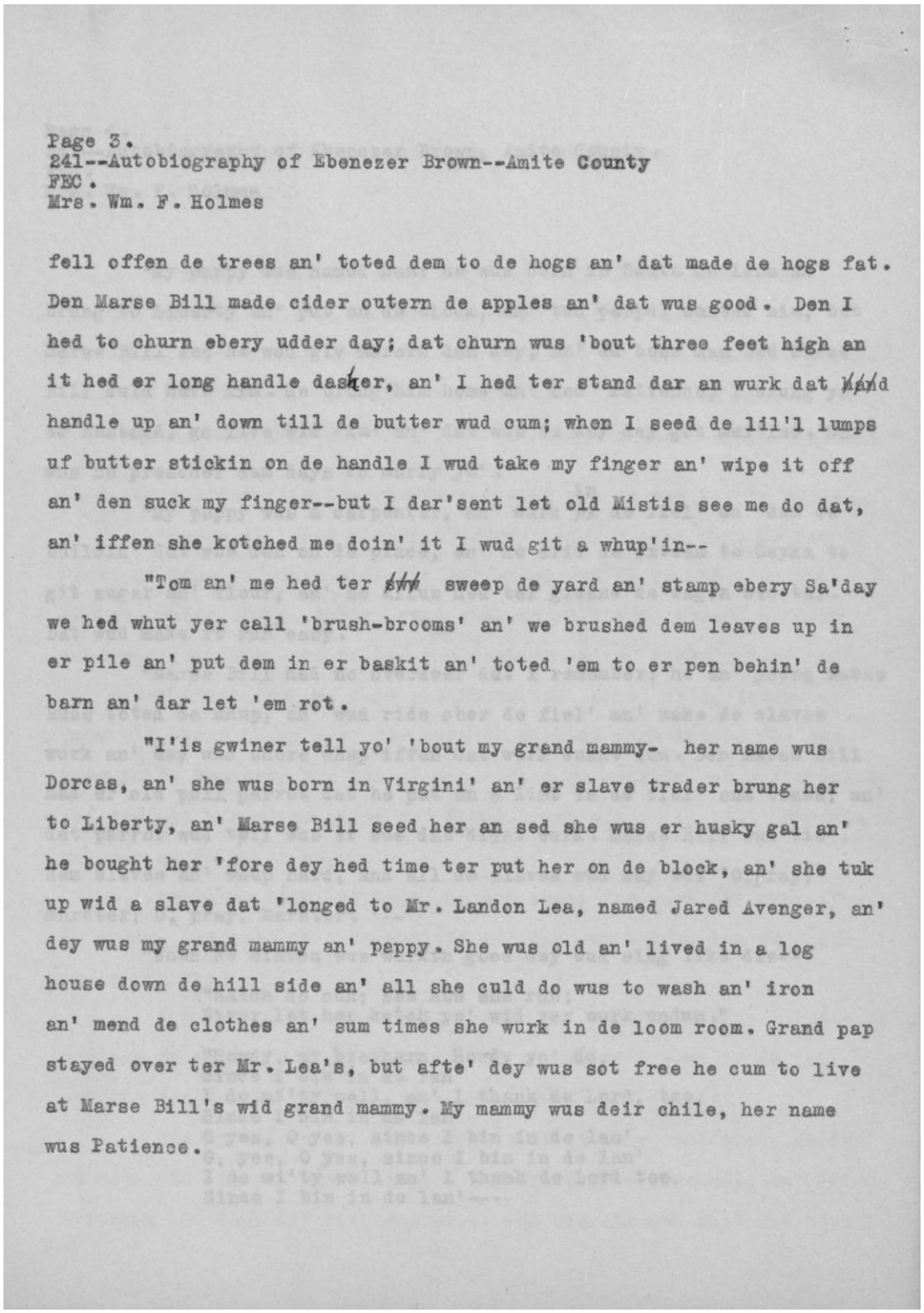

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fell offen de trees an' toted dem to de hogs an' dat made de hogs fat. Den Marse Bill made cider outern de apples an' dat wus good. Den I hed to churn ebery udder day; dat churn wus 'bout three feet high an it hed er long handle dasher, an' I hed ter stand dar an wurk dat ~~hand~~ handle up an' down till de butter wud cum; when I seed de lil'l lumps uf butter stickin on de handle I wud take my finger an' wipe it off an' den suck my finger--but I dar'sent let old Mistis see me do dat, an' iffen she kotched me doin' it I wud git a whup'in--

"Tom an' me hed ter ~~swp~~ sweep de yard an' stamp ebery Sa'day we hed whut yer call 'brush-brooms' an' we brushed dem leaves up in er pile an' put dem in er baskit an' toted 'em to er pen behin' de barn an' dar let 'em rot.

"I'is gwiner tell yo' 'bout my grand mammy- her name wus Dorcas, an' she wus born in Virgini' an' er slave trader brung her to Liberty, an' Marse Bill seed her an sed she wus er husky gal an' he bought her 'fore dey hed time ter put her on de block, an' she tuk up wid a slave dat 'longed to Mr. Landon Lea, named Jared Avenger, an' dey wus my grand mammy an' peppy. She wus old an' lived in a log house down de hill side an' all she culd do wus to wash an' iron an' mend de clothes an' sum times she wurk in de loom room. Grand pap stayed over ter Mr. Lea's, but afte' dey wus sot free he cum to live at Marse Bill's wid grand mammy. My mammy wus deir chile, her name wus Patience.

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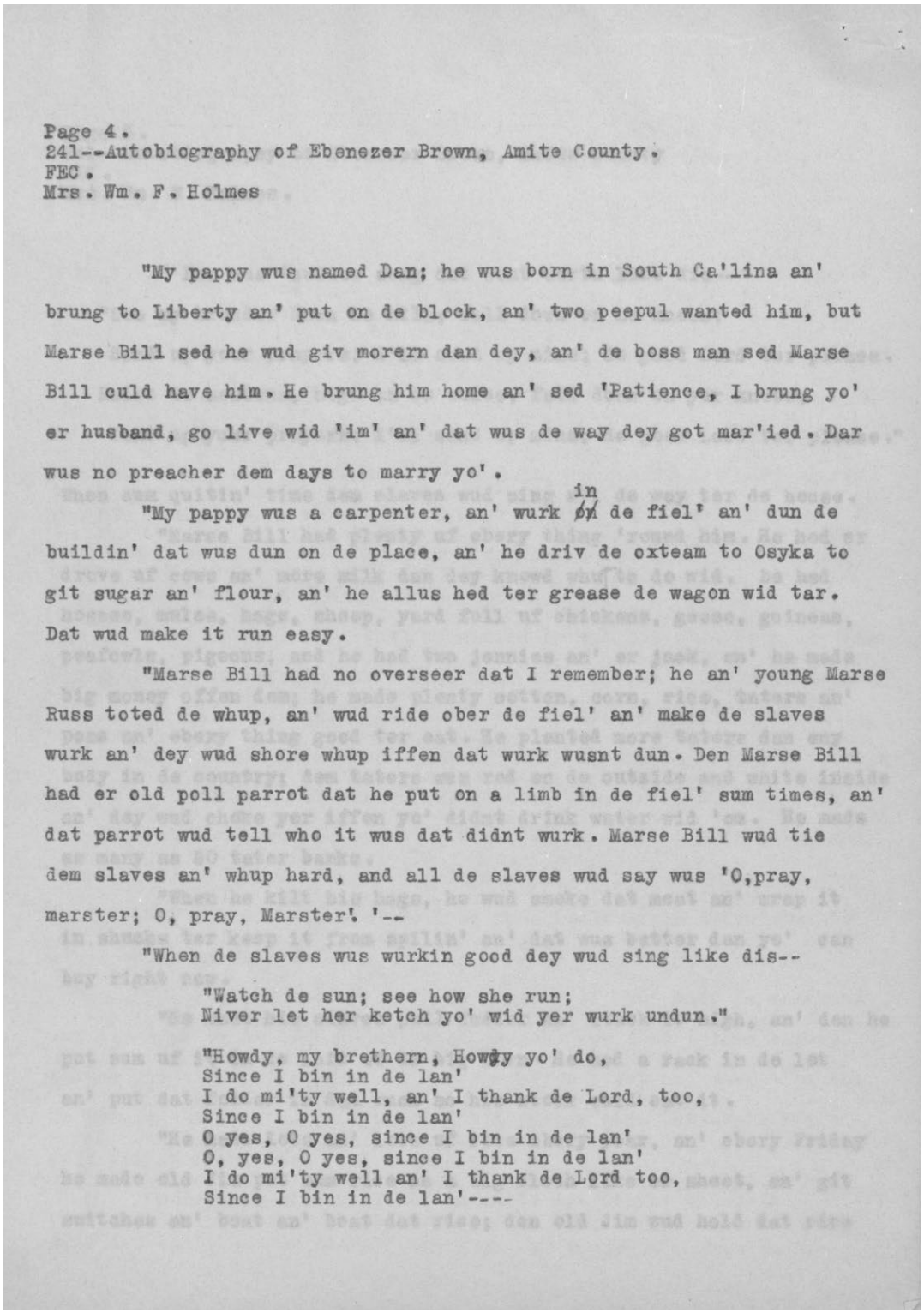

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"My pappy wus named Dan; he wus born in South Ca'lina an' brung to Liberty an' put on de block, an' two peepul wanted him, but Marse Bill sed he wud giv morern dan dey, an' de boss man sed Marse Bill culd have him. He brung him home an' sed 'Patience, I brung yo' er husband, go live wid 'im' an' dat wus de way dey got mar'ied. Dar wus no preacher dem days to marry yo'.

"My pappy wus a carpenter, an' wurk in de fiel' an' dun de buildin' dat wus dun on de place, an' he driv de oxteam to Osyka to git sugar an' flour, an' he allus hed ter grease de wagon wid tar. Dat wud make it run easy.

"Marse Bill had no overseer dat I remember; he an' young Marse Russ toted de whup, an' wud ride ober de fiel' an' make de slaves wurk an' dey wud shore whup iffen dat wurk wusnt dun. Den Marse Bill had er old poll parrot dat he put on a limb in de fiel' sum times, an' dat parrot wud tell who it wus dat didnt wurk. Marse Bill wud tie dem slaves an' whup hard, and all de slaves wud say wus 'O,pray, marster; O, pray, Marster'. '--

"When de slaves wus wurkin good dey wud sing like dis--

"Watch de sun; see how she run;
Niver let her ketch yo' wid yer wurk undun."

"Howdy, my brethern, Howdy yo' do,
Since I bin in de lan'
I do mi'ty well, an' I thank de Lord, too,
Since I bin in de lan'
O yes, O yes, since I bin in de lan'
O, yes, O yes, since I bin in de lan'
I do mi'ty well an' I thank de Lord too,
Since I bin in de lan'----

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

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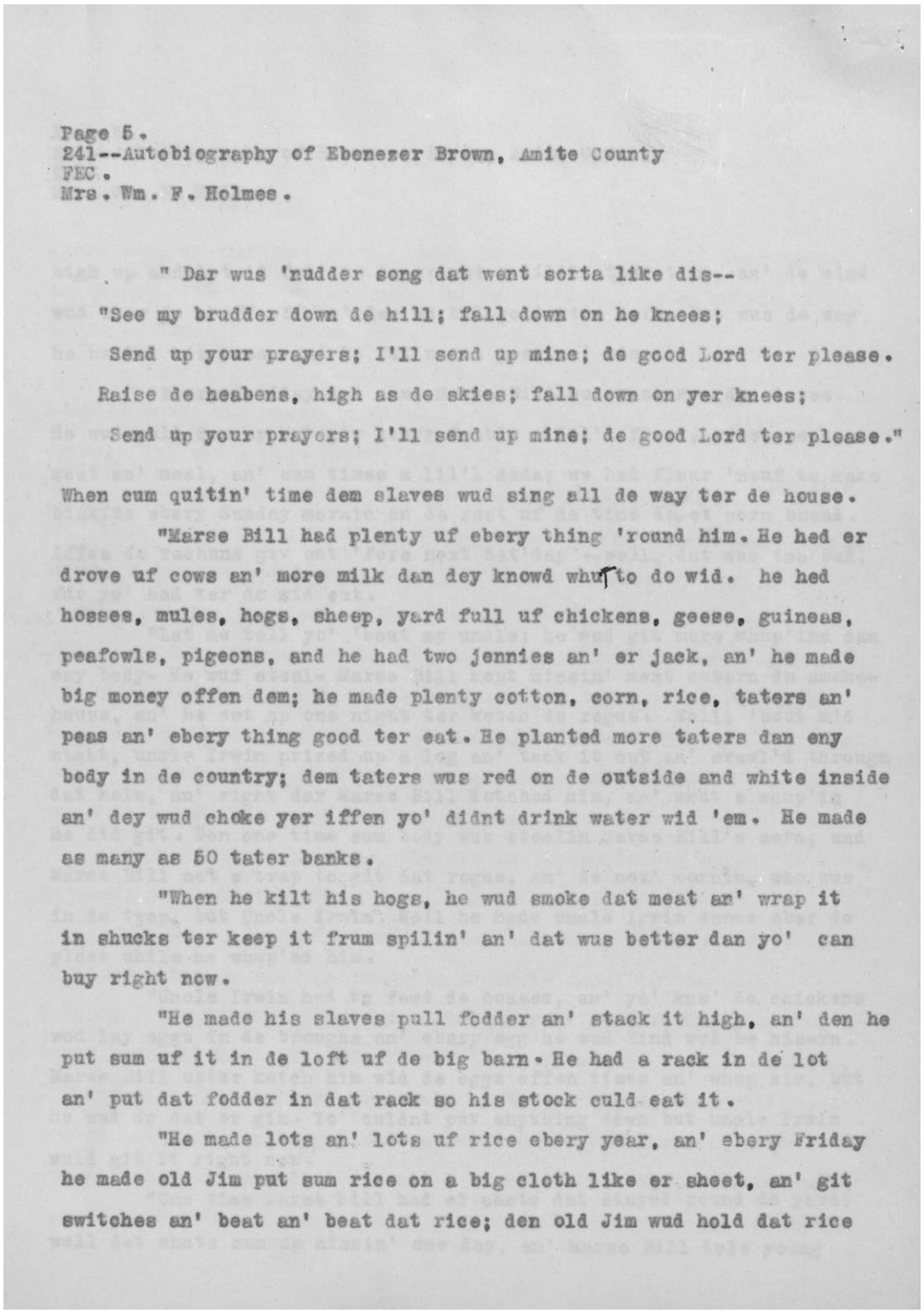

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" Dar wus 'nudder song dat went sorta like dis--

"See my brudder down de hill; fall down on he knees;
Send up your prayers; I'll send up mine; de good Lord ter please.
Raise de heabens, high as de skies; fall down on yer knees;
Send up your prayers; I'll send up mine; de good Lord ter please."

When cum quitin' time dem slaves wud sing all de way ter de house.

"Marse Bill had plenty uf ebery thing 'round him. He hed er drove uf cows an' more milk dan dey knowd whut to do wid. he hed hosses, mules, hogs, sheep, yard full uf chickens, geese, guineas, peafowls, pigeons, and he had two jennies an' er jack, an' he made big money offen dem; he made plenty cotton, corn, rice, taters an' peas an' ebery thing good ter eat. He planted more taters dan eny body in de country; dem taters wus red on de outside and white inside an' dey wud choke yer iffen yo' didnt drink water wid 'em. He made as many as 50 tater banks.

"When he kilt his hogs, he wud smoke dat meat an' wrap it in shucks ter keep it frum spilin' an' dat wus better dan yo' can buy right now.

"He made his slaves pull fodder an' stack it high, an' den he put sum uf it in de loft uf de big barn. He had a rack in de lot an' put dat fodder in dat rack so his stock culd eat it.

"He made lots an' lots uf rice ebery year, an' ebery Friday he made old Jim put sum rice on a big cloth like er sheet, an' git switches an' beat an' beat dat rice; den old Jim wud hold dat rice

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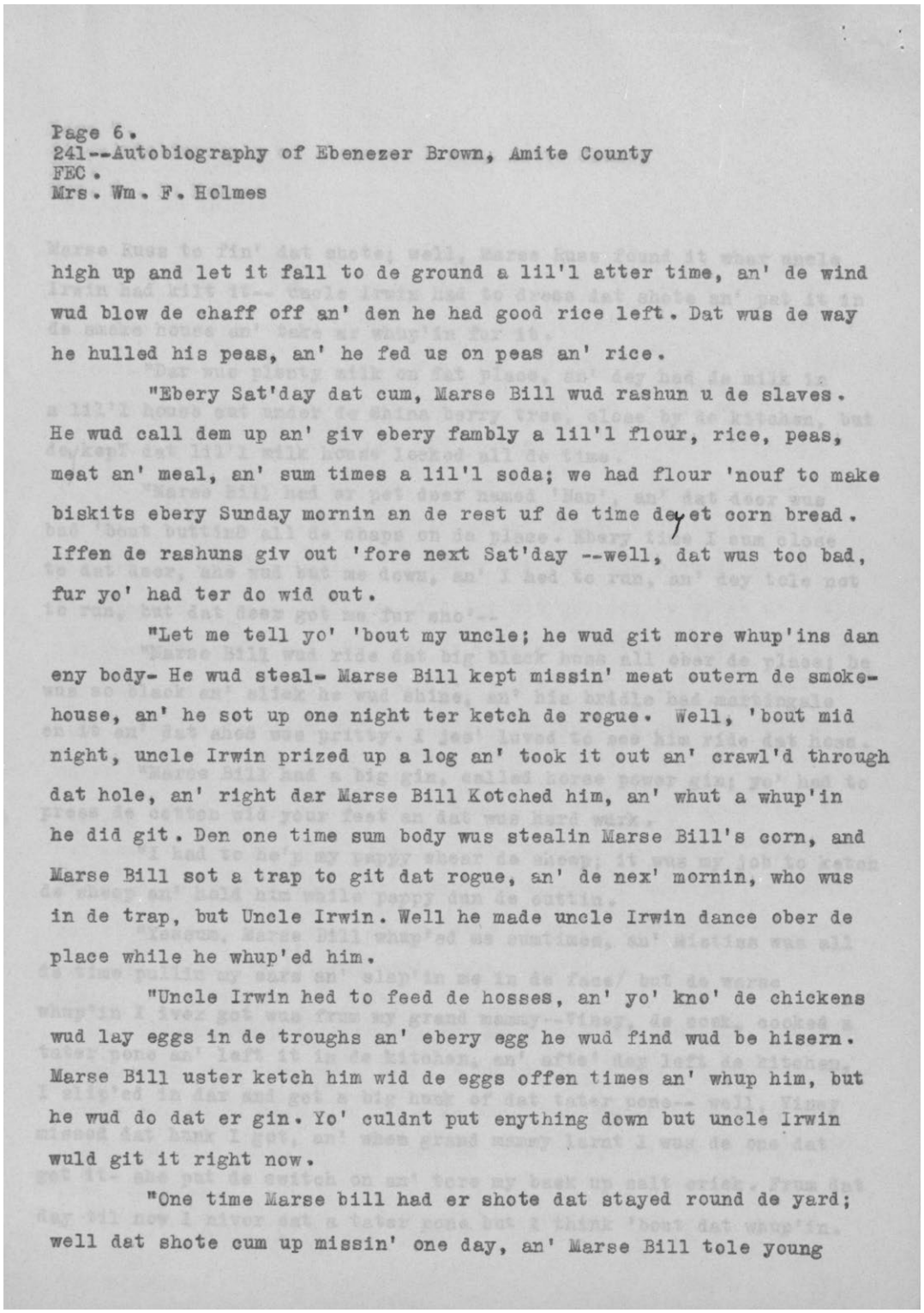

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high up and let it fall to de ground a lil'l atter time, an' de wind wud blow de chaff off an' den he had good rice left. Dat wus de way he hulled his peas, an' he fed us on peas an' rice.

"Ebery Sat'day dat cum, Marse Bill wud rashun u de slaves. He wud call dem up an' giv ebery fambly a lil'l flour, rice, peas, meat an' meal, an' sum times a lil'l soda; we had flour 'nouf to make biskits ebery Sunday mornin an de rest uf de time dey et corn bread. Iffen de rashuns giv out 'fore next Sat'day --well, dat wus too bad, fur yo' had ter do wid out.

"Let me tell yo' 'bout my uncle; he wud git more whup'ins dan eny body- He wud steal- Marse Bill kept missin' meat outern de smoke-house, an' he sot up one night ter ketch de rogue. Well, 'bout mid night, uncle Irwin prized up a log an' took it out an' crawl'd through dat hole, an' right dar Marse Bill Kotched him, an' whut a whup'in he did git. Den one time sum body wus stealin Marse Bill's corn, and Marse Bill sot a trap to git dat rogue, an' de nex' mornin, who wus in de trap, but Uncle Irwin. Well he made uncle Irwin dance ober de place while he whup'ed him.

"Uncle Irwin hed to feed de hosses, an' yo' kno' de chickens wud lay eggs in de troughs an' ebery egg he wud find wud be hisern. Marse Bill uster ketch him wid de eggs offen times an' whup him, but he wud do dat er gin. Yo' culdnt put enything down but uncle Irwin wuld git it right now.

"One time Marse bill had er shote dat stayed round de yard; well dat shote cum up missin' one day, an' Marse Bill tole young

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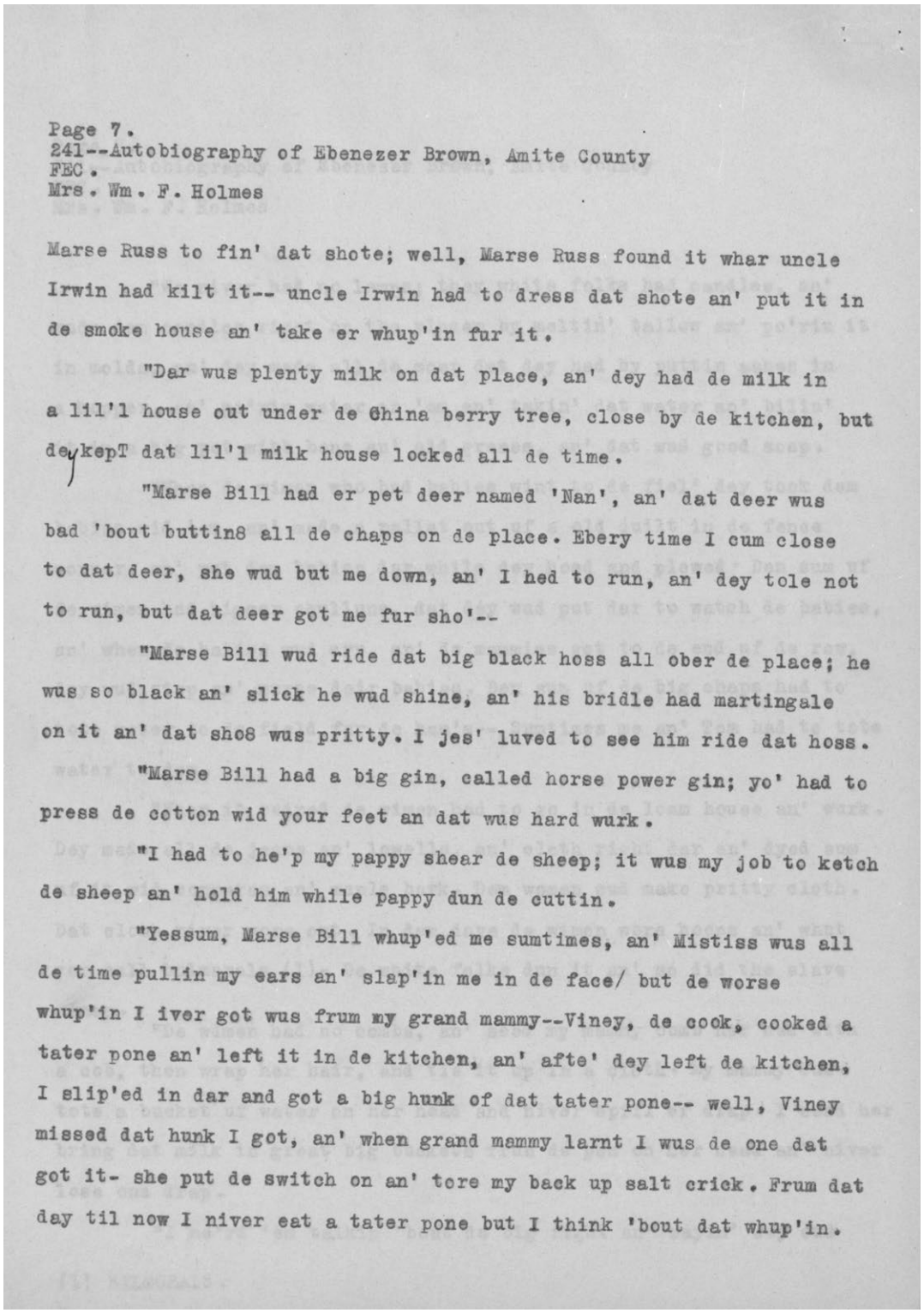

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Marse Russ to fin' dat shote; well, Marse Russ found it whar uncle Irwin had kilt it-- uncle Irwin had to dress dat shote an' put it in de smoke house an' take er whup'in fur it.

"Dar wus plenty milk on dat place, an' dey had de milk in a lil'l house out under de China berry tree, close by de kitchen, but dey kept dat lil'l milk house locked all de time.

"Marse Bill had er pet deer named 'Nan', an' dat deer wus bad 'bout buttin8 all de chaps on de place. Ebery time I cum close to dat deer, she wud but me down, an' I hed to run, an' dey tole not to run, but dat deer got me fur sho'--

"Marse Bill wud ride dat big black hoss all ober de place; he wus so black an' slick he wud shine, an' his bridle had martingale on it an' dat sho8 wus pritty. I jes' luved to see him ride dat hoss.

"Marse Bill had a big gin, called horse power gin; yo' had to press de cotton wid your feet an dat wus hard wurk.

"I had to he'p my pappy shear de sheep; it wus my job to ketch de sheep an' hold him while pappy dun de cuttin.

"Yessum, Marse Bill whup'ed me sumtimes, an' Mistiss wus all de time pullin my ears an' slap'in me in de face/ but de worse whup'in I iver got wus frum my grand mammy--Viney, de cook, cooked a tater pone an' left it in de kitchen, an' afte' dey left de kitchen, I slip'ed in dar and got a big hunk of dat tater pone-- well, Viney missed dat hunk I got, an' when grand mammy larnt I wus de one dat got it- she put de switch on an' tore my back up salt crick. Frum dat day til now I niver eat a tater pone but I think 'bout dat whup'in.

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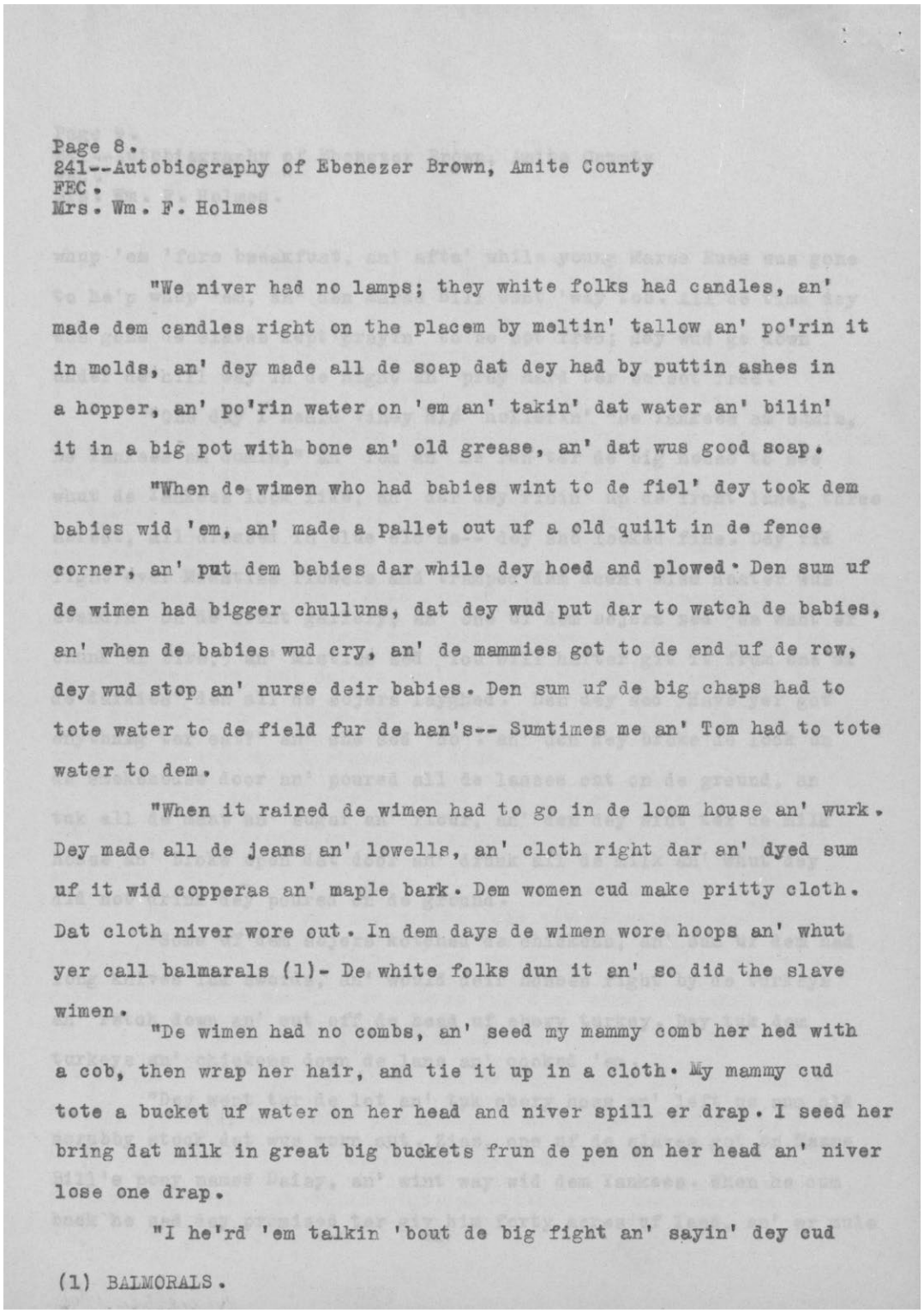

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"We niver had no lamps; they white folks had candles, an' made dem candles right on the placem by meltin' tallow an' po'rin it in molds, an' dey made all de soap dat dey had by puttin ashes in a hopper, an' po'rin water on 'em an' takin' dat water an' bilin' it in a big pot with bone an' old grease, an' dat wus good soap.

"When de wimen who had babies wint to de fiel' dey took dem babies wid 'em, an' made a pallet out uf a old quilt in de fence corner, an' put dem babies dar while dey hoed and plowed. Den sum uf de wimen had bigger chulluns, dat dey wud put dar to watch de babies, an' when de babies wud cry, an' de mammies got to de end uf de row, dey wud stop an' nurse deir babies. Den sum uf de big chaps had to tote water to de field fur de han's-- Sumtimes me an' Tom had to tote water to dem.

"When it rained de wimen had to go in de loom house an' wurk. Dey made all de jeans an' lowells, an' cloth right dar an' dyed sum uf it wid copperas an' maple bark. Dem women cud make pritty cloth. Dat cloth niver wore out. In dem days de wimen wore hoops an' whut yer call balmarals (1)- De white folks dun it an' so did the slave wimen.

"De wimen had no combs, an' seed my mammy comb her hed with a cob, then wrap her hair, and tie it up in a cloth. My mammy cud tote a bucket uf water on her head and niver spill er drap. I seed her bring dat milk in great big buckets frun de pen on her head an' niver lose one drap.

"I he'rd 'em talkin 'bout de big fight an' sayin' dey cud

(1) BALMORALS.

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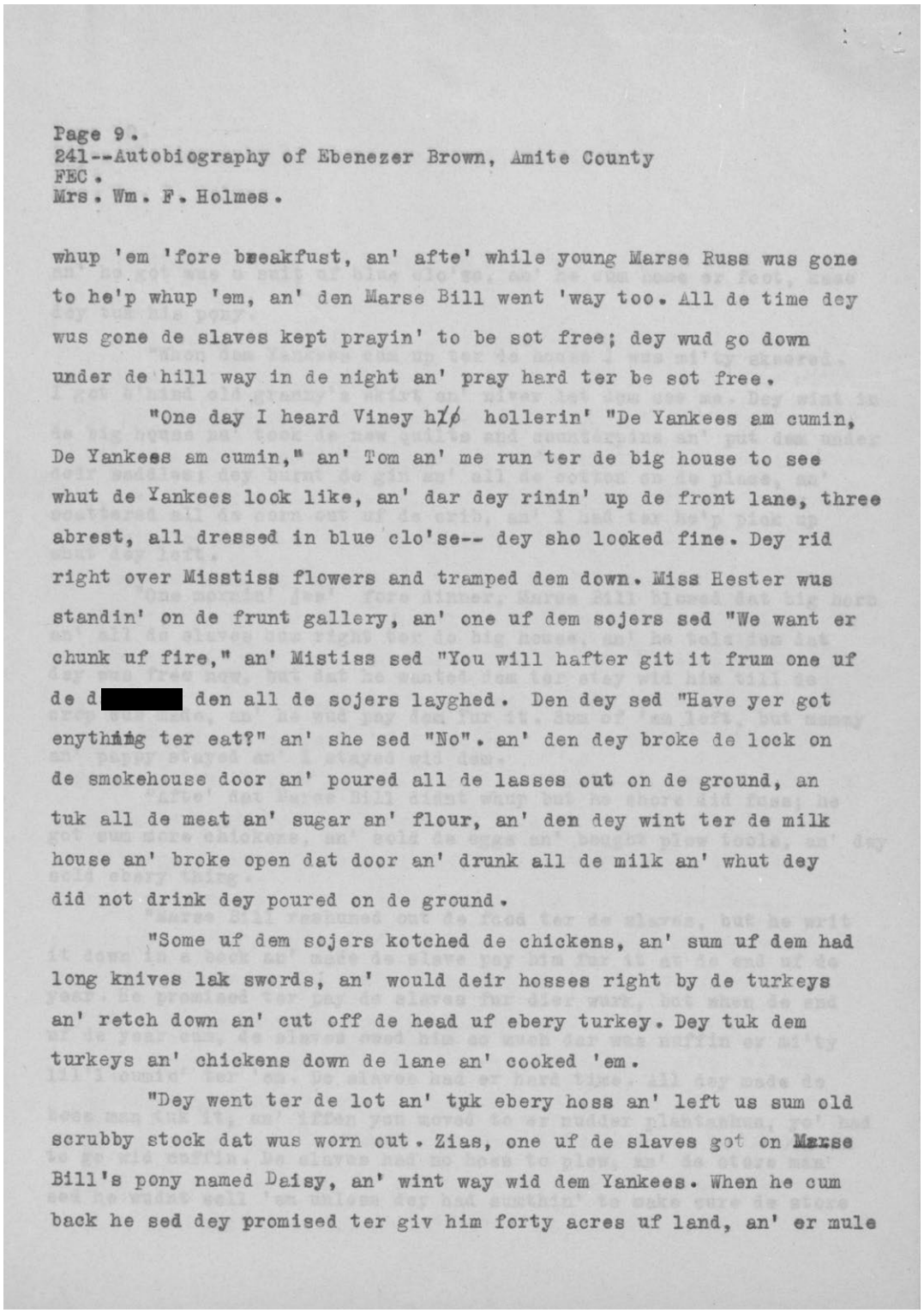

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whup 'em 'fore breakfust, an' afte' while young Marse Russ wus gone to he'p whup 'em, an' den Marse Bill went 'way too. All de time dey wus gone de slaves kept prayin' to be sot free; dey wud go down under de hill way in de night an' pray hard ter be sot free.

"One day I heard Viney hi hollerin' "De Yankees am cumin, De Yankees am cumin," an' Tom an' me run ter de big house to see whut de Yankees look like, an' dar dey rinin' up de front lane, three abrest, all dressed in blue clo'se-- dey sho looked fine. Dey rid right over Misstiss flowers and tramped dem down. Miss Hester wus standin' on de frunt gallery, an' one uf dem sojers sed "We want er chunk uf fire," an' Mistiss sed "You will hafter git it frum one uf de d[redacted] den all de sojers layghed. Den dey sed "Have yer got enything ter eat?" an' she sed "No". an' den dey broke de lock on de smokehouse door an' poured all de lasses out on de ground, an tuk all de meat an' sugar an' flour, an' den dey wint ter de milk house an' broke open dat door an' drunk all de milk an' whut dey did not drink dey poured on de ground.

"Some uf dem sojers kotched de chickens, an' sum uf dem had long knives lak swords, an' would deir hosses right by de turkeys an' retch down an' cut off de head uf ebery turkey. Dey tuk dem turkeys an' chickens down de lane an' cooked 'em.

"Dey went ter de lot an' tuk ebery hoss an' left us sum old scrubby stock dat wus worn out. Zias, one uf de slaves got on Marse Bill's pony named Daisy, an' wint way wid dem Yankees. When he cum back he sed dey promised ter giv him forty acres uf land, an' er mule

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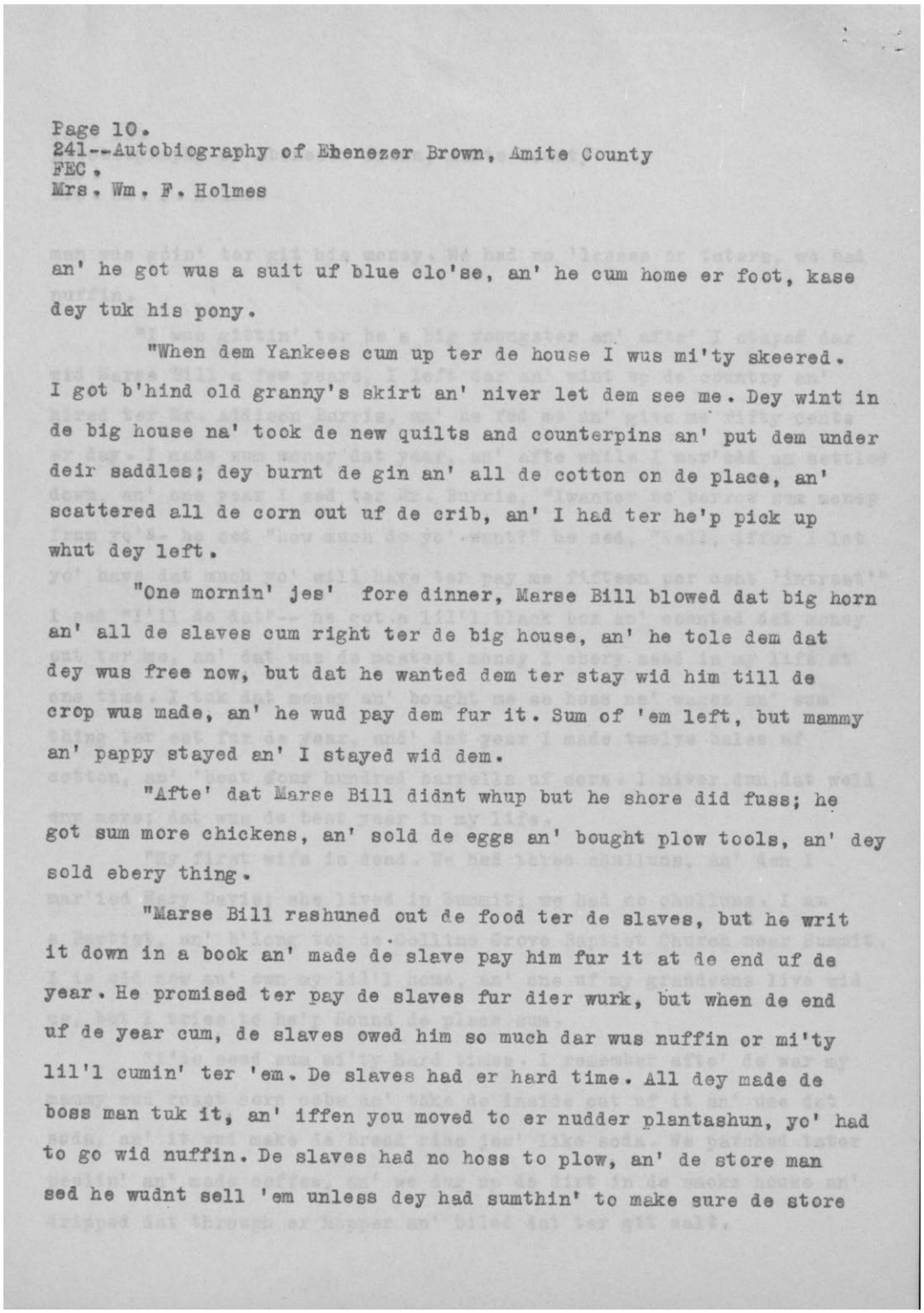

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an' he got wus a suit uf blue clo'se, an' he cum home er foot, kase dey tuk his pony.

"When dem Yankees cum up ter de house I wus mi'ty skeered. I got b'hind old granny's skirt an' niver let dem see me. Dey wint in de big house na' took de new quilts and counterpins an' put dem under deir saddles; dey burnt de gin an' all de cotton on de place, an' scattered all de corn out uf de crib, an' I had ter he'p pick up whut dey left.

"One mornin' jes' fore dinner, Marse Bill blowed dat big horn an' all de slaves cum right ter de big house, an' he tole dem dat dey wus free now, but dat he wanted dem ter stay wid him till de crop wus made, an' he wud pay dem fur it. Sum of 'em left, but mammy an' pappy stayed an' I stayed wid dem.

"Afte' dat Marse Bill didnt whup but he shore did fuss; he got sum more chickens, an' sold de eggs an' bought plow tools, an' dey sold ebery thing.

"Marse Bill rashuned out de food ter de slaves, but he writ it down in a book an' made de slave pay him fur it at de end uf de year. He promised ter pay de slaves fur dier wurk, but when de end uf de year cum, de slaves owed him so much dar wus nuffin or mi'ty lil'l cumin' ter 'em. De slaves had er hard time. All dey made de boss man tuk it, an' iffen you moved to er nudder plantashun, yo' had to go wid nuffin. De slaves had no hoss to plow, an' de store man sed he wudnt sell 'em unless dey had sumthin' to make sure de store

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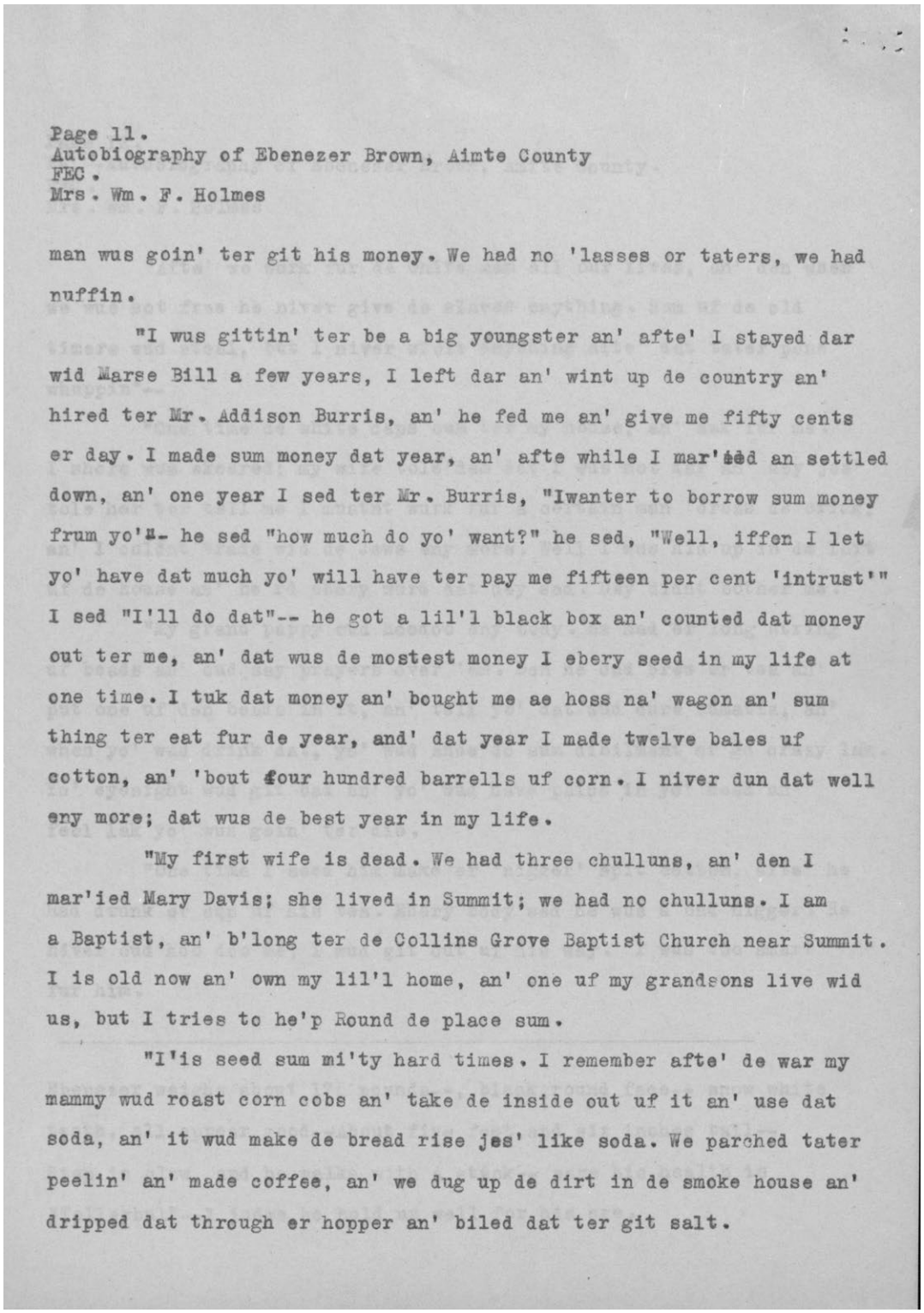

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Mrs. Wm. F. Holmes

man wus goin' ter git his money. We had no 'lasses or taters, we had nuffin.

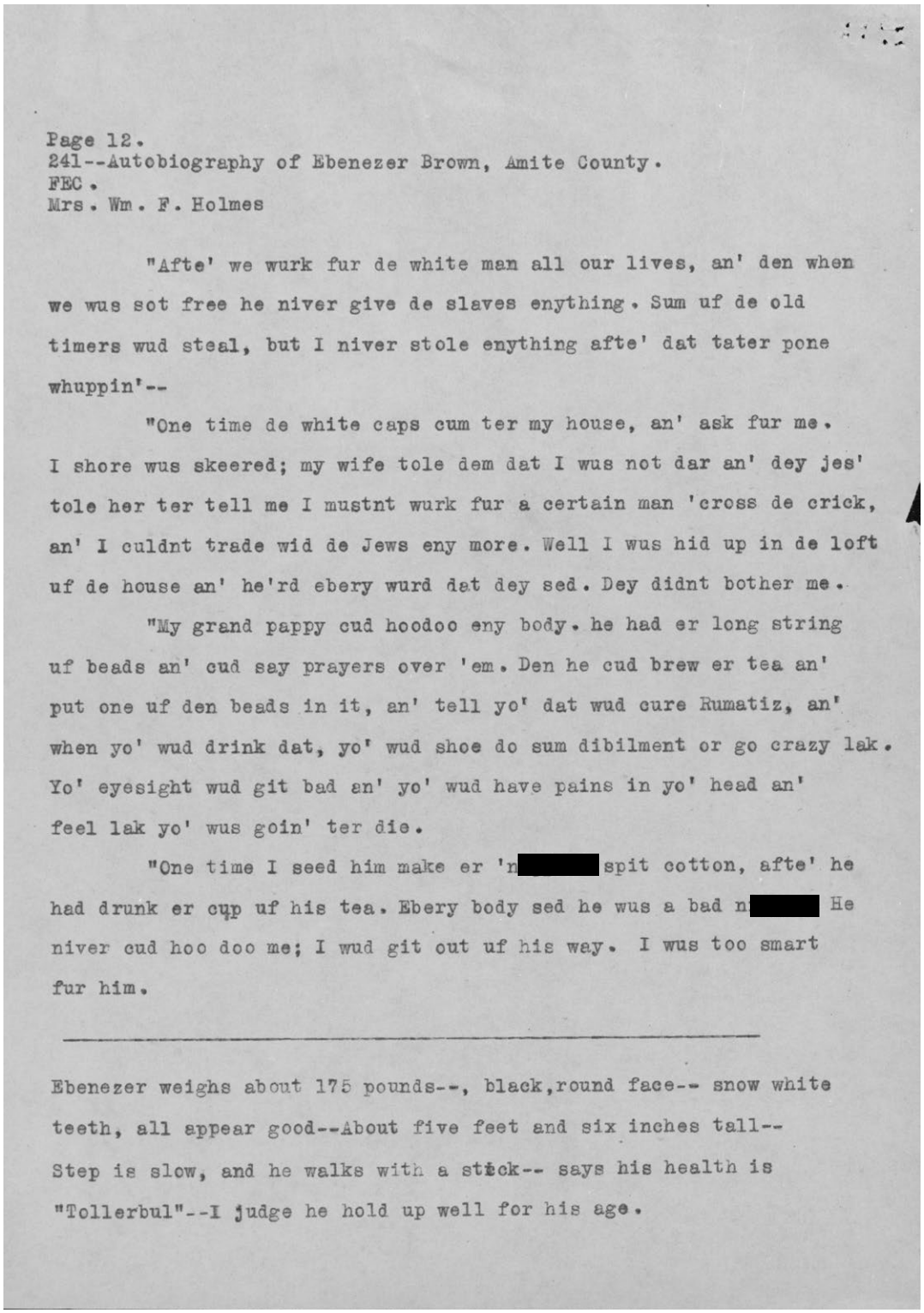
"I wus gittin' ter be a big youngster an' afte' I stayed dar wid Marse Bill a few years, I left dar an' wint up de country an' hired ter Mr. Addison Burris, an' he fed me an' give me fifty cents er day. I made sum money dat year, an' afte while I mar'ied an settled down, an' one year I sed ter Mr. Burris, "Iwanter to borrow sum money frum yo'"- he sed "how much do yo' want?" he sed, "Well, iffen I let yo' have dat much yo' will have ter pay me fifteen per cent 'intrust'" I sed "I'll do dat"-- he got a lil'l black box an' counted dat money out ter me, an' dat wus de mostest money I ebery seed in my life at one time. I tuk dat money an' bought me ae hoss na' wagon an' sum thing ter eat fur de year, and' dat year I made twelve bales uf cotton, an' 'bout four hundred barrells uf corn. I niver dun dat well ery more; dat wus de best year in my life.

"My first wife is dead. We had three chulluns, an' den I mar'ied Mary Davis; she lived in Summit; we had no chulluns. I am a Baptist, an' b'long ter de Collins Grove Baptist Church near Summit. I is old now an' own my lil'l home, an' one uf my grandsons live wid us, but I tries to he'p Round de place sum.

"I'is seed sum mi'ty hard times. I remember afte' de war my mammy wud roast corn cobs an' take de inside out uf it an' use dat soda, an' it wud make de bread rise jes' like soda. We parched tater peelin' an' made coffee, an' we dug up de dirt in de smoke house an' dripped dat through er hopper an' biled dat ter git salt.

EBENEZER BROWN TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Ebenezer Brown, August 16, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Amite County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/amite/436/brown-ebenezer



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Mrs. Wm. F. Holmes

"Afte' we wurk fur de white man all our lives, an' den when we wus sot free he niver give de slaves enything. Sum uf de old timers wud steal, but I niver stole enything afte' dat tater pone whuppin'--

"One time de white caps cum ter my house, an' ask fur me. I shore wus skeered; my wife tole dem dat I wus not dar an' dey jes' tole her ter tell me I mustnt wurk fur a certain man 'cross de crick, an' I culdnt trade wid de Jews eny more. Well I wus hid up in de loft uf de house an' he'rd ebery wurd dat dey sed. Dey didnt bother me.

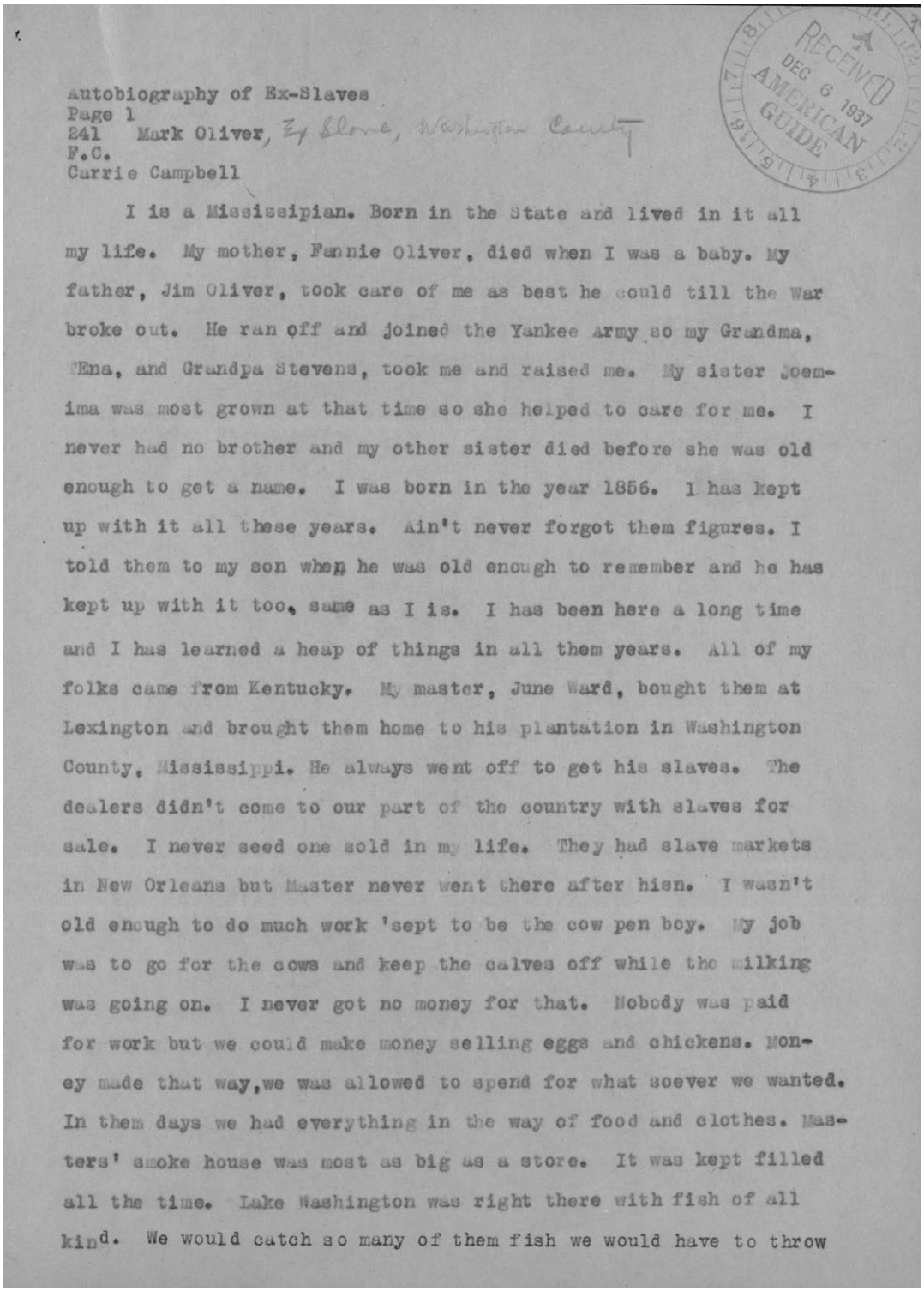
"My grand pappy cud hoodoo eny body. he had er long string uf beads an' cud say prayers over 'em. Den he cud brew er tea an' put one uf den beads in it, an' tell yo' dat wud cure Rumatiz, an' when yo' wud drink dat, yo' wud shoe do sum dibilment or go crazy lak. Yo' eyesight wud git bad an' yo' wud have pains in yo' head an' feel lak yo' wus goin' ter die.

"One time I seed him make er 'n [redacted] spit cotton, afte' he had drunk er cup uf his tea. Ebery body sed he wus a bad n [redacted] He niver cud hoo doo me; I wud git out uf his way. I wus too smart fur him.

Ebenezer weighs about 175 pounds--, black,round face-- snow white teeth, all appear good--About five feet and six inches tall-- Step is slow, and he walks with a stick-- says his health is "Tollerbul"--I judge he hold up well for his age.

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/washington/436/oliver-mark



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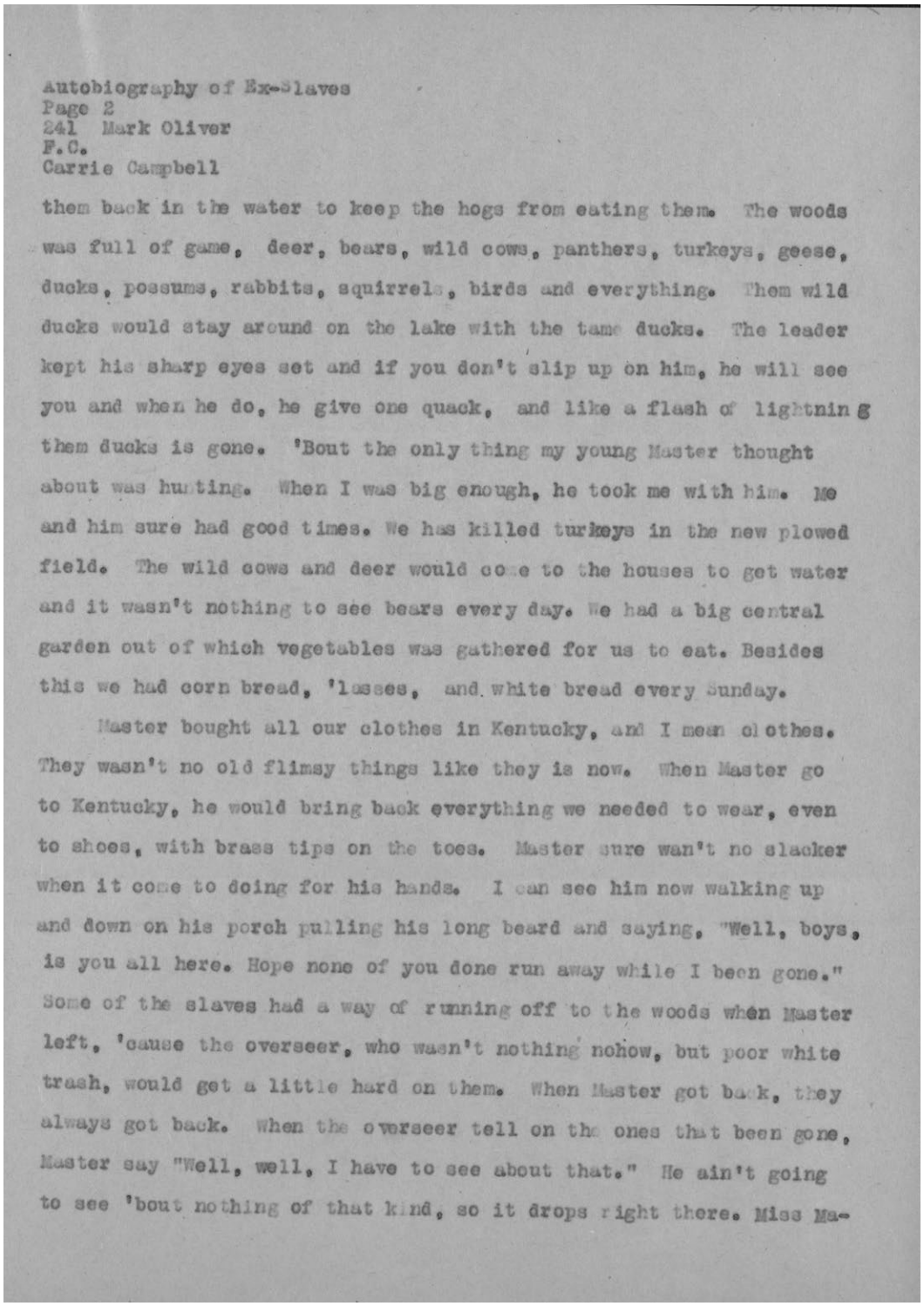
Carrie Campbell

I is a Mississipian. Born in the State and lived in it all my life. My mother, Fannie Oliver, died when I was a baby. My father, Jim Oliver, took care of me as best he could till the War broke out. He ran off and joined the Yankee Army so my Grandma, 'Ena, and Grandpa Stevens, took me and raised me. My sister Joemima was most grown at that time so she helped to care for me. I never had no brother and my other sister died before she was old enough to get a name. I was born in the year 1856. I has kept up with it all these years. Ain't never forgot them figures. I told them to my son when he was old enough to remember and he has kept up with it too, same as I is. I has been here a long time and I has learned a heap of things in all them years. All of my folks came from Kentucky. My master, June Ward, bought them at Lexington and brought them home to his plantation in Washington County, Mississippi. He always went off to get his slaves. The dealers didn't come to our part of the country with slaves for sale. I never seed one sold in my life. They had slave markets in New Orleans but Master never went there after hisn. I wasn't old enough to do much work 'sept to be the cow pen boy. My job was to go for the cows and keep the calves off while the milking was going on. I never got no money for that. Nobody was paid for work but we could make money selling eggs and chickens. Money made that way, we was allowed to spend for what soever we wanted. In them days we had everything in the way of food and clothes. Masters' smoke house was most as big as a store. It was kept filled all the time. Lake Washington was right there with fish of all kind. We would catch so many of them fish we would have to throw

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/washington/436/oliver-mark



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them back in the water to keep the hogs from eating them. The woods was full of game, deer, bears, wild cows, panthers, turkeys, geese, ducks, possums, rabbits, squirrels, birds and everything. Them wild ducks would stay around on the lake with the tame ducks. The leader kept his sharp eyes set and if you don't slip up on him, he will see you and when he do, he give one quack, and like a flash of lightning them ducks is gone. 'Bout the only thing my young Master thought about was hunting. When I was big enough, he took me with him. Me and him sure had good times. We has killed turkeys in the new plowed field. The wild cows and deer would come to the houses to get water and it wasn't nothing to see bears every day. We had a big central garden out of which vegetables was gathered for us to eat. Besides this we had corn bread, 'lasses, and white bread every Sunday.

Master bought all our clothes in Kentucky, and I mean clothes. They wasn't no old flimsy things like they is now. When Master go to Kentucky, he would bring back everything we needed to wear, even to shoes, with brass tips on the toes. Master sure wan't no slacker when it come to doing for his hands. I can see him now walking up and down on his porch pulling his long beard and saying, "Well, boys, is you all here. Hope none of you done run away while I been gone." Some of the slaves had a way of running off to the woods when Master left, 'cause the overseer, who wasn't nothing nohow, but poor white trash, would get a little hard on them. When Master got back, they always got back. When the overseer tell on the ones that been gone, Master say "Well, well, I have to see about that." He ain't going to see 'bout nothing of that kind, so it drops right there. Miss Ma-

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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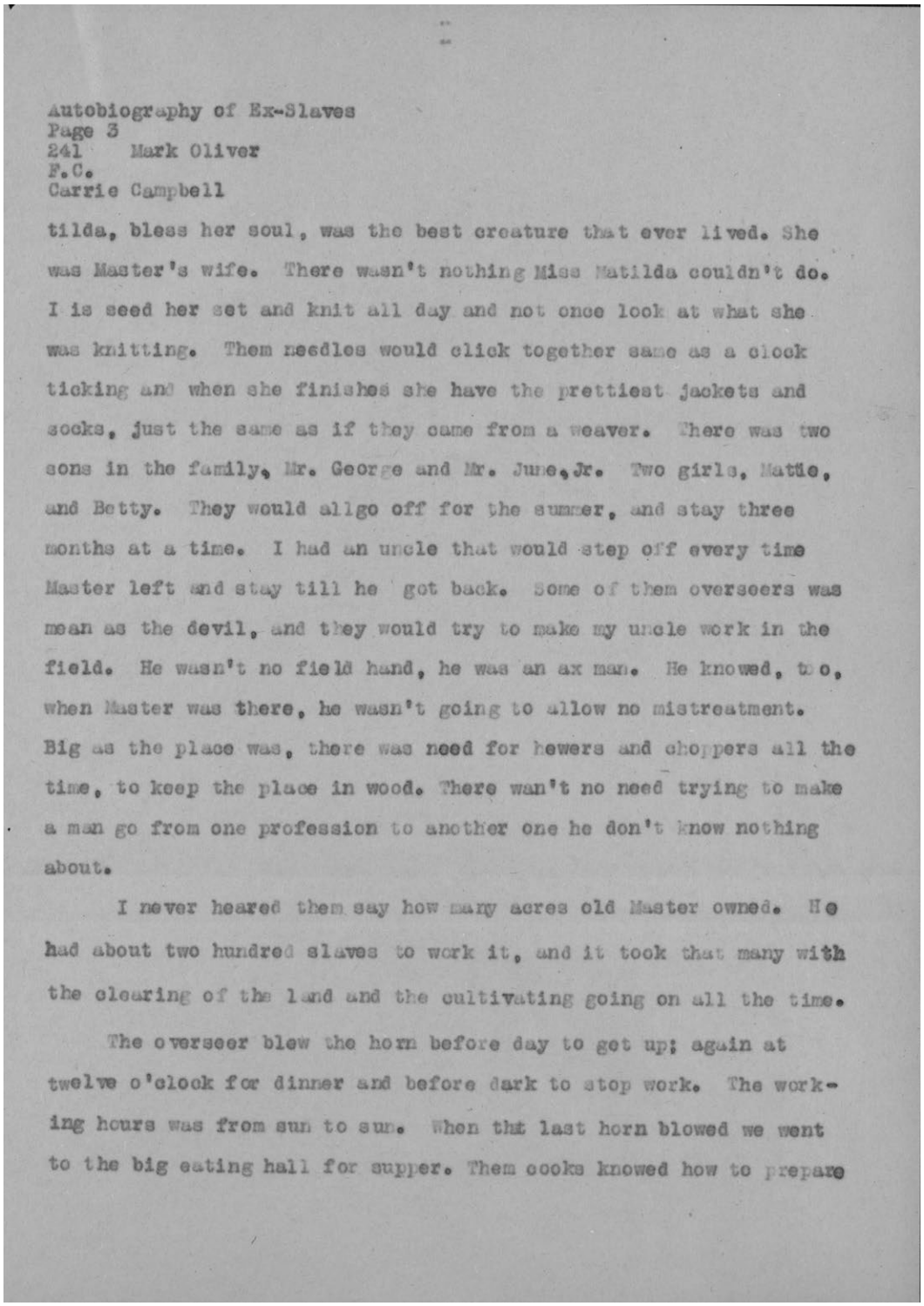

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tilda, bless her soul, was the best creature that ever lived. She was Master's wife. There wasn't nothing Miss Matilda couldn't do. I is seed her set and knit all day and not once look at what she was knitting. Them needles would click together same as a clock ticking and when she finishes she have the prettiest jackets and socks, just the same as if they came from a weaver. There was two sons in the family, Mr. George and Mr. June, Jr. Two girls, Mattie, and Betty. They would allgo off for the summer, and stay three months at a time. I had an uncle that would step off every time Master left and stay till he got back. Some of them overseers was mean as the devil, and they would try to make my uncle work in the field. He wasn't no field hand, he was an ax man. He knowed, too, when Master was there, he wasn't going to allow no mistreatment. Big as the place was, there was need for hewers and choppers all the time, to keep the place in wood. There wan't no need trying to make a man go from one profession to another one he don't know nothing about.

I never heared them say how many acres old Master owned. He had about two hundred slaves to work it, and it took that many with the clearing of the land and the cultivating going on all the time.

The overseer blew the horn before day to get up; again at twelve o'clock for dinner and before dark to stop work. The working hours was from sun to sun. When the last horn blowed we went to the big eating hall for supper. Them cooks knowed how to prepare

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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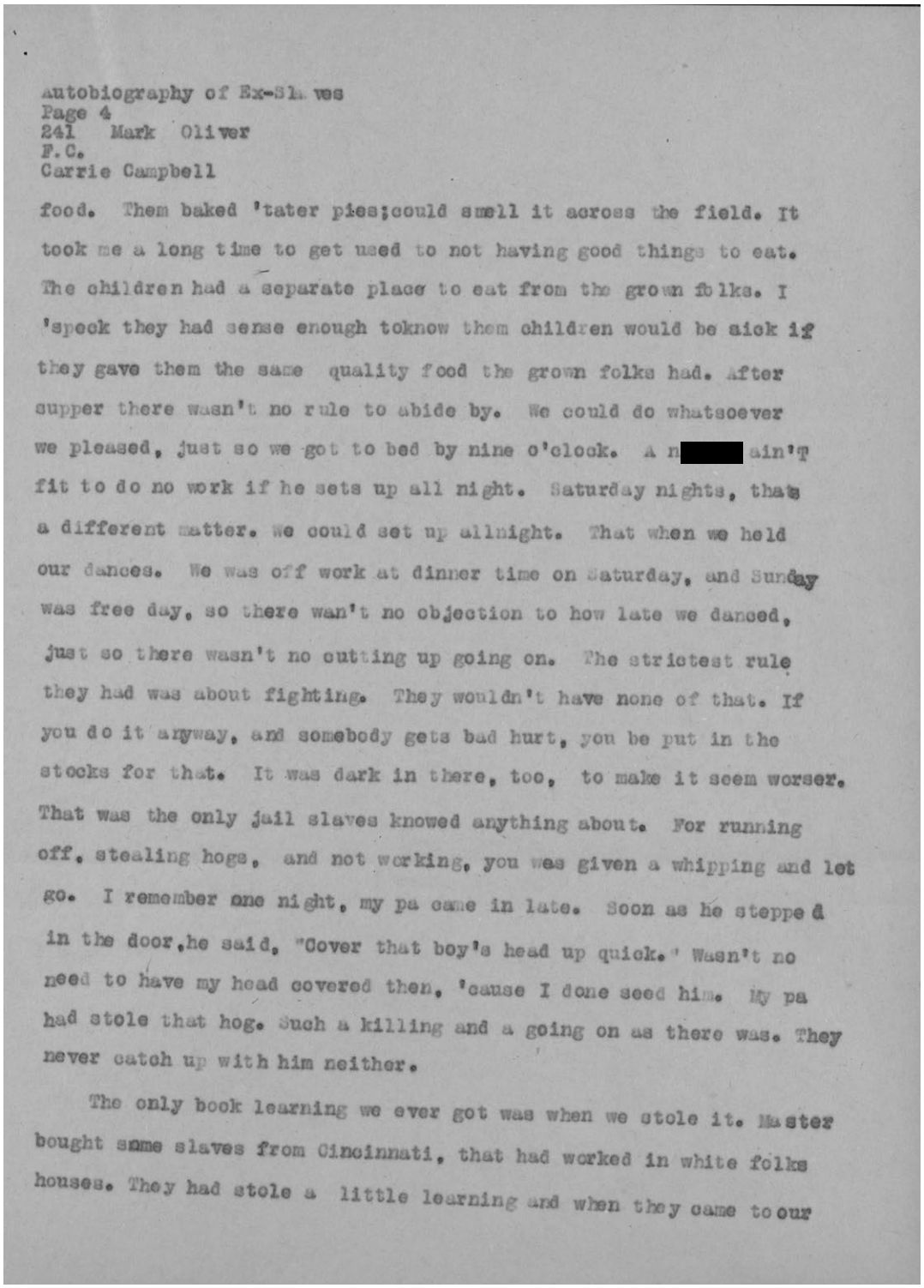

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food. Them baked 'tater pies;could smell it across the field. It took me a long time to get used to not having good things to eat. The children had a separate place to eat from the grown folks. I 'speck they had sense enough toknow them children would be sick if they gave them the same quality food the grown folks had. After supper there wasn't no rule to abide by. We could do whatsoever we pleased, just so we got to bed by nine o'clock. A n[redacted]ain't fit to do no work if he sets up all night. Saturday nights, thats a different matter. We could set up allnight. That when we held our dances. We was off work at dinner time on Saturday, and Sunday was free day, so there wan't no objection to how late we danced, just so there wasn't no cutting up going on. The strictest rule they had was about fighting. They wouldn't have none of that. If you do it anyway, and somebody gets bad hurt, you be put in the stocks for that. It was dark in there, too, to make it seem worser. That was the only jail slaves knowed anything about. For running off, stealing hogs, and not working, you was given a whipping and let go. I remember one night, my pa came in late. Soon as he steppe d in the door,he said, "Cover that boy's head up quick." Wasn't no need to have my head covered then, 'cause I done seed him. My pa had stole that hog. Such a killing and a going on as there was. They never catch up with him neither.

The only book learning we ever got was when we stole it. Master bought some slaves from Cincinnati, that had worked in white folks houses. They had stole a little learning and when they came to our

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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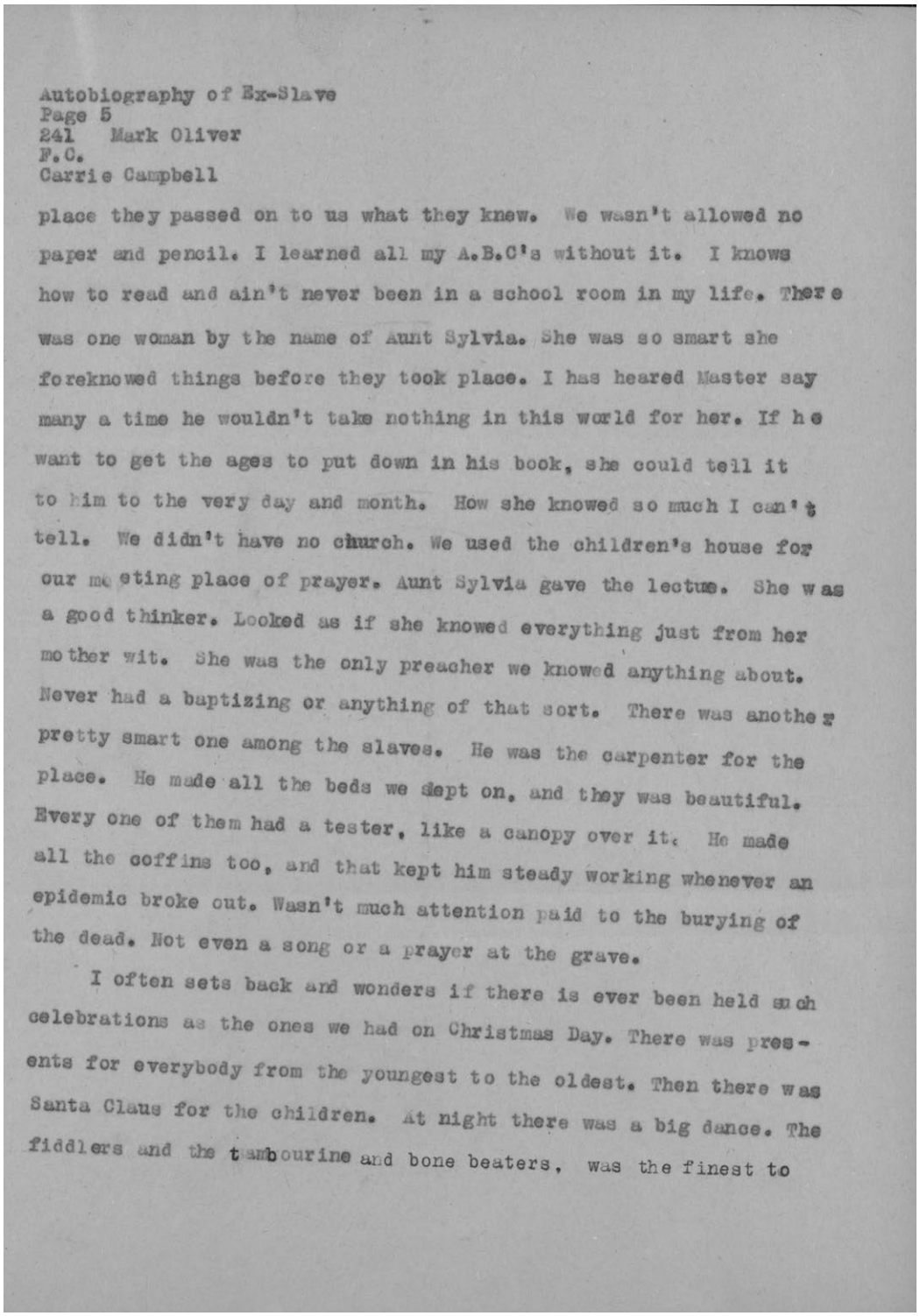

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place they passed on to us what they knew. We wasn't allowed no paper and pencil. I learned all my A.B.C's without it. I knows how to read and ain't never been in a school room in my life. There was one woman by the name of Aunt Sylvia. She was so smart she foreknowed things before they took place. I has heared Master say many a time he wouldn't take nothing in this world for her. If he want to get the ages to put down in his book, she could tell it to him to the very day and month. How she knowed so much I can't tell. We didn't have no church. We used the children's house for our meeting place of prayer. Aunt Sylvia gave the lectue. She was a good thinker. Looked as if she knowed everything just from her mother wit. She was the only preacher we knowed anything about. Never had a baptizing or anything of that sort. There was another pretty smart one among the slaves. He was the carpenter for the place. He made all the beds we slept on, and they was beautiful. Every one of them had a tester, like a canopy over it. He made all the coffins too, and that kept him steady working whenever an epidemic broke out. Wasn't much attention paid to the burying of the dead. Not even a song or a prayer at the grave.

I often sets back and wonders if there is ever been held such celebrations as the ones we had on Christmas Day. There was presents for everybody from the youngest to the oldest. Then there was Santa Claus for the children. At night there was a big dance. The fiddlers and the tambourine and bone beaters, was the finest to

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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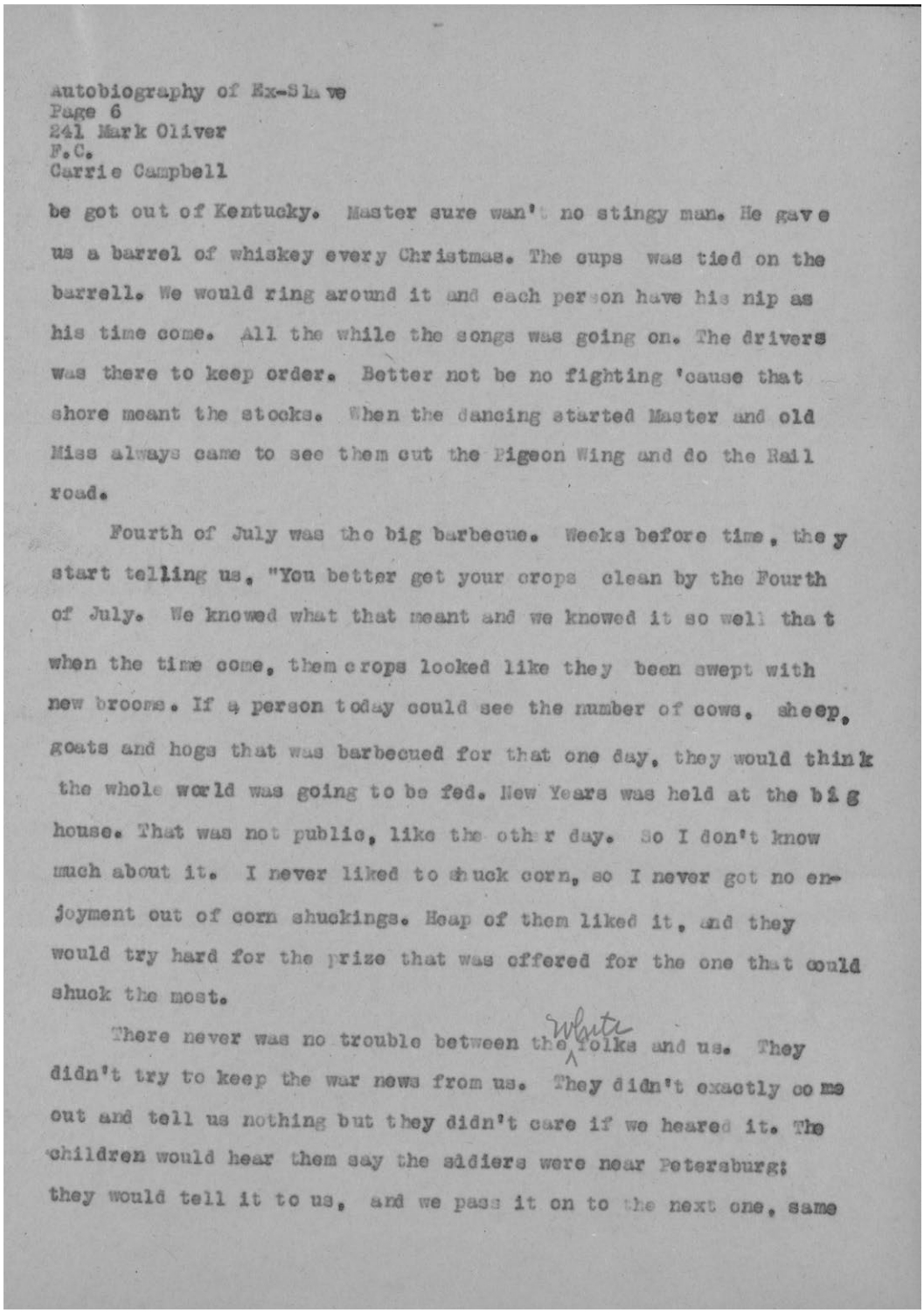

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be got out of Kentucky. Master sure wan't no stingy man. He gave us a barrel of whiskey every Christmas. The cups was tied on the barrell. We would ring around it and each person have his nip as his time come. All the while the songs was going on. The drivers was there to keep order. Better not be no fighting 'cause that shore meant the stocks. When the dancing started Master and old Miss always came to see them cut the Pigeon Wing and do the Rail road.

Fourth of July was the big barbecue. Weeks before time, they start telling us, "You better get your crops clean by the Fourth of July. We knowed what that meant and we knowed it so well that when the time come, them crops looked like they been swept with new brooms. If a person today could see the number of cows, sheep, goats and hogs that was barbecued for that one day, they would think the whole world was going to be fed. New Years was held at the big house. That was not public, like the other day. So I don't know much about it. I never liked to shuck corn, so I never got no enjoyment out of corn shuckings. Heap of them liked it, and they would try hard for the prize that was offered for the one that could shuck the most.

There never was no trouble between the white folks and us. They didn't try to keep the war news from us. They didn't exactly come out and tell us nothing but they didn't care if we heared it. The children would hear them say the sidiers were near Petersburg; they would tell it to us, and we pass it on to the next one, same

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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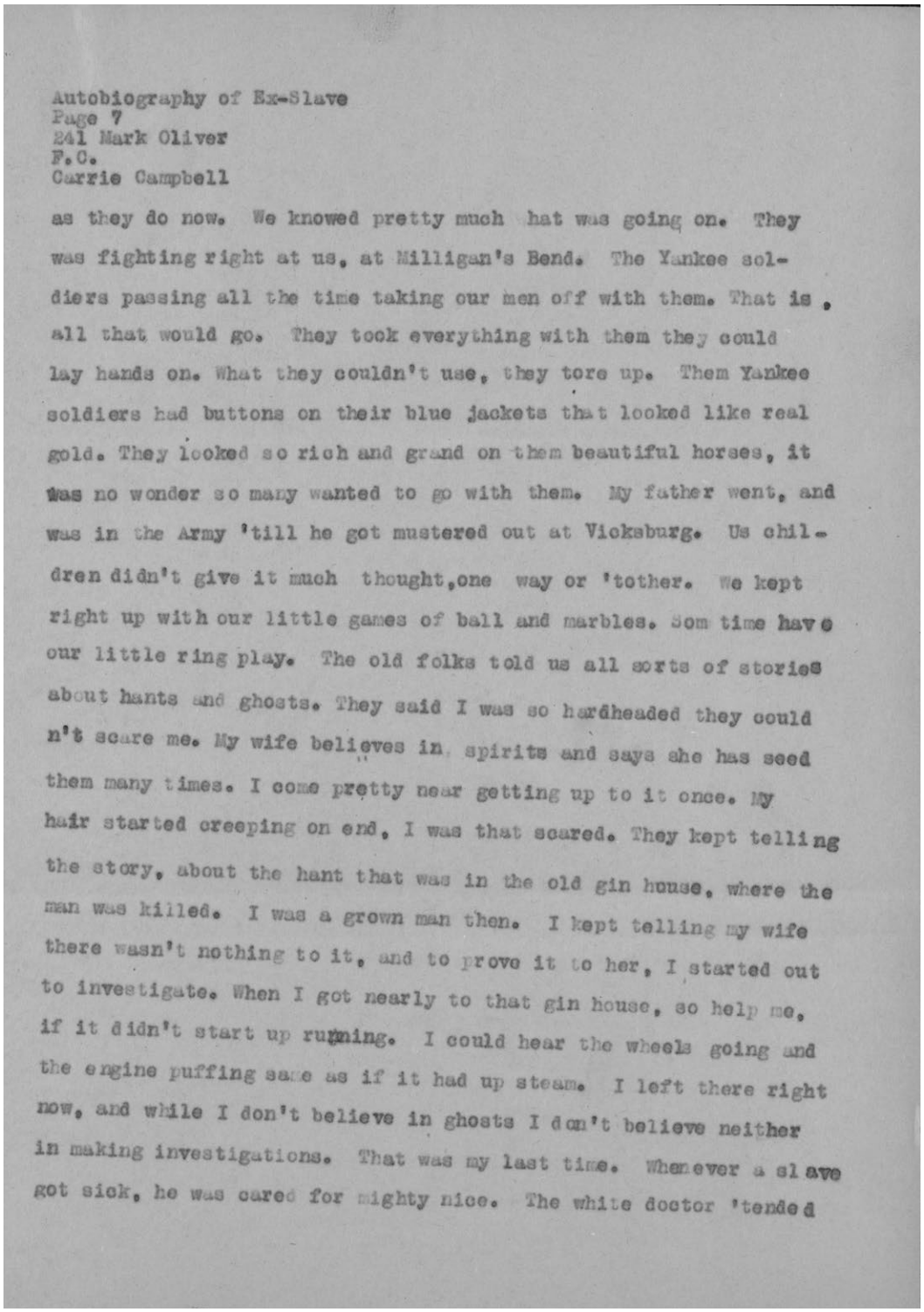

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as they do now. We knowed pretty much hat was going on. They was fighting right at us, at Milligan's Bend. The Yankee soldiers passing all the time taking our men off with them. That is, all that would go. They took everything with them they could lay hands on. What they couldn't use, they tore up. Them Yankee soldiers had buttons on their blue jackets that looked like real gold. They looked so rich and grand on them beautiful horses, it was no wonder so many wanted to go with them. My father went, and was in the Army 'till he got mustered out at Vicksburg. Us children didn't give it much thought, one way or 'tother. We kept right up with our little games of ball and marbles. Som time have our little ring play. The old folks told us all sorts of stories about hants and ghosts. They said I was so hardheaded they could n't scare me. My wife believes in spirits and says she has seed them many times. I come pretty near getting up to it once. My hair started creeping on end, I was that scared. They kept telling the story, about the hant that was in the old gin house, where the man was killed. I was a grown man then. I kept telling my wife there wasn't nothing to it, and to prove it to her, I started out to investigate. When I got nearly to that gin house, so help me, if it didn't start up running. I could hear the wheels going and the engine puffing same as if it had up steam. I left there right now, and while I don't believe in ghosts I don't believe neither in making investigations. That was my last time. Whenever a slave got sick, he was cared for mighty nice. The white doctor 'tended

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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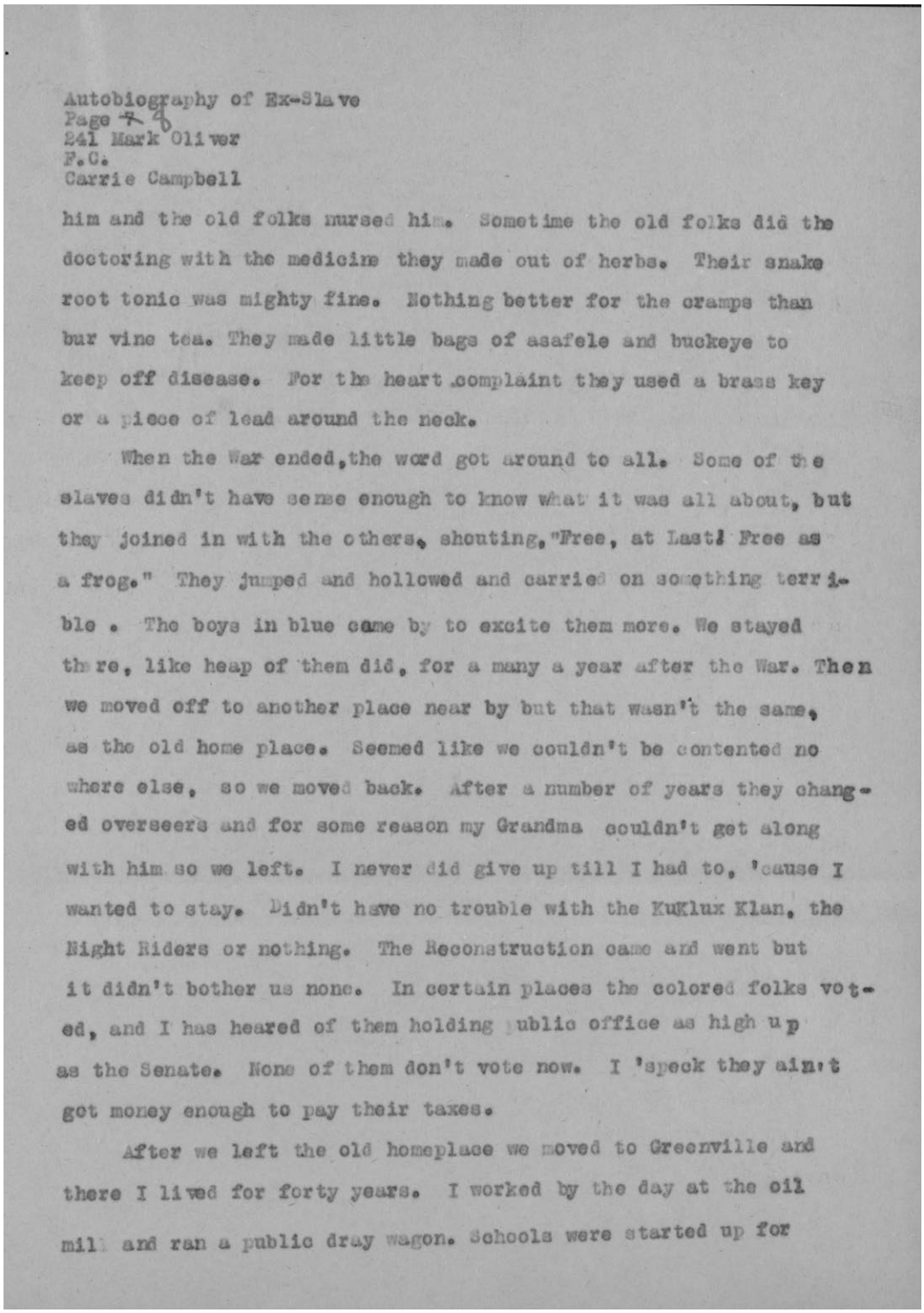

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him and the old folks nursed him. Sometime the old folks did the doctoring with the medicine they made out of herbs. Their snake root tonic was mighty fine. Nothing better for the cramps than bur vine tea. They made little bags of asafele and buckeye to keep off disease. For the heart complaint they used a brass key or a piece of lead around the neck.

When the War ended, the word got around to all. Some of the slaves didn't have sense enough to know what it was all about, but they joined in with the others, shouting, "Free, at Last! Free as a frog." They jumped and hollowed and carried on something terrible. The boys in blue came by to excite them more. We stayed there, like heap of them did, for a many a year after the War. Then we moved off to another place near by but that wasn't the same, as the old home place. Seemed like we couldn't be contented no where else, so we moved back. After a number of years they changed overseers and for some reason my Grandma couldn't get along with him so we left. I never did give up till I had to, 'cause I wanted to stay. Didn't have no trouble with the KuKlux Klan, the Night Riders or nothing. The Reconstruction came and went but it didn't bother us none. In certain places the colored folks voted, and I has heared of them holding public office as high up as the Senate. None of them don't vote now. I 'speck they ain't got money enough to pay their taxes.

After we left the old homeplace we moved to Greenville and there I lived for forty years. I worked by the day at the oil mill and ran a public dray wagon. Schools were started up for

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
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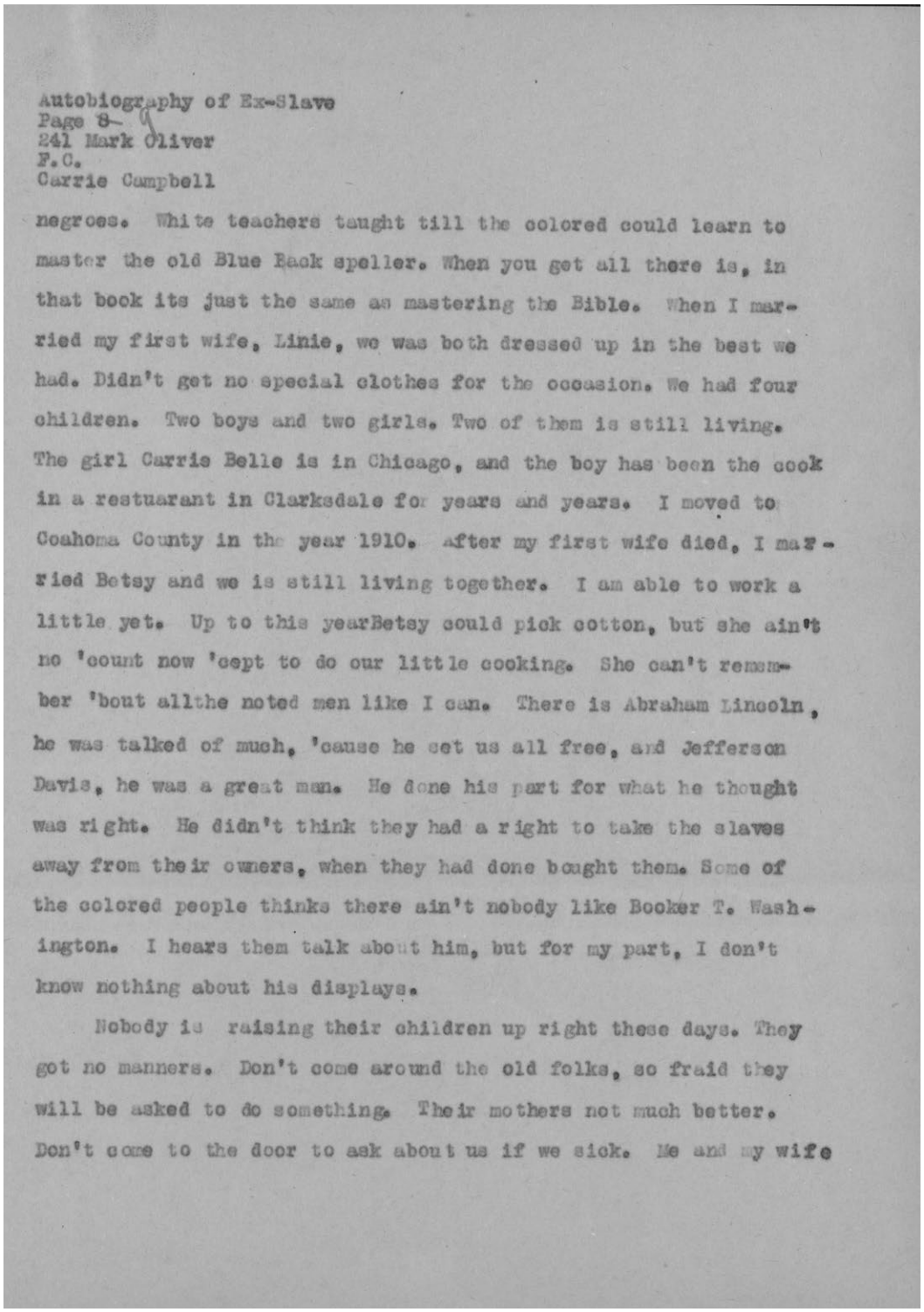

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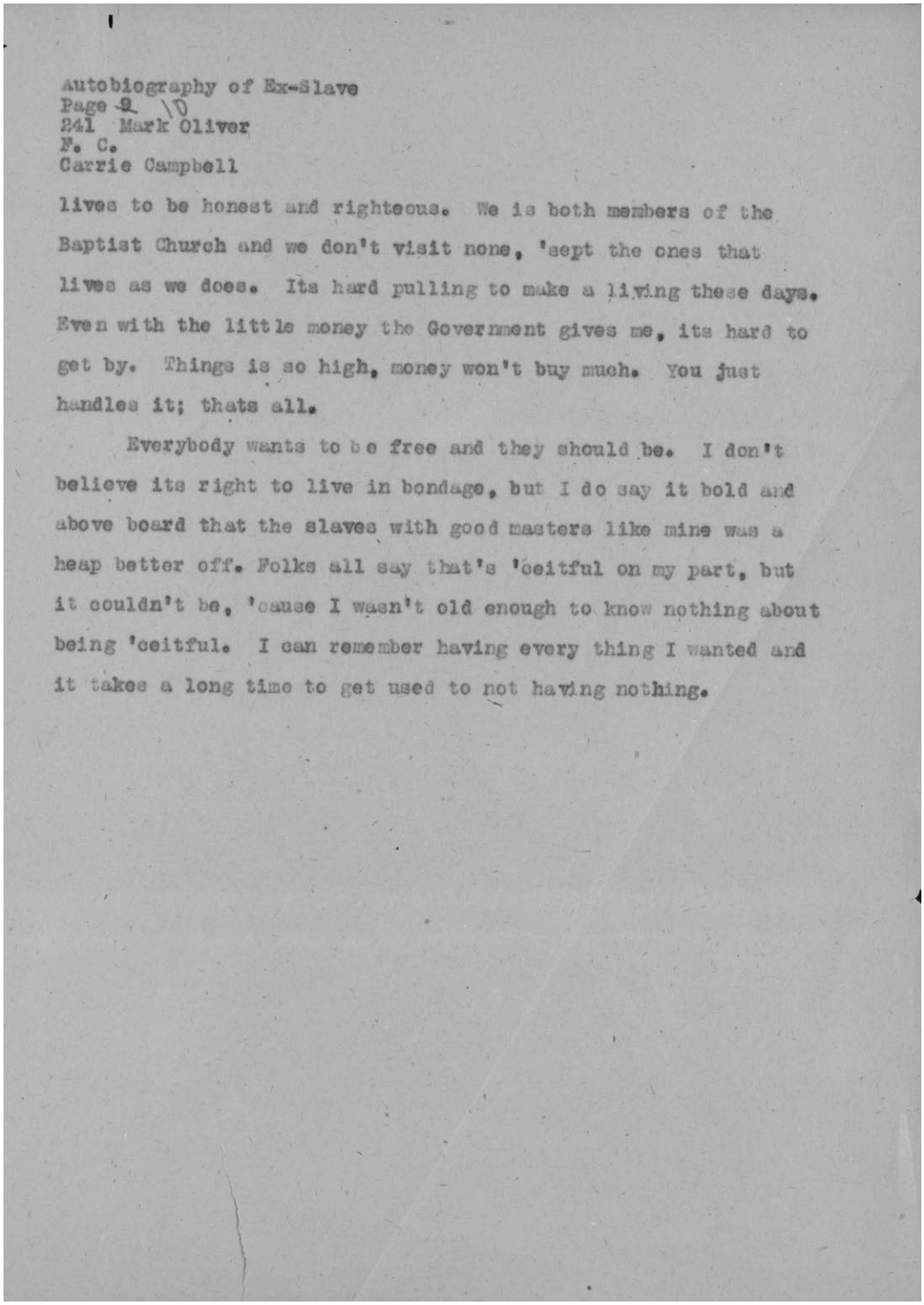
negroes. White teachers taught till the colored could learn to master the old Blue Back speller. When you get all there is, in that book its just the same as mastering the Bible. When I married my first wife, Linie, we was both dressed up in the best we had. Didn't get no special clothes for the occasion. We had four children. Two boys and two girls. Two of them is still living. The girl Carrie Belle is in Chicago, and the boy has been the cook in a restuarant in Clarksdale for years and years. I moved to Coahoma County in the year 1910. after my first wife died, I married Betsy and we is still living together. I am able to work a little yet. Up to this yearBetsy could pick cotton, but she ain't no 'count now 'cept to do our little cooking. She can't remember 'bout allthe noted men like I can. There is Abraham Lincoln, he was talked of much, 'cause he set us all free, and Jefferson Davis, he was a great man. He done his part for what he thought was right. He didn't think they had a right to take the slaves away from their owners, when they had done bought them. Some of the colored people thinks there ain't nobody like Booker T. Washington. I hears them talk about him, but for my part, I don't know nothing about his displays.

Nobody is raising their children up right these days. They got no manners. Don't come around the old folks, so fraid they will be asked to do something. Their mothers not much better. Don't come to the door to ask about us if we sick. Me and my wife

MARK OLIVER TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Mark Oliver, December 6, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Washington County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/washington/436/oliver-mark



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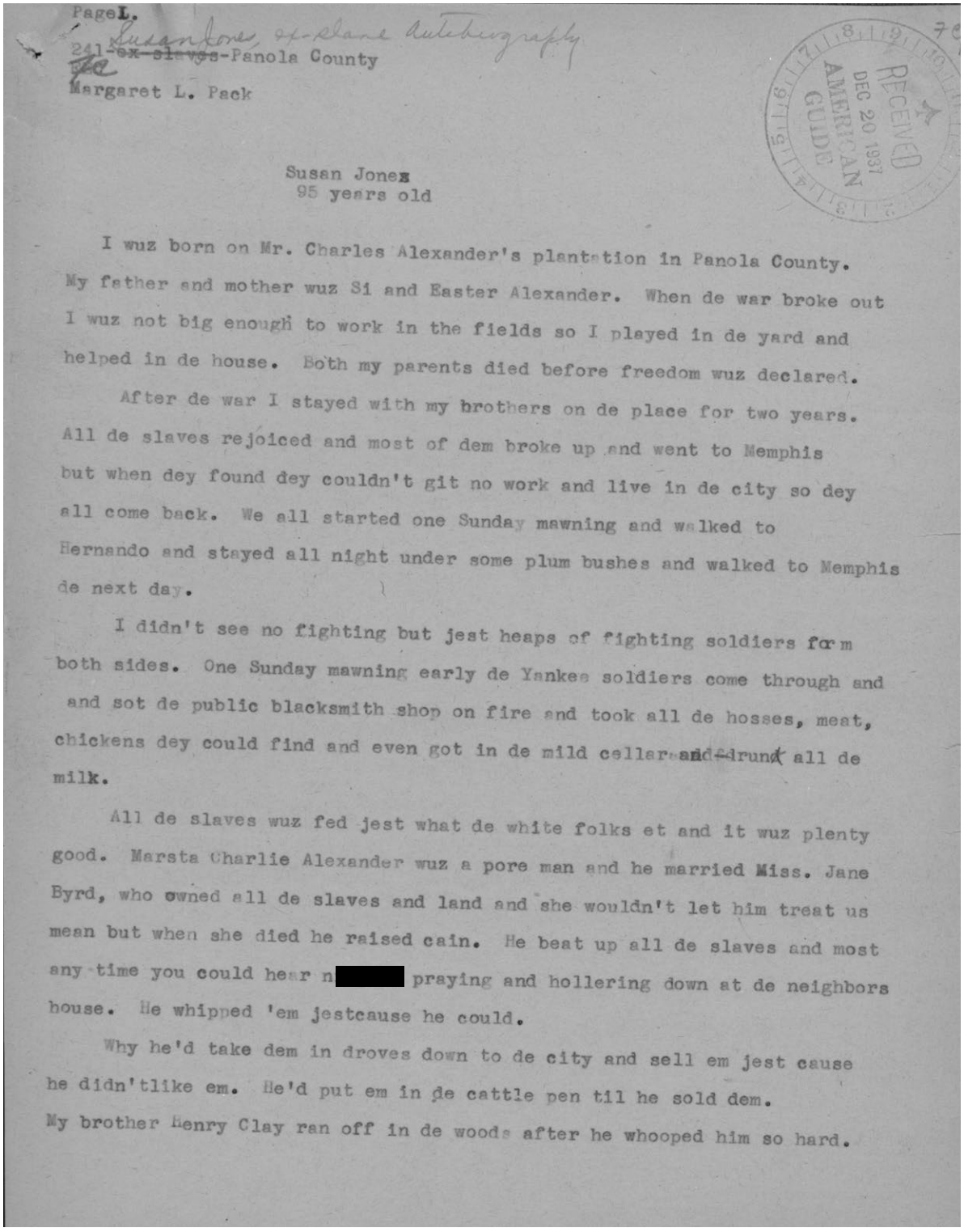
lives to be honest and righteous. We is both members of the Baptist Church and we don't visit none, 'sept the ones that lives as we does. Its hard pulling to make a living these days. Even with the little money the Government gives me, its hard to get by. Things is so high, money won't buy much. You just handles it; thats all.

Everybody wants to be free and they should be. I don't believe its right to live in bondage, but I do say it bold and above board that the slaves with good masters like mine was a heap better off. Folks all say that's 'ceitful on my part, but it couldn't be, 'cause I wasn't old enough to know nothing about being 'ceitful. I can remember having every thing I wanted and it takes a long time to get used to not having nothing.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/panola/436/jones-susan



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Susan Jones of Alone Autobiography
Margaret L. Pack

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Susan Jones
95 years old

I wuz born on Mr. Charles Alexander's plantation in Panola County. My father and mother wuz Si and Easter Alexander. When de war broke out I wuz not big enough to work in the fields so I played in de yard and helped in de house. Both my parents died before freedom wuz declared.

After de war I stayed with my brothers on de place for two years. All de slaves rejoiced and most of dem broke up and went to Memphis but when dey found dey couldn't git no work and live in de city so dey all come back. We all started one Sunday mawning and walked to Hernando and stayed all night under some plum bushes and walked to Memphis de next day.

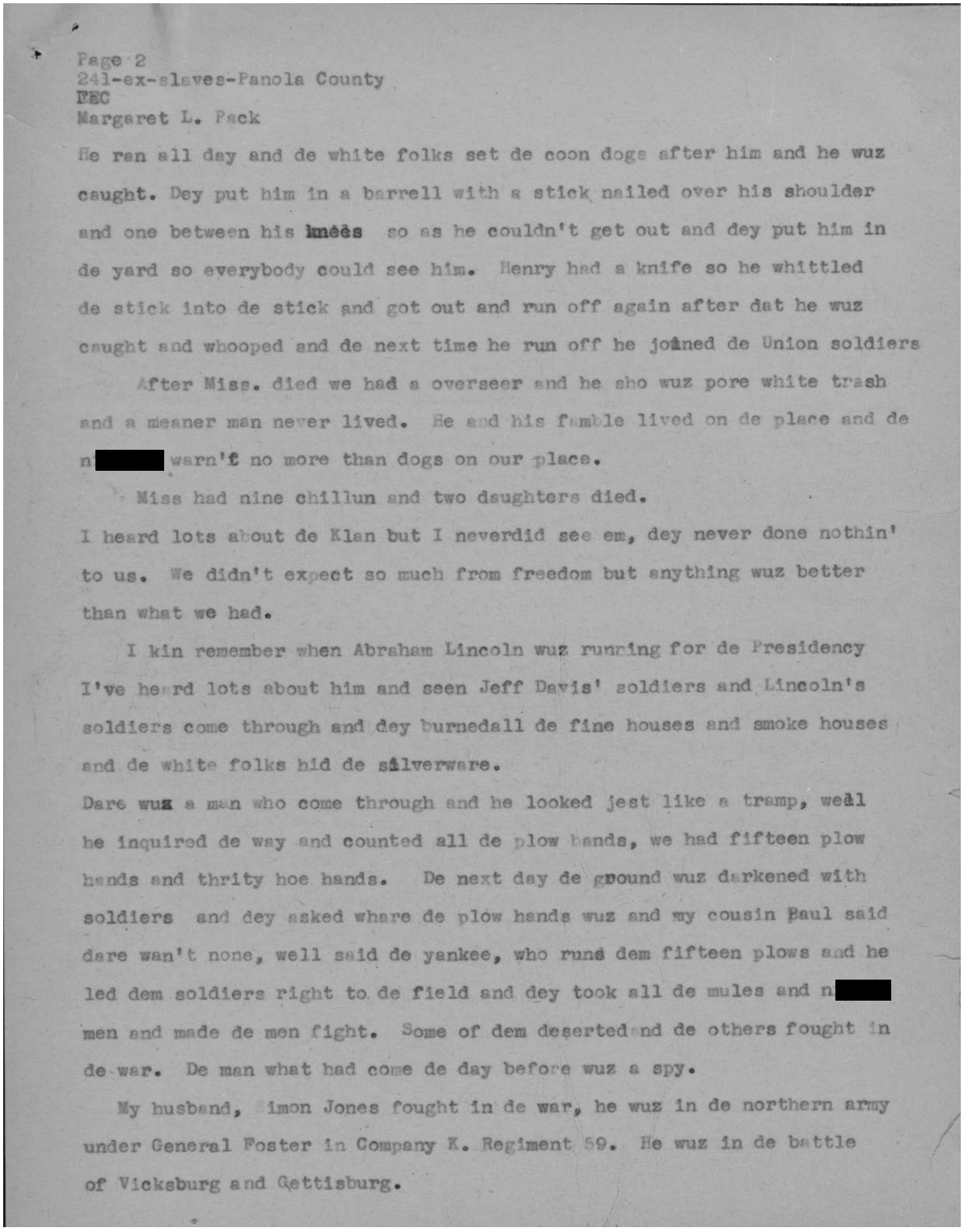
I didn't see no fighting but jest heaps of fighting soldiers form both sides. One Sunday mawning early de Yankee soldiers come through and and sot de public blacksmith shop on fire and took all de hosses, meat, chickens dey could find and even got in de mild cellar and drunk all de milk.

All de slaves wuz fed jest what de white folks et and it wuz plenty good. Marsta Charlie Alexander wuz a pore man and he married Miss. Jane Byrd, who owned all de slaves and land and she wouldn't let him treat us mean but when she died he raised cain. He beat up all de slaves and most any time you could hear n[redacted] praying and hollering down at de neighbors house. He whipped 'em jestcause he could.

Why he'd take dem in droves down to de city and sell em jest cause he didn'tlike em. He'd put em in de cattle pen til he sold dem. My brother Henry Clay ran off in de woods after he whooped him so hard.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/panola/436/jones-susan



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He ran all day and de white folks set de coon dogs after him and he wuz caught. Dey put him in a barrell with a stick nailed over his shoulder and one between his knees so as he couldn't get out and dey put him in de yard so everybody could see him. Henry had a knife so he whittled de stick into de stick and got out and run off again after dat he wuz caught and whooped and de next time he run off he joined de Union soldiers

After Miss. died we had a overseer and he sho wuz pore white trash and a meaner man never lived. He and his fumble lived on de place and de n[redacted] warn't no more than dogs on our place.

Miss had nine chillun and two dsughters died.

I heard lots about de Klan but I neverdid see em, dey never done nothin' to us. We didn't expect so much from freedom but anything wuz better than what we had.

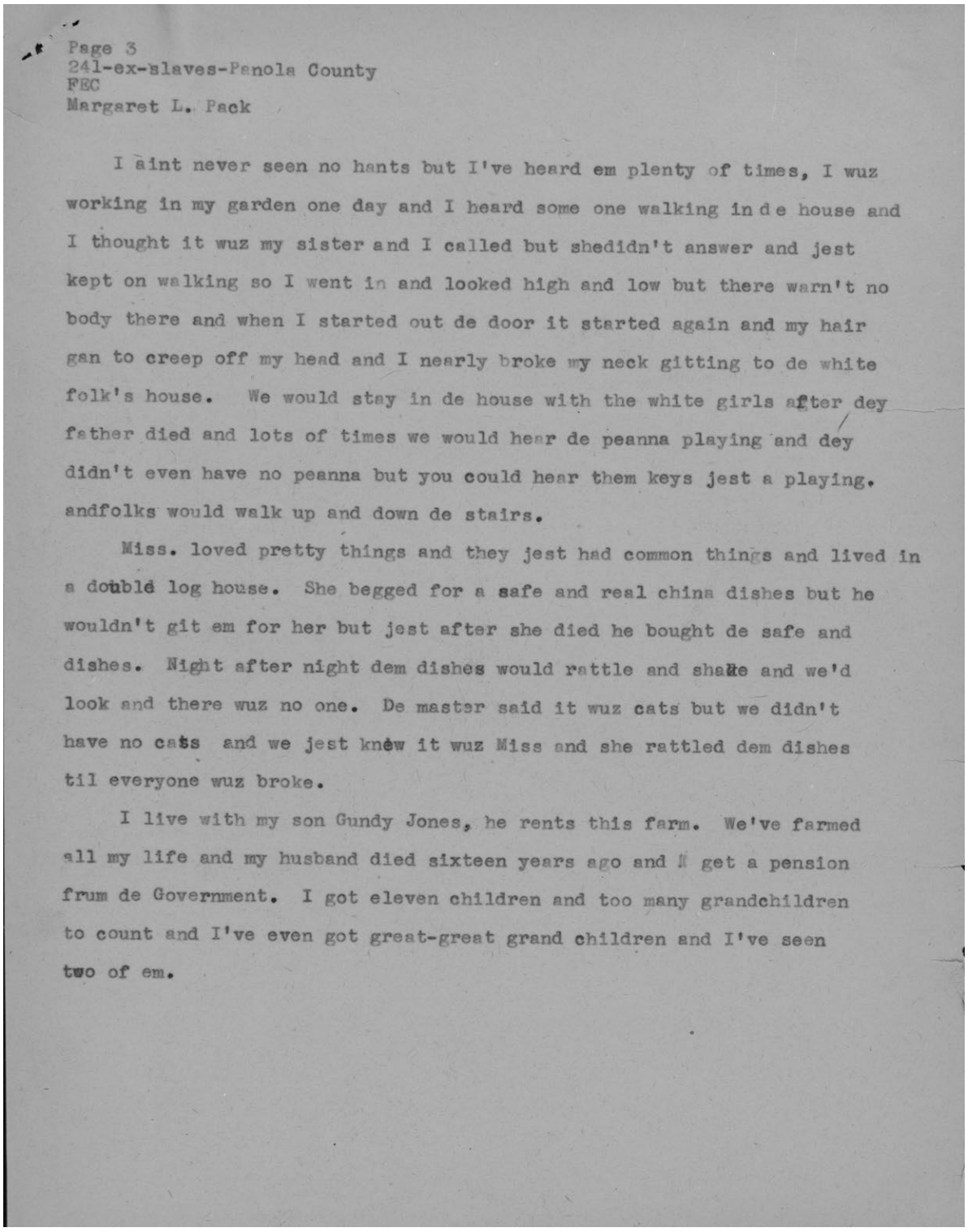
I kin remember when Abraham Lincoln wuz running for de Presidency I've heard lots about him and seen Jeff Davis' soldiers and Lincoln's soldiers come through and dey burnedall de fine houses and smoke houses and de white folks hid de silverware.

Dare wuz a man who come through and he looked jest like a tramp, well he inquired de way and counted all de plow hands, we had fifteen plow hands and thrity hoe hands. De next day de ground wuz darkened with soldiers and dey asked whare de plow hands wuz and my cousin Paul said dare wan't none, well said de yankee, who runs dem fifteen plows and he led dem soldiers right to de field and dey took all de mules and n[redacted] men and made de men fight. Some of dem deserted and de others fought in de war. De man what had come de day before wuz a spy.

My husband, Simon Jones fought in de war, he wuz in de northern army under General Foster in Company K. Regiment 59. He wuz in de battle of Vicksburg and Gettisburg.

SUSAN JONES TRANSCRIPT, REDACTED VERSION (CONT.)

Oral history transcript, Works Progress Administration, Susan Jones, December 20, 1937
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Series 0436, Panola County)
https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/panola/436/jones-susan



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I aint never seen no hants but I've heard em plenty of times, I wuz working in my garden one day and I heard some one walking in de house and I thought it wuz my sister and I called but shedidn't answer and jest kept on walking so I went in and looked high and low but there warn't no body there and when I started out de door it started again and my hair gan to creep off my head and I nearly broke my neck gitting to de white folk's house. We would stay in de house with the white girls after dey father died and lots of times we would hear de peanna playing and dey didn't even have no peanna but you could hear them keys jest a playing. andfolks would walk up and down de stairs.

Miss. loved pretty things and they jest had common things and lived in a double log house. She begged for a safe and real china dishes but he wouldn't git em for her but jest after she died he bought de safe and dishes. Night after night dem dishes would rattle and shake and we'd look and there wuz no one. De master said it wuz cats but we didn't have no cats and we jest knew it wuz Miss and she rattled dem dishes til everyone wuz broke.

I live with my son Gundy Jones, he rents this farm. We've farmed all my life and my husband died sixteen years ago and I get a pension frum de Government. I got eleven children and too many grandchildren to count and I've even got great-great grand children and I've seen two of em.

ORAL HISTORY COMPARISON CHART

	Mark Oliver	Ebenezer Brown	Susan Jones
How did this person describe enslavement?			
In what ways did enslaved people show agency?			

ORAL HISTORY COMPARISON CHART (CONT.)

	Mark Oliver	Ebenezer Brown	Susan Jones
What did this person remember about the Civil War?			
How did this person describe their life from the end of the Civil War to the 1930s?			

ORAL HISTORY COMPARISON CHART ANSWER KEY

	Mark Oliver	Ebenezer Brown	Susan Jones
How did this person describe enslavement?	-multi-generational family, raised by his grandparents after his mother died and his father joined the Union Army -June Ward (enslaver) purchased the family and brought them from Kentucky to Mississippi -cared for cows as a young boy -overseer described as threatening -described good food and clothing -activities were limited (curfew) -received medical care from a doctor	-describes how the enslaver (Bill McDowell) beat enslaved people -enslaved people did a variety of jobs on the farm. Some led to injuries or disability -children were workers, picking fruit, feeding animals, churning butter -Bill McDowell asked for money from his brother (possibly in debt?) -labor-intensive crops (potatoes, rice) -food was rationed each week -multiple accounts of violence and humiliation	-both parents died before the end of the Civil War -life of violence, beatings for no reason, humiliation, physical punishments -people could be sold and sent away without notice and against their will -could be sold away at a whim, inhumane
In what ways did enslaved people show agency?	-enslaved people raised chicken, sold eggs and meat -option to fish, hunt for game -when the enslaver left, enslaved people would run to the woods and hide until he returned -learning was “stolen” (learned to read) -prayer services led by community leaders (Aunt Sylvia)	-enslaved people formed strong family relationships -singing was part of work and life -singing was connected to prayer	-enslaved pople would try to run away (at great risk) multiple times -joined the Union Army as a way to escape enslavement

ORAL HISTORY COMPARISON CHART ANSWER KEY (CONT.)

	Mark Oliver	Ebenezer Brown	Susan Jones
What did this person remember about the Civil War?	-news about the war was transmitted orally from person to person -Union soldiers took or destroyed large quantities of food and goods	-encounter with Union soldiers in the Civil War who took food and killed animals	-soldiers (on both sides were feared) - they hid the silverware -Union soldiers stole or destroyed food -some enslaved people joined the Union Army, others were forced to join -some enslaved people joined the Union Army and then ran away -her husband fought at the Battles of Vicksburg and Gettysburg
How did this person describe their life from the end of the Civil War to the 1930s?	-after the Civil War, the family moved away but then moved back to the community -does not describe any experience with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) -heard of people voting or serving in office, but no one does now (suspects they cannot pay the tax) -worked at an oil mill, his children attended a segregated school -respects Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, doesn't understand Booker T. Washington	-enslaver asked formerly enslaved people to stay -workers were paid but then charged for food -hard to make money (debt cycle) -described an encounter with the "white caps" (KKK)	-says that she did not experience the KKK -after the war, some enslaved people went to Memphis but couldn't find work and returned -lives with her son, who rents his farm (likely a sharecropper) -has a pension from the government (service in the Union Army) -has 11 children but hasn't met all her grandchildren (implying they live far away—Great Migration?)

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