

# Elijah Greene

Charleston SC 12/25/1843-c. 1950 Interviewed by Works Progress Administration Augustus Ladson, 1937. Original Transcript can be found via the US Library of Congress.

Differences between the audio version and print version can be found in *Before Freedom: When I Just can remember*, edited by Belinda Hurmence 1989 Pages 63-67. All quotations are Elijah's and attention is paid in spelling and punctuation to convey his speech pattern and tonal inflections from the recording.

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"I was born in Charleston at 82 King Street December 25<sup>th</sup> 1843,

The house is still there.

My Ma and Pa was Kate and John Greene.

My Ma had 7 children and I am the last of them.

Their names are Henry, Ezekiel, Ellis, Nathanael, Robin, Michael,  
and myself.

All my brothers was farm hands for our master George W. Jones.

I did all the housework till the war, [American Civil War, 1861-1865] when I was given to Mr. George W. Jones son, William H. Jones, as his 'daily give servent

whose duty it was to clean his boots, shoes, sword and make his coffee.

Master's farm was about 25 acers, with about 18 slave.

The overseer blow the horn,

Which was a conch shell,

at 6 in the morning.

and every slave better answer when the roll was called at 7.

The Slaves didn't have to work on Saturday.

Mr. [Thomas] Ryan had a private jail on Queen Street near Planter's Hotel. [Current site of Dock Street Theatre]

He was very cruel.

He would lick [whip or lash] his slaves to death.

Very seldom his slaves survive a whipping.

He was the opposite to Governor Aiken, who lived on the northwest corner of Elizabeth and June [Judith] streets.

He had several rice plantations. Hundreds of his slaves he didn't know.

Not till John C Calhoun's body was carried down Boundary Street was the name changed in his honor.

He is buried in St. Philip's Churchyard, across the street,  
with a laurel tree planted at his head.

Four men an' me dig his grave,  
an' I clean the spot where his monument now stands.

I never did like Calhoun.

Cause he hated the Negro.

No man was ever hated, as much as him, by a group of people.

The Work House was on Magazine Street, built by Mr. Columbus C [G]. Trumbo[one]

On Chalmers Street was the slave market where slaves were taken to Vendue range and auctioned off.

At the foot of Lawrence Street, opposite East Bay Street, on the other side of the trolley track, is where Mr. Alonzo white kep' and sell slaves from his kitchen.

He was a slave broker who had a house that extended almost to the train tracks.

Which is about three hundred yards going to the waterfront.

No train or trolley track was there then,

cause there was only one railroad here

The Southern

The depot was on Ann Street.

When slaves run away

And their masters catch em

To the stockade they go,

Where they'd be whipped every other week for a number of months.

And for God's sake, don't let a slave be catch with a pencil and paper!

That was a major crime!

You might as well had killed your master or missus.

After the war, I did garden work.

I was a janitor at Benedict College in Columbia for two years and at Claflin in Orangeburg for twelve.

The presidents under which I worked was

Alan Webster, grandson of the Dictionary maker,

J.C Coop

and Mr. Dunstan.

Now all that is past, and I'm livin' from hand to mouth.

The Bank took all my money an' I can't work.

I do the collections for my landlord and he give me a room free.

If it wasn't for that

I don't know what I'd do.