

Former Slave Recalls Reconstruction Era

She Was One Of York's First Black Teachers

When Eliza Hill White was 100 years old in 1959, she was interviewed by Virginia Davis. Mrs. White had been born into slavery near Tirzah in York County and had a keen memory of her childhood and of the terrible years of the Reconstruction Era that followed the Civil War.



Nearby
History
**Louise
Pettus**

Eliza's father lived on the Sam Johnson farm; her mother and the children lived on Robert Quinn's farm over a mile away. The father came every Saturday and stayed until Sunday night when he returned to work the crops on Johnson's farm until the following Saturday.

Eliza had few memories of the Civil War itself but had vivid memories of the years afterward when the Ku Klux Klan was very active. Her father was hard-working and ambitious, the very type of man that the KKK feared. Eliza's father had acquired land and built his own home. KKK members broke into the home and plundered it. After that, the family would work the farm by day but walk more than a mile to sleep in a house owned by a Faris family who allowed them to use it.

In the late 1870s when recruiters came through this area selling tickets for Liberia with promises of great prosperity for those blacks willing to take a chance, Eliza's father sold the land and house for \$3,000 and bought tickets. Fortunately, he left the bulk of his money with Arnold Friedheim, a Rock Hill merchant, in case the Liberian venture did not work out.

In 1959, Eliza could still remember the giant ocean waves and the disappointment they felt with conditions in Liberia. The family soon returned to America, but her uncle, Solomon Hill, and his family remained in Liberia.

Eliza was an exceptionally bright child. When she was 5 years of age, she had learned to read. It was against the laws of the state to teach a slave to read and write, but no one checked on that sort of thing. She managed to attend Scotia Seminary at Concord, N.C., and Lincoln Academy in Kings Mountain, N.C. As a result Eliza Hill became one of the first black

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teachers in York County. She taught at Friendship when it was a high school.

At the age of 27 Eliza Hill married a medical doctor and preacher by the name of White. Respected members of the communities, the Whites operated a store in Rock Hill for 50 years.

Major Woods, once a slave on the Mount Gallant Plantation near Rock Hill, was interviewed in 1950 by Elizabeth Reed. He remembered when Cadwalader Jones and four of his sons went off to the Civil War.

Woods was standing in the yard the day the four sons returned. Their mother was there and when she saw Iredell, "Ward," Allen and Johnny Jones, Woods said that she exclaimed, "Oh, my sons, my sons! I'm so glad to see you all get back!" And then she fainted on the spot.

This was right after "bummers" had come through, looting and pillaging the countryside. Woods witnessed the army followers kill Col. Jones' cattle and sheep and throw them into their wagons. He was especially conscious of the loss for he had been taught to read and write and keep the plantation account books. Woods had done the accounts and worked in the house in the morning and worked in the fields in the afternoon.

After the war, Woods went to the plantation of Iredell Jones. Jones was in frail health from the years of exposure. When Jones died, "Uncle" Major Woods came into Rock Hill and supported himself by doing odd jobs. His one-horse wagon and mule were a familiar sight in Rock Hill. He was popular and never lacked work. He said he could remember when Trade Street (now Dave Lyle Boulevard) had only three shacks on it.

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