

## [Sallie Brown]

Marie Reese

Lowndes County, Ala.

The Clifford Hawkins Family. Scene at the Reese ante-bellum plantation mansion on Southwest outskirts of Lowndesboro.

From interview with Mrs. Hawkins and her daughter, Mrs. Cecil Bozeman. Hawkins family moving, address Hope Hull, Ala.

Bozeman address Lowndesboro, Alabama.

### SALLIE BROWN

In the environments of the small village of Lowndesboro is the remains of an ante-bellum plantation mansion which was built in the early part of the 1800 century, by a pioneer for his family. On down through the years, the pioneer has passed on, the children, nine in number, left the home nest. The beautiful daughters graced the homes of prominence in different towns of Alabama, while the sons who were victims of the civil strife, are sleeping in a graveyard nearby.

After the family circle was broken, the old mansion was unoccupied, save by the memories and ghosts of other days. It passed with the surrounding plantations, into other hands and was used to house the tenant farmer. Its beautiful architectural attractiveness, the memories of its former grandeur and cultural atmosphere were forgotten. Sentiment was a thing of the past. It was purchased by one who chose to register the dollars instead of sentimental memories. The tenant family moved into what was a mere "shell" of what was once a most interesting specimen of the plantation mansion of the wealthy farmer. Sallie

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and her family, consisting of her husband, herself and 13 children were moved in. Sallie was mentioned first due to fact that she was the “bread winner” and the responsibility fell on her shoulders. From the “concrete ribbon” which is the southern bounds of this small village the 2 top of the old house can be seen at a distance surrounded by a grove of giant oaks which no doubt sheltered the “Red Sticks” when they held dominion over these environs.

The approach is made to the home by a road which winds around and about through a cotton field until the oak lawn is reached. Several centuries old trees stand to guard the old mansion, which had it not been for the wonderful durability of the material used in its construction, would have years ago decayed and been but a memory. The outlook was one of blankness and desolation. No yard, no fence or flowers. The tenant family were too busy fighting for the necessities of life to adorn their surroundings.

The beautiful porticoes that were supported by massive colonial columns, the lovely shuttered blinds were all gone, destroying the type and outlines of the once handsome house. Glasses that were once charming, and rare sidelights and fanlights were broken out and replaced with boards and a pillow stuffed to keep out the wind and cold.

Instead of steps, the entrance into the house was made by use of a box, which did not look that it would stand one's weight. The interior was far from being pleasant, but was corresponding in appearance with in appearance with the external. Gloomy, empty and most uninviting, the windows all out, walls dingy and all smoked up, caused from cooking just anywhere with unsuitable conveniences. Plaster falling in most places, causing an uneasiness that a piece might fall any minute and your head might be reminded of how heavy it was made in that period.

The large rooms and hallways were not suited to the furniture and household goods of this tenant farmer family. The beds and trunks and a few other necessary pieces were virtually lost in the spacious apartments. The family had increased so rapidly, and the income

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had failed to make same record, so they had no funds to invest in furniture and scarcely comforts. 3 There were 13 children, whose birthdays ranged from high school girls to babies, the oldest of list being girls which made the pathway to a livelihood harder and more difficult. When the visit was made she was called from the “washtub” and seemed pleased to talk and no doubt needed the rest from her laborious task. She entered with a baby swinging on either side of her dress, and as a matter there were so many they were in evidence everywhere, and what was said to be “sandwiched” in.

It seemed that necessarily she was at the head of the family. She had to take the initiative. The old song “Everybody Works at my House but my old Man” was the “motto.” He had a weak (?) heart, the doctors said (?) and could not. Sallie endorsed him and excused him on all sides, doing double duty and working her poor fingers to the bone for him and his. While he sat with the weak (?) heart in the shade of the nearby stores, exchanging gossip and jokes with those who chanced to linger with him.

On Saturday, the week-end and marketing day, it was he who went into the city to trade and spend the money she had earned by hard toil. She and tge oldest children which were mostly girls, tilled the land and did their utmost best to “wrest a scant living from it. They had a small cotton acreage, some corn and potatoes, etc. In addition a nice small bunch of cows which gave milk enough for the home use and a small daily shipment. Also she raised chickens, eggs andan excellent vegetable garden, these helping out the family living expenses.

Sallie was strong, halthy and most cheerful. But despite her willing mind and willing hand her expenses could not be met and she was compelled to “take in washing,” at a few dollars a month. Finally seeing this was not sufficient, she appealed to the charity people of the village and they gladly and generously went to her assistance. 4 The members of Home Missionary Society took up her case and gave them continued aid, however a humourous coincidence occurred during the period of time that she and her cause were “under their wings”. Sallie was in need of clothing for the anticipated addition to the family.

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The ladies of the Home Mission responded to the call with a suitable layette, but when the "event" came about there were two additions made instead of one, and the little outfit had an encore! It had to be duplicated, as there were two most adorable little girls. Little Ellen and Helen.

History repeats itself, and believe it or not, ere many summers passed she made the same appeal to the good ladies and they prepared a second layette and little Herbert and Hubert arrived! Two most precious little boys. Both sets of twins are identical and most attractive. About this time the ladies were "outdone" and determined to give her a "call." We're willing to assist in reason, but called a halt, as to "duplicating."

Sally and family were Mormons or latter day Saints and the belief in large families were one of the most devout characteristics. They never attended Sunday School and the attendance of services at a church other than their own was strictly against their faith. Occasionally, but very rarely, they went into Montgomery to worship and sometimes an intinerant Mormon visited their home. All of the children who were the school age were sent, via the bus that passed within sight of their home. With all the hardships and handicaps in their pathways they reached out for an education and went to school as best they could.

On an average about six went at a time and it was an uphill attemp to equip them with wearing apparel, food for lunches and books but where the will is the way comes. Daily there was a mad rush to get breakfast, fix lunches and catch the bus down at the Big gate on the highway.

Sallie speaks of preparations to this and the proceeding night. After 5 the little ones are fed and tucked in bed and she begins and as many children as she has to attend school she collects their clothing and makes as many piles, consisting of clothes, caps, books, etc. so as to facilitate matters next morning, when during the cold winter mornings the Benton School Bus blows all too soon. The older children assist with the smaller ones and while

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the mother prepares the early meal and the lunch boxes which are most often filled with a large baked yam, they get in line and in readiness.

She lines them up in a row and the little faces are scrubbed and heads brushed. Nature has been most generous to them in regard to health and appearance. Each and every one is pretty and to an extent attractive and will "get by."

As time passed two of the girls married. Two others got too "grownish" to work in the field barefooted as they were accustomed to do. Edna, the oldest girl married and passed out of the picture and as her family increased so rapidly she most naturally had her own responsibilities. Fannie May married at fifteen and also passed from the household picture. Three babies in less than that many years was her "allotment". Her health gave way and she had to be sent to the Sanatorium for a while (thereby giving the hard working husband who had gotten a good start) a set-back. Grace and Gene who were "near-twins" and very pretty, got "boy-struck" and threw all attention to "good-thing".

The weak (?) hearted father still spent his time at the crossroads stores and continued to discuss the crops, weather, etc., etc. stimulated by an occasional "done". Thus it is seen that the ranks of Sallie's force are thinned out, which at best were too feeble.

Grace ran away and married, but stayed married only a short time. She returned and by intercession of kind friends was put on the N.Y.A., a sewing project for young women. She puts in two weeks at \$6.50 per week and is taught to sew. Also a certain amount of material is given her free each month for her personal use and she is taught to make it up on the project.

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Gene is still "courting" and Sallie working by day and worrying by night and begins to see the "handwriting on the wall." Her help is inadequate, she can't "make the grade." By the

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hardest toil she has raised a nice little drove of cows though the years. Many little mouths have yet to be fed and little bodies covered.

“She thinks of the “mortgage now”. Necessity forces her to “contact” [?]. He is hard. He entices the needy prospect and after he or she is “tied” hard fast, he says his dollar has two eagles on it, meaning he lends dollar for dollar. The farmer “in tough” can't meet this, but too [late?] he is “tied.” The victims have to get someone else to pay him out, thereby getting deeper in the [mire?] or he is closed out and has to begin all over.

Also the landlord sees that the house room is wasted. Sallie's small face is too weak to produce. She is given a notice! The house and land will “cash in” more being occupied by larger family and she and the flock is adrift. As a consolation she is conceded a milk cow, etc., and for potatoes and her small amount of furniture. On moving she will have to make a bottom start, and in time her life's program will be doubtless a repetition. She is bright and cheerful, still “loves her man” and seemingly willing to meet life and its hardships with a smile.

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S.B.J.