

Donna Wyant Howell

The Lives of Slave Children

JACOB BRANCH: Us chillen start to work soon's [as soon as] us could toddle. First us gather firewood. Iffen it freezin' or hot, us have to go to toughen us up. When us git li'l bigger, us tend de cattle and feed hosses and hawgs. By time us good sprouts, us pickin' cotton and pullin' cane. Us ain't never idle.

ANNA MILLER: My work 'twas helpin' wid de chores and pick up de brush whar my pappy was a-clearin' de land. When I gits bigger, I'se plowed, hoed, and done all de goin' to de mill. De weavin' was de night work, after workin' all de day in de fiel'. I'se helps card, spins, and cuts de thread.

WILL DAILY: I seen some slaves sold off dat big auction block and de little chillun sho' would be a-cryin' when dey takes deir mothers away from dem.

HENRY KIRK MILLER: As fast as us children got big enough to hire out, she [the mistress] leased us to anybody who would pay for our hire. I was put out with another widow woman who lived about 20 miles. She worked me on her cotton plantation. Old Mistress sold one of my sisters and took cotton for pay.

THOMAS COLE: My sister's name was Sarah and my brother's name was Ben. We lived in one room of the Big House, and allus had a good bed to sleep in and good things to eat at the same table, after de white folks gits through.

LUCY GALLMAN: I was a girl in slavery, worked in the fields from the time I could work at all and was whipped if I didn't work. I worked hard.

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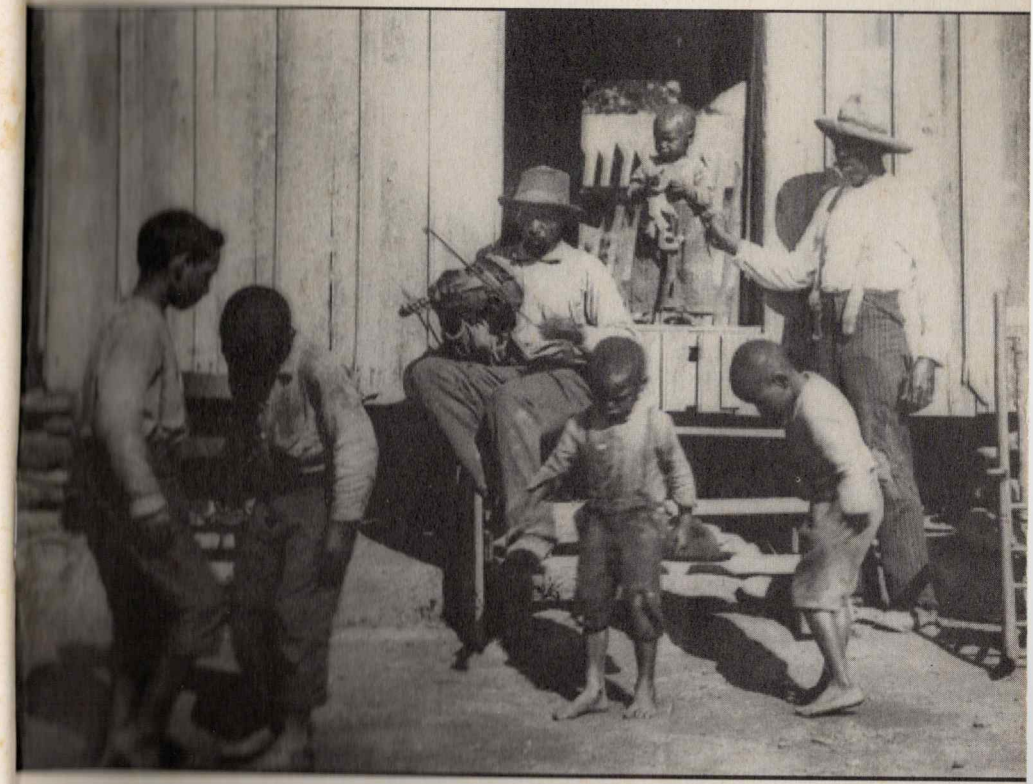
Chapter 5:
THE LIVES OF SLAVE CHILDREN



Compiled by Donna Wyant Howell