

## Interview with Eugenia Martin about Reconstruction, November 1939

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... "When we first came to Atlanta husband had a home built, and at his death he hadn't finished paying for it. I had to take hold and try to pay for it for I didn't have any children or anyone to help me; the job was mine. I had the notes readjusted and they/ were cut down to \$36.00 a month. [this?] was as low as I could get them because the house cost a lot , and when he lived he was able to keep up the high notes. His salary was good and, being a general officer of the church , he was paid [?] and regularly. With notes on the home of \$36.00 , plus my living expense and the general upkeep of the house I found it next to impossible to live. Of course husband left me a little money, very little however, at his death and this was soon exhausted. I then tried to get work to maintain myself. I made every attempt to get work in private industry and, being unsuccessful, I was compelled to get work on WPA. I was reluctant at first to go to WPA, for heretofore it had seemingly been the consensus of many that only the shiftless, lazy, and lower types resorted to relief agencies. The need of work was so great that this barrier was soon eradicated. Of course, as many, many others, I'm sure, I experienced the 6 humiliations that go with the process of securing this work and it was disappointing at times but I was growing more and more in need and this caused me to keep on trying. I finally succeeded in being certified and then was later assigned to work.

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"I was assigned to a project known as the Survey of White Collar and Skilled Negroes. This was a most interesting work. We first went out and found all the white collar and skilled workers among the Negroes here in Atlanta. This was done through a house to house canvas. These workers were interviewed as to [?] their father's occupation, their schooling, and their occupation. We found those who had followed their father's occupation and those who had deviated. We checked on how many who had migrated from rural to urban localities, occupations trained for , and whether they were engaged in those occupations [?] or whether , because of employment conditions , they were forced to work at occupations not trained for. I enjoyed it so much. After we got all of the information together, it was then compiled in tables and put in book form.

"I worked hard every day and went to school at night, where I took a two-year commercial course. I completed the course as prescribed by the Board of Education, City of Atlanta.

"After that project ended I was sent to the sewing project, and here too found the work interesting. I had a knowledge of sewing and because of this experience I was put over a group of women as 'floor woman', and like the former project I enjoyed it much. After this work I was transferred to the Housekeepers Aid Project. This was a most unusual experience for me. I had worked in the church, coming in contact with the poor and needy, the / sick and suffering, but it was nothing compared with that which 7 I found or experienced on this project. I never realized before just what was out there in those alleys, in the slums, the poverty and illiteracy that existed there. I am glad I have had the opportunity to work on WPA, first because it has provided me a livelihood and second for the experience I've gotten, which I wouldn't have gotten otherwise. It enabled me to keep up my notes on

my home. I haven't been able to save anything since working on WPA but it enabled me to carry on. I simply could not have held out this long had it not been for WPA. The experience caused me to care for the sick [?] and the old age pensioners and performing their household work which they were unable to do. In fact, all sorts of human suffering has been witnessed in my work.