



It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw

Don Tate

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Growing up as an enslaved boy on an Alabama cotton farm, Bill Traylor worked all day in the hot fields. When slavery ended, Bill's family stayed on the farm as sharecroppers. There Bill grew to manhood, raised his own family, and cared for the land and his animals. By 1935 Bill was eighty-one and all alone on his farm. So he packed his bag and moved to Montgomery, the capital of Alabama. Lonely and poor, he wandered the busy downtown streets. But deep within himself Bill had a reservoir of memories of working and living on the land, and soon those memories blossomed into pictures. Bill began to draw people, places, and animals from his earlier life, as well as scenes of the city around him. Today Bill Traylor is considered to be one of the most important self-taught American folk artists. Winner of Lee & Low's New Voices Award Honor, *It Jes' Happened* is a lively tribute to this man who has enriched the world with more than twelve hundred warm, energetic, and often humorous pictures.

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