

WPA Slave Narratives  
Indiana  
Events: Things Seen and Heard Tell Of  
John Sepich, ed.

George W. Arnold IN-1

On this plantation George W. Arnold was born and the child was allowed to live in a cabin with his relatives and declares that he never heard one of them speak an unkind word about Master Oliver Arnold or any member of his family. "Happiness and contentment and a reasonable amount of food and clothes seemed to be all we needed," said the now white-haired man.

Only a limited memory of Civil War days is retained by the old man but the few events recalled are vividly described by him. "Mother, my young brother, my sister and I were walking along one day. I don't remember where we had started but we passed under the fort at Wartrace. A battle was in progress and a large cannon was fired above us and we watched the huge ball sail through the air and saw the smoke of the cannon pass over our heads. We poor children were almost scared to death but our mother held us close to her and tried to comfort us. The next morning, after, we were safely at home ... we were proud we had seen that much of the great battle and our mother told us the war was to give us freedom."

Mittie Blakeley IN-4

She remembers once an old woman slave had displeased her master about something. He had a pit dug, and boards placed over the hole. The woman was made to lie on the boards, face down, and she was beaten until the blood gushed from her body; she was left there and bled to death.

Carl Boone IN-5

The most terrible treatment of any slave, is told by my father in a story of a slave on a neighboring plantation, owned by Daniel Thompson. "After committing a small wrong, Master Thompson became angry, tied his slave to a whipping post and beat him terribly. Mrs. Thompson begged him to quit whipping, saying, 'you might kill him,' and the master replied that he aimed to kill him. He then tied the slave behind a horse and dragged him over a fifty acre field until the slave was dead. As a punishment for this terrible deed, master Thompson was compelled to witness the execution of his own son, one year later. The story is as follows:

A neighbor to Mr. Thompson, a slave owner by name of Kay Van Cleve, had been having some trouble with one of his young male slaves, and had promised the slave a whipping. The slave was a powerful man and Mr. Van Cleve was afraid to undertake the job of whipping him alone. He called for help from his neighbors, Daniel

Thompson and his son Donald. The slave, while the Thompsons were coming, concealed himself in a horse-stall in the barn and hid a large knife in the manger.

After the arrival of the Thompsons, they and Mr. Van Cleve entered the stall in the barn. Together, the three white men made a grab for the slave, when the slave suddenly made a lunge at the elder Mr. Thompson with the knife, but missed him and stabbed Donald Thompson.

The slave was overpowered and tied, but too late, young Donald was dead.

The slave was tried for murder and sentenced to be hanged. At the time of the hanging, the first and second ropes used broke when the trap was sprung. For a while the executioner considered freeing the slave because of his second failure to hang him, but the law said, "He shall hang by the neck until dead," and the third attempt was successful."

#### Angie Boyce IN-7

It is said that the slaves were in constant dread of the Rebel soldiers and when they would hear of their coming they would hide the baby "Angie" and cover her over with leaves.

It was Henry King who bought his and his wife's freedom. He sent his wife and baby Angie to Indiana, but upon their arrival they were arrested and returned to Kentucky. They were placed in the Louisville jail and lodged in the same cell with large Brutal and drunken Irish woman. The jail was so infested with bugs and fleas that the baby Angie cried all night. The white woman crazed with drink became enraged at the cries of the child and threatened to "bash its brains out against the wall if it did not stop crying". The mother, Mrs. King was forced to stay awake all night to keep the white woman from carrying out her threat.

The next morning the Negro mother was tried in court and when she produced her free papers she was asked why she did not show these papers to the arresting officers. She replied that she was afraid that they would steal them from her. She was exonerated from all charges and sent back to Indiana with her baby.

#### George Taylor Burns IN-11

Little George clung to his mother but strong hands tore away his clasp. Then he watched her cross a distant hill, chained to a long line of departing slaves. George never saw his parents again and although the memory of his mother is vivid he scarcely remembers his father's face. He said, "Father was black but my mother was a bright mulatto."

Nothing impressed the little boy with such unforgettable imagery as the cold which descended upon Greogery's Landing one winter. Motherless, hungry, desolate and unloved, he often cried himself to sleep at night while each day he was compelled to carry wood. One morning he failed to come when the horn was sounded to call the slaves to breakfast. "Old Missus went to the Negro quarters to see what was wrong" and "She was horrified when she found I was frozen to the bed."

She carried the small bundle of suffering humanity to the kitchen of her home and placed him near the big oven. When the warmth thawed the frozen child the toes fell from his feet. "Old Missus told me I would never be strong enough to do hard work, and she had the neighborhood shoemaker fashion shoes too short for any body's feet but mine," said Uncle George.

### Belle Butler IN-12

Belle Butler, the daughter of Chaney Mayer, tells of the hardships her mother endured during her days of slavery. Chaney was owned by Jesse Coffey, "a mean old devil." He would whip his slaves for the slightest misdemeanor, and many times for nothing at all--just enjoyed seeing them suffer. Many a time Jesse would whip a slave, throw him down, and gouge his eyes out. Such a cruel act!

Chaney's sister was also a slave on the Coffey plantation. One day their master decided to whip them both. After whipping them very hard, he started to throw them down, to go after their eyes. Chaney grabbed one of his hands, her sister grabbed his other hand, each girl bit a finger entirely off of each hand of their master. This, of course, hurt him so very bad he had to stop their punishment and never attempted to whip them again. He told them he would surely put them in his pocket (sell them) if they ever dared to try anything like that again in life.

Not so long after their fight, Chaney was given to a daughter of their master, and her sister was given to another daughter and taken to Passaic County, N.C.

One woman left the plantation without a pass. The overseer caught her and whipped her to death.

### Joseph William Carter IN-13

Both the Gardner and Smith families lived near Gallatin, Tennessee, in Sumner County. The Smith plantation was situated on the Cumberland River and commanded a beautiful view of river and valley acres but Malvina was very unhappy. She did not enjoy the Smith family and longed for her old friends back in the Gardner home.

One night the little girl gathered together her few personal belongings and started back to her old home.

Afraid to travel the highway the child followed a path she knew through the forest; but alas, she found the way long and beset with perils. A number of uncivil Indians were encamped on the side of the Cumberland mountains and a number of the young braves were out hunting that night. Their stealthy approach was heard by the little fugitive girl but too late for her to make an escape. An Indian called "Buck" captured her and by all the laws of the tribe was his own property. She lived for almost a year in the teepee with Buck and during that time learned much about Indian habits.

When Malvina was missed from her new home, Mr. Smith went to the Gardner plantation to report his loss, not finding her there a wide search was made for her but the Indians kept her thoroughly concealed. Miss Puss, however, kept up the search. She knew the Indians were encamped on the mountain and believed she would find the girl with them. The Indians finally broke camp and the members of the Gardner home watched them start on their journey and Miss Puss soon discovered Malvina among the other maidens in the procession.

The men of the Gardner plantation, white and black, overtook the Indians and demanded the girl be given up to them. The Indians reluctantly gave her to them. Miss Puss Gardner took her back and Mr. Gardner paid Mr. Smith the original purchase price and Malvina was once more installed in her old home.

Malvina Gardner was not yet twelve years of age when she was captured by the Indians and was scarcely thirteen years of age when she became the mother of Joseph William, son of the uncivil Indian, "Buck". The child was born in the Gardner

home and mother and child remained there. The mother was a good slave and loved the members of the Gardner family and her son and she were loved by them in return.

One story that the aged man relates is of an encounter with an eagle and follows: "George Irish, a white boy near my own age, was the son of the miller. His father operated a sawmill on Bledsoe Creek near where it empties into the Cumberland river. George and I often went fishing together and had a good dog called Hector. Hector was as good a coon dog as there was to be found in that part of the country. That day we boys climbed up on the mill shed to watch the swans in Bledsoe Creek and we soon noticed a great big fish hawk catching the goslings. It made us mad and we decided to kill the hawk. I went back to the house and got an old flint lock rifle Mars. Mooney had let me carry when we went hunting. When I got back where George was, the big bird was still busy catching goslings. The first shot I fired broke its wing and I decided I would catch it and take it home with me. The bird put up a terrible fight, cutting me with its bill and talons. Hector came running and tried to help me but the bird cut him until his howls brought help from the field. Mr. Jacob Greene was passing along and came to us. He tore me away from the bird but I could not walk and the blood was running from my body in dozens of places. Poor old Hector, was crippled and bleeding for the bird was a big eagle and would have killed both of us if help had not come." The old negro man still shows signs of his encounter with the eagle. He said it was captured and lived about four months in captivity but its wing never healed. The body of the eagle was stuffed with wheat bran, by Greene Harris, and placed in the court yard in Sumner County.

"I saw many of the slaves beaten to death. Master Gardner didn't do any of the whippin' but every few months he sent to Mississippi for negro rulers to come to the plantation and whip all the negroes that had not obeyed the overseers. A big barrel lay near the barn and that was always the whippin place." Uncle Joe remembers two or three professional slave whippers and recalls the death of two of the Mississippi whippers. He relates the story as follows: "Mars Gardner had one of the finest black smiths that I ever saw. His arms were strong, his muscles stood out on his breast and shoulders and his legs were never tired. He stood there and shoed horses and repaired tools day after day and there was no work ever made him tired."

The old negro man so vividly described the noble blacksmith that he almost appeared in person, as the story advanced. "I don't know what he had done to rile up Mars Gardner, but all of us knew that the Blacksmith was going to be flogged. When the whippers from Mississippi got to the plantation. The blacksmith worked on day and night. All day he was shoein horses and all the spare time he had he was makin a knife. When the whippers got there all of us were brought out to watch the whippin but the blacksmith, Jim Gardner did not wait to feel the lash, he jumped right into the bunch of overseers and negro whippers and knifed two whippers and one overseer to death; then stuck the sharp knife into his arm and bled to death."

"Do you believe in witchcraft?" was asked while interviewing the aged negro. "No" was the answer. "I had a cousin that was a full blooded Indian and a Voodoo doctor. He got me to help him with his Voodoo work. A lot of people both white and black sent for the Indian when they were sick. I told him I would do the best I could, if it would help sick people to get well. A woman was sick with rhumatism and he

was going to see her. He sent me into the woods to dig up poke roots to boil. He then took the brew to the house where the sick woman lived. Had her to put both feet in a tub filled with warm water, into which he had placed the poke root brew. He told the woman she had lizards in her body and he was going to bring them out of her. He covered the woman with a heavy blanket and made her sit for a long time, possibly an hour, with her feet in the tub of poke root brew and water. He had me slip a good many lizards into the tub and when the woman removed her feet, there were the lizards. She was soon well and believed the lizards had come out of her legs. I was disgusted and would not practice with my cousin again."

#### Harriet Cheatam IN-15

"At Thanksgiving time we would have pound cake. That was fine. We would take our hands and beat and beat our cake dough, put the dough in a skillet, cover it with the lid and put it in the fireplace. (The covered skillet would act our ovens of today.) It would take all day to bake, but it sure would be good; not like the cakes you have today."

"When we roasted a chicken, we got it all nice and clean, stuffed him with dressing, greased him all over good, put a cabbage leaf on the floor of the fireplace, put the chicken on the cabbage leaf, then covered him good with another cabbage leaf, and put hot coals all over and around him, and left him to roast. That is the best way to cook chicken."

#### James Childress IN-16

"The negroes at Mr. Childress' place were allowed to learn as much as they could. Several of the young men could read and write. Our master was a good man and did no harm to anybody."

#### Sarah Colbert IN-17

One morning after a severe beating, Isaac met an old slave, who asked him why he let his mistress beat him so much. Isaac laughed and asked him what he could do about it. The old man told him if he would bite her foot, the next time she knocked him down, she would stop beating him and perhaps sell him.

The next morning he was getting his regular beating, he willingly fell to the floor, grabbed his mistress' foot, bit her very hard. She tried very hard to pull away from him, he held on still biting, she ran around in the room, Isaac still holding on. Finally, she stopped beating him and never attempted to strike him again.

The next week he was put on the block, being a very good worker and a very strong man, the bids were high.

His young master, Leige Jr., outbid everyone and bought him for \$1200.00.

His young mistress was very mean to him. He went again to his old friend for advice. This time he told him to get some yellow dust, sprinkle it around in his mistress' room and if possible, got some in her shoes. This he did and in a short time he was sold again to Johnson Carpenter in the same county. He was not really treated any better there. By this time he was very tired of being mistreated. He remembered his old master telling him to never let anyone be mean to him. He ran away to his old mistress, told her of his many hardships, and told her what the old master had told

him, so she sent him back. At the next sale she bought him, and he lived there until slavery was abolished.

Frank Cooper IN-18

Ah was placed on the auction block to be bid for so mah owner could see if ah was worth anything or not. One man bid \$1700 after puttin' two dirty fingahs in my mouth to see my teeth. Ah bit him and his face showed angah. He then wanted to own me so he could punish me.

'Thinkin' his bid of \$1700 was official he unstrapped his buggy whip to beat me, but my mastah saved me. My master declared the bid unofficial.

Rev. H.H. Edmunds IN-19

"The slaves had been watering cucumbers which had been planted around barrels filled with soil. Holes had been bored in the barrels, and when water was poured in the barrels, it gradually seeped out through the holes thus watering the cucumbers.

John Eubanks IN-20

Come de wintah, it be so cold mah feet weah plumb numb mos' o' de time and manya time--when we git a chanct--we druve the hogs from outin the bogs an' put ouah feet in the wahmed wet mud.

George Fortman IN-22

"So passed a year away, then unhappiness came to the Indian mother, for her daughter, Courtney, became the mother of young Master Ford George's child. The parents called the little half-breed "Eliza" and were very fond of her.

"Suddenly sorrow settled down over the home and the laughter turned into wailing, for Ford George's body was found pierced through the heart and the half-breed, Eliza, was nowhere to be found.

"The young master's body lay in state many days. Friends and neighbors came bringing flowers. His mother, bowed with grief, looked on the still face of her son and understood--understood why death had come and why Eliza had gone away.

"The beautiful home on the Cumberland river with its more than 600 acres of productive land was put into the hands of an administrator of estates to be readjusted in the interest of the George heirs. It was only then Mistress Hester went to Aunt Lucy and demanded of her to tell where Eliza could be found.

'She has gone to Alabama, Ole Mistus', said Aunt Lucy, 'Eliza was scared to stay here.' A party of searchers were sent out to look for Eliza. They found her secreted in a cane brake in the low lands of Alabama nursing her baby boy at her breast. They took Eliza and the baby back to Kentucky. I am that baby, that child of unsatisfactory birth."

The face of George Fortman registered sorrow and pain, it had been hard for him to retell the story of the dark road to strange ears.

"My white uncles had told Mistress Hester that if Eliza brought me back they were going to build a fire and put me in it, my birth was so unsatisfactory to all of them, but Mistress Hester always did what she believed was right and I was brought up by my own mother.

"We lived in a cabin at the slave quarters and mother worked in the broom cane. Mistress Hester named me Ford George, in derision, but remained my friend. She was never angry with my mother. She knew a slave had to submit to her master and besides Eliza did not know she was Master Ford George's daughter."

The truth had been told at last. The master was both the father of Eliza and the father of Eliza's son.

"Mistress Hester believed I would be feeble either in mind or body because of my unsatisfactory birth, but I developed as other children did and was well treated by Mistress Hester, Mistress Lorainne and her children.

When the breastbones of the fowls were strong and hard to sever with the knife it was a sign of a hard, cold and snowy winter. Another superstition was this: 'A green winter, a new graveyard--a white winter, a green graveyard.'"

#### Betty Guwn IN-24

The Master had to take much money with him and was afraid of robbers. The day they were to start my Mistress took me into a private room and had me remove most of my clothing; she then opened a strong box and took out a great roll of money in bills; these she strapped to me in tight bundles, arranging them around my waist in the circle of my body. She put plenty of dresses over this belt and when she was through I wore a bustle of money clear around my belt. I made a funny "figger" but no one noticed my odd shape because I was a slave and no one expected a slave to "know better". We always got through safely and I went down with my Mistress every year.

#### Matthew Hume IN-27

As soon as the children were old enough they were placed in the fields to prepare the ground for setting tobacco plants. This was a very complicated procedure. The ground was made into hills, each requiring about four feet of soil. The child had to get all the clods broken fine. Then place his foot in the center and leave his track. The plants were to be set out in the center and woe to the youngster who had failed to pulverize his hill. After one plowing the tobacco was hand tended. It was long green and divided into two grades. It was pressed by being placed in large hogsheads and weighted down. On one occasion they were told their tobacco was so eaten up that the worms were sitting on the fence waiting for the leaves to grow but nevertheless in some manner his master hid the defects and received the best price paid in the community.

A bad overseer was discharged once by Mr. Payne because of his cruelty to Mr. Luke Hume. The corncrib was a tiny affair where a man had to climb out one leg at a time, one morning just as Mr. Hume's father was climbing out with his feed, he was struck over the head with a large club, the next morning he broke the scoop off an iron shovel and fastened the iron handle to his body. This time he swung himself from the door of the crib and seeing the overseer hiding to strike him he threw his bar, which made a wound on the man's head which did not knock him out. As soon as Mr. Payne heard of the disturbance the overseer was discharged and Mr. Mack placed in charge of the slaves.

One way of exacting obedience was to threaten to send offenders South to work in the fields. The slaves around Lexington, Kentucky, came out ahead on one occasion.

The collector was Shrader. He had the slaves handcuffed to a large leg chain and forced on a flat boat. There were so many that the boat was grounded, so some of the slaves were released to push the boat off. Among the "blacks" was one who could read and write. Before Shrader could chain them up again, he was seized and chained, taken to below Memphis Tennessee and forced to work in the cotton fields until he was able to get word from Richmond identifying him. In the meantime the educated negro issued freedom papers to his companions. Many of them came back to Lexington, Kentucky where they were employed.

#### Lizzie Johnson IN-29

John Scott, one of their number was a hod carrier. He earned \$2.50 a day, knowing that would not accumulate fast enough, he was strong and thrifty. After he had worked hard all day, he would spend his evenings putting new bottoms in chairs, and knitting gloves for anyone who wanted that kind of work. In the summer he made a garden, sold his vegetables. He worked very hard, day and night, and was able to save some money.

The thing these early settlers wanted most, was for their children to learn to read and write. So many of them had been caught trying to learn to write, and had had their thumbs mashed, so they would not be able to hold a pencil.

#### Nathan Jones IN-31

Nathan's stepfather, Willis Jones, was a very strong man, a very good worker, and knew just enough to be resentful of his master's cruel treatment, decided to run away, living in the woods for days. His master sent out searchers for him, who always came in without him. The day of the sale, Willis made his appearance and was the first slave to be put on the block.

#### Thomas Lewis IN-33

I was born in Spencer County, Kentucky, in 1857. I was born a slave. There was slavery all around on all the adjoining places. I was seven years old when I was set free. My father was killed in the Northern army. My mother, step-father and my mother's four living children came to Indiana when I was twelve years old. My grandfather was set free and given a little place of about sixteen acres. A gang of white men went to my grandmother's place and ordered the colored people out to work. The colored people had worked before for white men, on shares. When the wheat was all in and the corn laid by, the white farmers would tell the colored people to get out, and would give them nothing. The colored people did not want to work that way, and refused. This was the cause of the raids by white farmers. My mother recognized one of the men in the gang and reported him to the standing soldiers in Louisville. He was caught and made to tell who the others were until they had 360 men. All were fined and none allowed to leave until all the fines were paid. So the rich ones had to pay for the poor ones. Many of them left because all were made responsible if such an event ever occurred again.

Once when I was a little boy, I was sitting on the fence while my mother plowed to get the field ready to put in wheat. The white man who owned her was plowing too. Some Yankee soldiers on horses came along. One rode up to the fence and when my mother came to the end of the furrow, he said to her, "Lady, could you tell me

where Jim Downs' still house is?" My mother started to answer, but the man who owned her told her to move on. The soldiers told him to keep quiet, or they would make him sorry. After he went away, my mother told the soldiers where the house was. The reason her master did not want her to tell where the house was, was that some of his Rebel friends were hiding there. Spies had reported them to the Yankee soldiers. They went to the house and captured the Rebels.

Next soldiers came walking. I had no cap. One soldier asked me why I did not wear a cap. I said I had no cap. The soldier said, "You tell your mistress I said to buy you a cap or I'll come back and kill the whole family." They bought me a cap, the first one I ever had.

The soldiers passed for three days and a half. They were getting ready for a battle. The battle was close. We could hear the cannon. After it was over, a white man went to the battle field. He said that for a mile and a half one could walk on dead men and dead horses. My mother wanted to go and see it, but they wouldn't let her, for it was too awful.

I don't know what town we were near. The only town I know about had only about four or five houses and a mill. I think the name was Fairfield. That may not be the name, and the town may not be there any more. Once they sent my mother there in the forenoon. She saw a flash, and something hit a big barn. The timbers flew every way, and I suppose killed men and horses that were in the barn. There were Rebels hidden in the barn and in the houses, and a Yankee spy had found out where they were. They bombed the barn and surrounded the town. No one was able to leave. The Yankees came and captured the Rebels.

I had a cousin named Jerry. Just a little while before the barn was struck a white man asked Jerry how he would like to be free. Jerry said that he would like it all right. The white men took him into the barn and were going to put him over a barrel and beat him half to death. Just as they were about ready to beat him, the bomb struck the barn and Jerry escaped. The man who owned us said for us to say that we were well enough off, and did not care to be free, just to avoid beatings. There was no such thing as being good to slaves. Many people were better than others, but a slave belonged to his master and there was no way to get out of it. A strong man was hard to make work. He would fight so that the white men trying to hold him would be breathless. Then there was nothing to do but kill him. If a slave resisted, and his master killed him, it was the same as self-defense today. If a cruel master whipped a slave to death, it put the fear into the other slaves. The brother of the man who owned my mother had many black people. He was too mean to live, but he made it. Once he was threshing wheat with a 'ground-hog' threshing machine, run by horse power. He called to a woman slave. She did not hear him because of the noise of the machine, and did not answer. He leaped off the machine to whip her. He caught his foot in some cogs and injured it so that it had to be taken off.

#### Sarah H. Locke IN-34

Her father came to see her mother on Wednesday and Saturday nights. They would have big dinners on these nights in their cabin.

Her father cradled all the grain for the neighborhood. He was a very high tempered man and would do no work when angry; therefore, every effort was made to keep him in a good humor when the work was heavy.

### Robert McKinley IN-35

Robert McKinley was born in Stanley County, N.C., in 1849, a slave of Arnold Parker.

His master was a very cruel man, but was always kind to him, because he had given him (Bob) as a present to his favorite daughter, Jane Alice, and she would never permit anyone to mistreat Bob.

Miss Jane Alice was very fond of little Bob, and taught him to read and write.

His master owned a large farm, but Jane Alice would not let little Bob work on the farm. Instead, he helped his master in the blacksmith shop.

His master always prepared himself to whip his slaves by drinking a large glass of whiskey to give him strength to beat his slaves.

Robert remembers seeing his master beat his mother until she would fall to the ground, and he was helpless to protect her. He would just have to stand and watch.

He has seen slaves tied to trees and beaten until the master could beat no longer; then he would salt and pepper their backs.

Once when the Confederate soldiers came to their farm, Robert told them where the liquor was kept and where the stock had been hidden. For this the soldiers gave him a handful of money, but it did him no good for his master took it away from him.

The McKinley family, of course, were Parkers and after the Civil war, they took the name of their father who was a slave of John McKinley.

A neighbor farmer, Jesse Hayden, was very kind to his slaves, gave them anything they wanted to eat, because he said they had worked hard, and made it possible for him to have all he had, and it was part theirs.

The Parker slaves were not allowed to associate with the Hayden slaves. They were known as the "rich niggers, who could eat meat without stealing it."

When the "nigger traders" came to the Parker farm, the old mistress would take meat skins and grease the mouths of the slave children to make it appear she had given them meat to eat.

### Rev. Henry Clay Moorman IN-37

One of this black boys' sisters married just before slavery was abolished. He remembers this wedding. In connection with the marriages of the slaves in slavery days, it is recalled that slaves seldom married among themselves on the same plantation but instead the unions were made by some negro boy from some other plantation courting a negro girl on a distant plantation. As was the custom in slavery days the black boy would have to get the consent of three people before he was allowed to enter upon wedlock; first, he would get the consent of the negro girls' mother, then he would get the consent of his own master as well as the black girl's master. This required time and diplomacy. When all had given their consent the marriage would take place usually on Saturday night, when a great time was had with slaves coming from other plantations with a generous supply of fried chicken, hams, cakes and pies a great feast and a good time generally with music and dancing. The new husband had to return to his own master after the wedding but it was understood by all that the new husband could visit his wife every Saturday night and stay until Monday morning. He would return every Monday to his master and work as usual indefinitely unless by chance one or the other of the two masters would buy the husband or wife, in such event they would live together as man and wife. Unless

this purchase did occur it was the rule in slavery days that any children born to the slave wife would be the property of the girl's master.

When the required consent could not be had from all parties concerned it sometimes caused friction and instances have occurred when attempts at elopement was made causing no end of trouble. This condition was very rare, as in most all cases of this kind the masters were quite willing for this marriage and would encourage the young couple. It is remembered that there were no illegitimate children born on the Moorman plantation.

#### America Morgan IN-38

The new mistress was not so kind. Miss Meda, who knew her reputation, told her if she abused America, she would come for her, and she would loose the \$600.00 she had paid for her. Therefore, America was treated very kindly.

She remembers one slave, who had been given five hundred lashes on his back, thrown in his cabin to die. He laid on the floor all night, at dawn he came to himself, and there were blood hounds licking his back.

When the overseers lashed a slave to death, they would turn the bloodhounds out to smell the blood, so they would know "nigger blood," that would help trace runaway slaves.

Aunt Jane Stringer was given five hundred lashes and thrown in her cabin. The next morning when the overseer came, he kicked her and told her to get up, and wanted to know if she was going to sleep there all day. When she did not answer him, he rolled her over and the poor woman was dead, leaving several motherless children.

#### George Morrison IN-39

"Yes, ma'am, the War sho did affect my fambly. My father, he fought for the north. He got shot in his side, but it finally got all right. He saved his money and came north after the war and got a good job. But, I saw them fellows from the south take my Uncle. They put his clothes on him right in the yard and took him with them to fight. And even the white folks, they all cried. But he came back, he wasnt hurt but he wasnt happy in his mind like my pappy was."

"Yes Ma'am. I remember when people used to take wagon loads of corn to the market in Louisville, and they would bring back home lots of groceries and things. A colored man told me he had come north to the market in Louisville with his master, and was working hard unloading the corn when a white man walks up to him, shows him some money and asks him if he wanted to be free? He said he stopped right then and went with the man, who hid him in his wagon under the provisions and they crossed the Ohio River right on the ferry. That's the way lots of 'em got across here."

I was goin't thru the woods one day, and come up sudden in a clear patch of ground. There sat a little boy on a stump, all by his-self, there in the woods. I asks him who he wuz & wuz he lost, and he never answered me. Jest sat there, lookin at me. All of a sudden he ups and runs, and I took out after him. He run behind a big tree, and when I got up to where I last seed him, he wuz gone. And there sits a great big brown man twice as big as me, on another stump. He never seys a word, jest looks at me. And then I got away from there, yes ma'am I really did."

#### Joseph Mosley (Moseley) IN-40

Joseph Mosley, one of twelve children, was born March 15, 1853, fourteen miles from Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

His master, Tim Mosley, was a slave trader. He was supposed to have bought and sold 10,000 slaves. He would go from one state to another buying slaves, bringing in as many as 75 or 80 slaves at one time.

The slaves would be handcuffed to a chain, each chain would link 16 slaves. The slaves would walk from Virginia to Kentucky, and some from Mississippi to Virginia.

In front of the chained slaves would be an overseer on horseback with a gun and dogs. In back of the chained slaves would be another overseer on horseback with a gun and dogs. They would see that no slave escaped. Joseph's father was the shoemaker for all the farm hands and all adult workers. He would start in September making shoes for the year. First the shoes for the folks in the house, then the workers.

No slave child ever wore shoes, summer or winter.

#### Amy Elizabeth Patterson IN-41

Louisa Street became mother of seventeen children. Three were almost white. Amy Elizabeth was the daughter of John Street and half sister of his children by his lawful wife. Mrs. Street knew the facts and respected Louisa and her child and, says grandmother Patterson, "That was the greatest crime ever visited on the United States. It was worse than the cruelty of the overseers, worse than hunger, for many slaves were well fed and well cared for; but when a father can sell his own child, humiliate his own daughter by auctioning her on the slave block, what good could be expected where such practices were allowed?"

#### Mrs. Preston IN-42

When Mrs. Preston was a little older part of her work was to drive about a dozen cows to and from the stable. Many a time she warmed her bare feet in the cattle bedding. She said they did not always go barefooted but their shoes were old or their feet wrapped in rags.

Several years later the Ku Klux Klan gave them a ten days notice to leave, one of the masked band interceded for them by pointing out that they were quiet and peaceable, and a man with a crop and ten children couldn't possibly leave on so short a notice so the time was extended another ten days, when they took what the Klan paid them and came north. They remained in the north until they had to buy their groceries "a little piece of this and a little piece of that, like they do now", when her father returned to Kentucky. Mrs. Preston remained in Indiana. Her father was burned out, the family escaping to the woods in their night clothes, later befriended by a white neighbor. Now they appealed to their former owner who built them a new house, provided necessities and guards for a few weeks until they were safe from the Ku Klux Klan.

#### Candus Richardson IN-44

Scott beat her husband a lot of times because he caught him praying. But "beatings didn't stop my husband from praying. He just kept on praying. He'd steal off to the woods and pray, but he prayed so loud that anybody close around could

hear, 'cause he had such a loud voice. I prayed too, but I always prayed to myself." One time, Jim Scott beat her husband so unmerciful for praying that his shirt was as red from blood stain "as if you'd paint it with, a brush".

They didn't have any Bible on the Scott plantation she said, for it meant a beating or "a killing if you'd be caught with one". But there were a lot of good slaves and they knew how to pray and some of the white folks loved to hear than pray too, "'cause there was no put-on about it. That's why we folks know how to sing and pray, 'cause we have gone through so much, but the Lord is with us, the Lord's with us, he is".

When the slaves went to church, they went to a Baptist church that the Scotts belonged to and sat in the rear of the church. The sermon was never preached to the slaves. "They never preached the Lord to us," Mrs. Richardson said, "They would just tell us to not steal, don't steal from your master".

"We walked to church with our shoes on our arms to keep from wearing them out".

They walked six miles to reach the church, and had to wade across a stream of water. The women were carried across on the men's backs. They did all of this to hear the minister tell them "don't steal from your Master".

"You see that pencil that you have In your hand there, why, that would cost me my life 'if old Mas' Jim would see me with a pencil in my hand.

#### John Rudd IN-48

One day, when several Negroes had just recovered from an unusual amount of chastisement, the little Negro, John Rudd, was playing in the front yard of the Moore's house when he heard a soft voice calling him. He knew the voice belonged to Shell Moore, one of his best friends at the Moore estate. Shell had been among those severely beaten and little John had been grieving over his misfortunes. "Shell had been in the habbit of whittling out whistles for me and pettin' of me," said the now aged negro. "I went to see what he wanted wif me and he said 'Goodby Johnnie, you'll never see Shellie alive after today.'" Shell made his way toward the cornfield but the little Negro boy, watching him go, did not realize what situation confronted him. That night the master announced that Shell had run away again and the slaves were started searching fields and woods but Shell's body was found three days later by Rhoder McQuirk, dangling from a rafter of Moore's corn crib where the unhappy Negro had hanged himself with a leather halter.

He relates many incidents of run-away Negroes. Remembers his fear of the Ku Klucks, and remembers seeing seven ex-slaves hanging from one tree near the top of Grimes-Hill, just after the close of the war.

#### Amanda Elizabeth Samuels IN-49

The child, Lizzie was given to young Robert. She lived in the house to help the young mistress who was not so kind to her. Lizzie was forced to eat chicken heads, fish heads, pig tails, and parsnips.

#### Billy Slaughter IN-51

The spring on the Lincoln Farm that falls from a cliff was a place associated with Indian cruelty. It was here in the pool of water below the cliff that the Indians would

throw babies of the settlers. If the little children could swim or the settlers could rescue them they escaped, otherwise they were drowned. The Indians would gather around the scene of the tragedy and rejoice in their fashion.

#### Mr. and Mrs. Alex Smith IN-52

On the Peter Stubblefield plantation the slaves were treated very well and had plenty to eat, while on the Robert Stubblefield plantation Mr Smith went hungry many times, and said, "Often, I would see a dog with a bit of bread, and I would have been willing to take it from him if I had not been afraid the dog would bite me."

Mrs. Smith was named after Elizabeth Stubblefield, a relative of Peter Stubblefield. As a child of five years or less, Elizabeth had to spin "long reels five cuts a day," pick seed from cotton, and cockle burrs from wool, and perform the duties of a house girl.

Unlike the chores of Elizabeth, Mr. Smith had to chop wood, carry water, chop weeds, care for cows, pick bugs from tobacco plants. This little boy had to go barefoot both summer and winter, and remembers the cracking of ice under his bare feet.

#### Barney Stone IN-53

At the out-break of the Civil War and when the Northern army was marching into the Southland, hundreds of male slaves were shot down by the Rebels, rather than see them join with the Yankees. One day when I learned that the Northern troops were very close to our plantation, I ran away and hid in a culvert, but was found and I would have been shot had the Yankee troops not scattered them and that saved me. I joined that Union army and served one year, eight months and twenty-two days, and fought with them in the battle of Fort Wagner, and also in the battle of Milikin's Bend. When I went into the army, I could not read or write. The white soldiers took an interest in me and taught me to write and read, and when the war was over I could write a very good letter. I taught what little I knew to colored children after the War.

#### Adah Isabelle Suggs IN-54

She was contented and happy but the mother knew that much unhappiness was in store for her young daughter if she remained as she was situated.

A custom prevailed throughout the southern states that the first born of each slave maiden should be the son or daughter of her master and the girls were forced into maternity at puberty. The mothers naturally resisted this terrible practice and Harriott was determined to prevent her child being victimized.

One planned escape was thwarted; when the girl was about twelve years of age the mother tried to take her to a place of safety but they were overtaken on the road to the ferry where they hoped to be put across the Ohio river. They were carried back to the plantation and the mother was mildly punished and imprisoned in an upstairs room.

#### Katie Sutton IN-55

"Ole Missus and Young Missus told the little slave children that the stork brought the white babies to their mothers but that the slave children were all hatched out from buzzards eggs and we believed it was true."

### George Thompson IN-56

As there were no oil lamps or candles, another black boy and myself were stationed at the dining table to hold grease lamps for the white folks to see to eat. And we would use brushes to shoo away the flies.

### Rev. Wamble (Womble) IN-57

When the women slaves were in an advanced stage of pregnancy they were made to lie face down in a specially dug depression in the ground and were whipped.

Since the Reverend's grandmother was a Westbrook and the Wambles treated the slaves much better, she wanted him to become a Wamble. She hid the child in a shed, what would probably be a poor dog-house today, and fed the child during the night time.

During this period of his life the Reverend remembers what happened to one of the Westbrook slaves who had run away. One evening he came to the Wamble home and asked for some supper. Wamble took the slave into his home and after feeding him, placed a log chain which was hanging above the fire-place, around the slave's waist, left him to sleep on a bench in front of the fire-place. The next morning after the slave was given breakfast by the Wambles, Westbrook, his son and over-seer appeared. Rev. Wamble in his hide-out remembers being awakened by the sound of the slave being whipped and the moaning of the slave. After the whipping, the slave was turned loose. After he had gone about a mile through the bottom-land toward the river, Westbrook turned his hounds loose on the slave's tracks. The hounds treed the slave before he had gone another mile, much like a dog would tree a cat.

The Westbrooks pulled the slave down from the tree and the dogs slashed his foot. The slave was then whipped and long ropes placed around him. He was driven back to the Wamble place with whips where he was once again whipped. They [TR: Then?] they drove him two miles to the Westbrook place where he was whipped once more. Whatever became of the slave, whether he died or recovered, is unknown. One unusual feature of this story is that Westbrook who permitted his slaves to be whipped, was a church deacon, whereas Wamble, who never attended church, never whipped or mistreated his slaves.

### Samuel Watson IN-58

The mistress accompanied by a number of slaves was walking out one morning and all were startled by the sound of hurrying horses. Soon many mounted soldiers could be seen coming over a hill in the distance. The child Samuel was later told that the soldiers were making their way to Fort Donelson and were pressing horses into service. They were also enlisting negroes into service whenever possible.

Old master, Thomas Watson, owned many good able-bodied slaves and many splendid horses. The mistress realised the danger of loss and opening the "big gate" that separated the corral from the forest lands, Mrs. Watson ran into the midst of the horses shouting and frailing them. The frightened horses ran into the forest off the highway and toward the river.

When the soldiers stopped at the Watson plantation they found only a few old work horses standing under a tree and not desiring these they want on their way.

The little negro boy ran and hid himself in the corner made by a great outside chimney, where he was found later, by his frightened mother. Uncle Samuel remembers that the horses came home the following afternoon, none missing.

It was the custom for a slave indentured to a master to be given a fair education, a good horse, bridle, saddle and a suit of clothes for his years of toil, but Mr. Price did not believe the boy deserved the pay and refused to pay him. A lawyer friend sued in behalf of the Negro and received a judgement of \$115.00 (one hundred and fifteen dollars). Eighteen dollars repaid the lawyer for his service and Samuel started out with \$95.00 and his freedom.

#### Nancy Whallen IN-59

The old woman remembers the Big Eclipse of the sun or the "Day of Dark" as she called it. The chickens all went to roost and the darkies all thought the end of the world had come. The cattle lowed and everyone was scared to death.

#### Anderson Whitted IN-60

The government was allowing hard tack and pickled beef for the negroes. They received their allotment, and were well satisfied with hard tack because they were free. In telling about the pickled beef he says he never has seen any beef since that looked like it; he believed that it was horse meat.

Mr. Whitted's uncle belonged to a mean master. The slaves worked hard all day, then were chained together at night.

#### Alex Woodson IN-61

When war come Old Master gave his (Woodson's) mother a big roll of bills, "greenbacks as big as Yo' arm", to keep for him, and was forced to leave the neighborhood. After the war the old darkey returned the money to him intact.

"Barbecues! My we shore used to have 'em, yes ma'am, we did! Folks would come for miles around. Would roast whole hawks and cows, and folks would sing, and eat and drink whiskey. The white folks had 'em but we helped and had fun too. Sometimes we would have one ourselves."

That mule was jest natcherly no count. He would lay right down in the plow. One day after I had worked with him and tried to get him to work right, I got mad. I says to my wife, Belle, I'm goin' to get rid of that mule if I have to trade him for a cat.

"I like to go back down in Kentucky on visits as the folks there wont take a thing for bed and vittles. Here they are so selfish wont even gave a drink of water away."