

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

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I asked "Auntie" if she were ever sold on the block, and she answered, "Law sakes, honey, I must tell you. No, I never was sold, but nuthin' but the Dear Blessed Lawd saved me. You see Massa Sid had gone away for a few days, and his boys was takin' care of things, when some nigger traders came and wanted to buy some niggers, and they picked on my grandmammy and me. How old was I? Well, I reckon I was about fourteen. You see, honey, I never could read or write, but I can count, and I can remember--Lawdy! how I can remember. Well, there I was on the block, just scairt and shivering--I was just cold all over--and them there nigger traders was jest a talkin', when down that long lane came Massa Sid, and I'm tellin' you, it was the Dear Lawd that sent him. He was a ridin' on his hoss, and he stopped right in front of me, standing there on the block. He looked at his boys, then he turned to them nigger traders and yelled out, "What you all doin' here?" The boys told him there was just so many niggers on the place, and they wanted some money and when the nigger traders come along they thought they would sell a few niggers. Honey, I'm tellin' you, Massa Sid turned to them nigger traders and said, "you nigger traders get out of here. These are my niggers and I don't sell niggers. I can feed them all, I don't want any help." He grabbed me right off of the block and put me on the hoss in front of him and set me down in front of my cabin. Sceered, oh Lawdy I was sceered! No, suh, Massa Sid never sold no niggers."

"I must tell you about what happened one night while we were all there in the camp. One of the massa's boys that loved my uncle, came crawling on all fours, just like a pig, into camp. He passed the pickets, and when he found my uncle he laid there on the ground in my uncle's arms and cried like a baby. My uncle was old but he cried too and after a while he told the boy that he must go back--he was 'fraid that the pickets would see him and he would be shot, so he went with him, crawling on all fours just like a pig, till he got him past the pickets, and our young master never saw my uncle any more. Oh, honey, them was heart-breakin' times. The first night we was in camp, my mammy got to thinking about Mother Hulsie and how she was left all alone with all the work, and not a soul to help her. The blue coats had gone through the house and upset everything, so in the morning she asked the captain if she could ask just one thing of him, and that was that she and my uncle go back to Mother Hulsie just for the day, and help put everything away and do the washing. The captain said they could go, but they must be back by five o'clock, and not one nigger child could go along, so they went back for the day and mammy did all the washing, every rag that she could find, and my uncle chopped and stacked outside the house, all the wood that he could chop that day, and then they came back to

camp. My mammy said she'd never forget Mother Hulsie wringing her hands and crying, 'Oh Lawd, what will I do?' as they went down the land."