

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

Isaac Adams OK-1

Time I was nine or ten Mr. Sack's daughter was getting to be a young woman-- fifteen or sixteen years old--and that was old enough to get married off in them days.

Along at the last the negroes on our place didn't put in much stuff--jest what they would need, and could hide from the Yankees, because they would get it all took away from them if the Yankees found out they had plenty of corn and oats.

Alice Alexander OK-2

We had a overseer back on Colonel Threff's plantation and my mother said he was the meanest man on earth. He'd jest go out in de fields and beat dem niggers, and my mother told me one day he come out in de field beating her sister and she jumped on him and nearly beat him half to death and old Master come up jest in time to see it all and fired dat overseer. Said he didn't want no man working fer him dat a woman could whip.

Phoebe Banks OK-3

We all get to Fort Scott where there was a big army camp; daddy work in the blacksmith shop and Uncle Jacob join with the Northern soldiers to fight against the South. He come through the war and live to tell me about the fighting he been in.

He went with the soldiers down around Fort Gibson where they fight the Indians who stayed with the South. Uncle Jacob say he killed many a man during the war, and showed me the musket and sword he used to fight with; said he didn't shoot the women and children--just whack their heads off with the sword, and almost could I see the blood dripping from the point! It made me scared at his stories.

The captain of this company want his men to be brave and not get scared, so before the fighting start he put out a tub of white liquor (corn whiskey) and steam them up so's they'd be mean enough to whip their grannie! The soldiers do lots of riding and the saddle-sores get so bad they grease their body every night with snake oil so's they could keep going on.

Nancy Rogers Bean OK-4

Master Rogers kept all our family together, but my folks have told me about how the slaves was sold. One of my aunts was a mean, fighting woman. She was to be sold and when the bidding started she grabbed a hatchet, laid her hand on a log and chopped it off. Then she threwed the bleeding hand right in her master's face. Not long ago I hear she is still living in the country around Nowata, Oklahoma.

Lewis Bonner OK-6

There was four or five hundred slaves on our place. One morning during slavery, my father killed 18 white men and ran away. They said he was lazy and whipped him, and he just killed all of 'em he could, which was 18 of 'em. He stayed away 3 years without being found. He come back and killed 7 before they could kill him. When he was on the place he jest made bluing.

I knows when the war started and ceaseted. I tell you it was some war. When it was all over, the Yankees come thoo' singing, "You may die poor but you won't die a slave."

Francis Bridges OK-7

My mother say dey had a nigger driver and he'd whip 'em all but his daughter. I never seen no slaves whipped, but my mother say dey had to whip her Uncle Charley Mills once for telling a story. She say he bored a hole in de wall of de store 'til he bored de hole in old Master's whiskey barrel, and he caught two jugs of whiskey and buried it in de banks of de river. When old Master found out de whiskey was gone, he tried to make Uncle Charley 'fess up, and Uncle Charley wouldn't so he brung him in and hung him and barely let his toes touch. After Uncle Charley thought he was going to kill him, he told where de whiskey was.

I used to hear 'em talking 'bout Ku Klux Klan coming to the well to get water. They'd draw up a bucket of water and pour the water in they false stomachs. They false stomachs was tied on 'em with a big leather buckle. They'd jest pour de water in there to scare 'em and say, "This is the first drink of water I've had since I left Hell." They'd say all sech things to scare the cullud folks.

I married Jake Bridges. We had a ordinary wedding. The preacher married us and we had a license. We have two sons grown living here. My husband told me that in slavery if your Master told you to live with your brother, you had to live with him. My father's mother and dad was first cousins.

I've heerd 'em say dey old master raised chillun by those cullud women. Why, there was one white man in Texas had a cullud woman, but didn't have no chillun by her, and he had this cullud woman and her old mistress there on the same place. So, when old Mistress died he wouldn't let this cullud woman leave, and he gave her a swell home right there on the place, and she is still there I guess. They say she say sometime, she didn't want no Negro man smutting her sheets up.

John Brown OK-8

My Grandmother was one of them. A savage in Africa--a slave in America. Mammy told it to me. Over there all the natives dressed naked and lived on fruits and nuts. Never see many white mens.

One day a big ship stopped off the shore and the natives hid in the brush along the beach. Grandmother was there. The ship men sent a little boat to the shore and scattered bright things and trinkets on the beach. The natives were curious. Grandmother said everybody made a rush for them things soon as the boat left. The trinkets was fewer than the peoples. Next day the white folks scatter some more. There was another scramble. The natives was feeling less scared, and the next day some of them walked up the gangplank to get things off the plank and off the deck.

The deck was covered with things like they'd found on the beach. Two-three hundred natives on the ship when they feel it move. They rush to the side but the plank was gone. Just dropped in the water when the ship moved away.

Folks on the beach started to crying and shouting. The ones on the boat was wild with fear. Grandmother was one of them who got fooled, and she say the last thing seen of that place was the natives running up and down the beach waving their arms and shouting like they was mad. The boat men come up from below where they had been hiding and drive the slaves down in the bottom and keep them quiet with the whips and clubs.

The slaves was landed at Charleston. The town folks was mighty mad 'cause the blacks was driven through the streets without any clothes, and drove off the boat men after the slaves was sold on the market. Most of that load was sold to the Brown plantation in Alabama. Grandmother was one of the bunch.

Even during the war foods was plentiful. One time the Yankee soldiers visit the place. The white folks gone and I talks with them. Asks me lots of questions--got any meats--got any potatoes--got any this--some of that--but I just shake my head and they don't look around.

The old cook fixes them up though. She fry all the eggs on the place, skillet the ham and pan the biscuits! Them soldiers fill up and leave the house friendly as anybody I ever see!

Sallie Carder OK-9

No sir, we never had no money while I was a slave. We jest didn't have nothing a-tall! We ate greens, corn bread, and ash cake. De only time I ever got a biscuit would be when a misdemeanor was did, and my Mistress would give a buttered biscuit to de one who could tell her who done it.

My Master lived in a three-story frame house painted white. My Mistress was very mean. Sometimes she would make de overseer whip negroes for looking too hard at her when she was talking to dem.

De only trouble between de whites and blacks on our plantation was when de overseer tied my mother to whip her and my father untied her and de overseer shot and killed him.

George Conrad, Jr. OK-12

My old Master had 900 acres of land. My father was a stiller. He made three barrels of whisky a day. Before the War whisky sold for 12-1/2¢ and 13¢ a gallon. After the War it went up to \$3 and \$4 per gallon. When War broke out he had 300 barrels hid under old Master's barn.

My mother cooked and took care of the house. Aunt Sarah took care of the children. I had two little baby brothers, Charlie and John. The old Mistress would let my mother put them in her cradle and Aunt Sarah got jealous, and killed both of the babies. When they cut one of the babies open they took out two frogs. Some say she conjured the babies. Them niggers could conjure each other but they couldn't do nothing to the whitefolks, but I don't believe in it. There's an old woman living back there now (pointing around the corner of the house where he was sitting) they said her husband put a spell on her. They call 'em two-headed Negroes.

William Curtis OK-14

Our suits was made out of jeans. That cloth wore like buckskin. We'd wear 'em for a year before they had to be patched.

We made our own brogan shoes too. We'd kill a beef and skin it and spread the skin out and let it dry a while. We'd put the hide in lime water to get the hair off, then we'd oil it and work it 'till it was soft. Next we'd take it to the bench and scrape or 'plesh' it with knives. It was then put in a tight cabinet and smoked with oak wood for about 24 hours. Smoking loosened the skin. We'd then take it out and rub it to soften it. It was blacked and oiled and it was ready to be made into shoes. It took nearly a year to get a green hide made into shoes. Twan't no wonder we had to go barefooted.

Lucinda Davis OK-15

Dat de way de Creek made de name for young boys when I was a little girl. When de boy git old enough de big men in de town give him a name, and sometime later on when he git to going round wid de grown men dey stick on some more name. If he a good talker dey sometime stick on "yoholo", and iffen he make lots of jokes dey call him "Hadjo." If he is a good leader dey call him "Imala" and if he kind of mean dey sometime call him "fixigo."

We had a big tree in de yard, and a grape vine swing in it for de little baby "Istidji", and I was swinging him real early in de morning befo' de sun up. De house set in a little patch of woods wid de field in de back, but all out on de north side was a little open space, like a kind of prairie. I was swinging de baby, and all at once I seen somebody riding dis way 'cross dat prairie--jest coming a-kiting and a-laying flat out on his hoss. When he see de house he begin to give de war whoop, "Eya-a-a-a-he-ah!" When he git close to de house he holler to git out de way 'cause dey gwine be a big fight, and old Master start rapping wid his cane and yelling to git some grub and blankets in de wagon right now!

We jest leave everything setting right whar it is, 'cepting putting out de fire and grabbing all de pots and kettles. Some de nigger women run to git de mules and de wagon and some start gitting meat and corn out of de place whar we done hid it to keep de scouters from finding it befo' now. All de time we gitting ready to travel we hear dat boy on dat horse going on down de big Texas road hollering. "Eya-a-a-he-he-hah!"

Den jest as we starting to leave here come something across dat little prairie sho' nuff! We know dey is Indians de way dey is riding, and de way dey is all strung out. Dey had a flag, and it was all red and had a big criss-cross on it dat look lak a saw horse. De man carry it and rear back on it when de wind whip it, but it flap all 'round de horse's head and de horse pitch and rear lak he know something going happen, sho!

'Bout dat time it turn kind of dark and begin to rain a little, and we git out to de big road and de rain come down hard. It rain so hard for a little while dat we jest have to stop de wagon and set dar, and den long come more soldiers dan I ever see befo'. Dey all white men, I think, and dey have on dat brown clothes dyed wid walnut and butternut, and old Master say dey de Confederate soldiers. Dey dragging some big guns on wheels and most de men slopping 'long in de rain on foot.

De next morning we goes back to de house and find de soldiers ain't hurt nothing much. De hogs is whar dey is in de pen and de chickens come cackling 'round too. Dem soldiers going so fast dey didn't have no time to stop and take nothing, I reckon.

Den long come lots of de Yankee soldiers going back to de North, and dey looks purty wore out, but dey is laughing and joshing and going on.

Old Master pack up de wagon wid everything he can carry den, and we strike out down de big road to git out de way of any more war, is dey going be any.

Dat old Texas road jest crowded wid wagons! Everybody doing de same thing we is, and de rains done made de road so muddy and de soldiers done tromp up de mud so bad dat de wagons git stuck all de time.

De people all moving along in bunches, and every little while one bunch of wagons come up wid another bunch all stuck in de mud, and dey put all de hosses and mules on together and pull em out, and den dey go on together awhile.

At night dey camp, and de women and what few niggers dey is have to git de supper in de big pots, and de men so tired dey eat everything up from de women and de niggers, purty nigh.

Dem Indian soldiers jest quit de army and lots went scouting in little bunches and took everything dey find. Iffen somebody try to stop dem dey git killed.

One day three men rid up and talk to de old man awhile in English talk. Den he called me and tell me to go wid dem to find my own family. He jest laugh and slap my behind and set me up on de hoss in front of one de men and dey take me off and leave my good checkedy dress at de house!

Before long we git to dat Canadian river again, and de men tie me on de hoss so I can't fall off. Dar was all dat water, and dey ain't no boat, and dey ain't no bridge, and we jest swim de hosses. I knowed sho' I was going to be gone dat time, but we git across.

When we come to de Creek Agency dar is my pappy and my mammy to claim me, and I live wid dem in de Verdigris bottom above Fort Gibson till I was grown and dey is both dead.

Anthony Dawson OK-16

But now and then they was a devil on earth, walking in the sight of God and spreading iniquity before him. He was de low-down Sesesh dat would take what a poor runaway nigger had to give for his chance to git away, and den give him 'structions dat would lead him right into de hands of de patrollers and git him caught or shot!

Alice Douglass OK-17

Peoples make big miration 'bout girls having babies at 11 years old. And you better have them whitefolks some babies iffen you didn't wanta be sold. Though a funny thing to me is, iffen a nigger woman had a baby on the boat on the way to the cotton farms, they throwed it in the river.

Doc Daniel Dowdy OK-18

I saw slaves sold. I can see that old block now. My cousin Eliza was a pretty girl, really good looking. Her master was her father. When the girls in the big house had beaux coming to see 'em, they'd ask, "Who is that pretty gal?" So they decided to git

rid of her right away. The day they sold her will allus be remembered. They stripped her to be bid off and looked at. I wasn't allowed to stand in the crowd. I was laying down under a fig brush. The man that bought Eliza was from New York. The Negroes had made up nuff money to buy her off theyself, but they wouldn't let that happen. There was a man bidding for her who was a Swedeland. He allus bid for the good looking cullud gals and bought 'em for his own use. He ask the man from New York, "Whut you gonna do with her when you git 'er?" The man from New York said, "None of your damn business, but you ain't got money nuff to buy 'er." When the man from New York had done bought her, he said, "Eliza, you are free from now on." She left and went to New York with him. Mama and Eliza both cried when she was being showed off, and master told 'em to shet up before he knocked they brains out.

I called a boy Johnny once and he took me 'hind the garden and poured it on me and made me call him master. It was from then on I started to fear the white man. I come to think of him as a bear.

They carried news from one plantation by whut they call relay. Iffen you was caught, they whipped you till you said, "Oh, pray Master!" One day a man gitting whipped was saying "Oh pray master, Lord have mercy!" They'd say "Keep whipping that nigger Goddamn him." He was whipped till he said, "Oh pray Master, I gotta nuff." Then they said, "Let him up now, 'cause he's praying to the right man."

Joanna Draper OK-19

Right at the first they made him a high officer in the War and he done doctoring somewhar at a hospital most of the time. But he could go on both sides of the War, and sometime he would come in at night and bring old Mistress pretty little things, and I heard him tell her he got them in the North.

One day I was fanning him and I asked him is he been to the North and he kick out at me and tell to shut up my black mouth, and it nearly scared me to death the way he look at me! Nearly every time he been gone and come in and tell Mistress he been in the North he have a lot more hard money to put away in them boxes, too!

About the time he come home to stay I seen the first Ku Klux I ever seen one night. I was going down the road in the moonlight and I heard a hog grunting out in the bushes at the side of the road. I jest walk right on and in a little ways I hear another hog in some more bushes. This time I stop and listen, and they's another hog grunts across the road, and about that time two mens dressed up in long white skirts steps out into the road in front of me! I was so scared the goose bumps jump up all over me 'cause I didn't know what they is! They didn't say a word to me, but jest walked on past me and went on back the way I had come. Then I see two more mens step out of the woods and I run from that as fast as I can go!

I ast Miss Kate what they is and she say they Ku Klux, and I better not go walking off down the road any more. I seen them two, three times after that, though, but they was riding hosses them times.

Esther Easter OK-20

While Master Jim is out fighting the Yanks, the Mistress is fiddling round with a neighbor man, Mister Headsmith. I is young then, but I knows enough that Master Jim's going be mighty mad when he hears about it.

The Mistress didn't know I knows her secret, and I'm fixing to even up for some of them whippings she put off on me. That's why I tell Master Jim next time he come home.

See that crack in the wall? Master Jim say yes, and I say, it's just like the open door when the eyes are close to the wall. He peek and see into the bedroom.

That's how I find out about the Mistress and Mister Headsmith, I tells him, and I see he's getting mad.

What you mean? And Master Jim grabs me hard by the arm like I was trying to get away.

I see them in the bed.

That's all I say. The Demon's got him and Master Jim tears out of the room looking for the Mistress.

Then I hears loud talking and pretty soon the Mistress is screaming and calling for help, and if old Master Ben hadn't drop in just then and stop the fight, why, I guess she be beat almost to death, that how mad the Master was.

Eliza Evans OK-21

My grandma was a refugee from Africa. You know dey was white men who went slipping 'round and would capture or entice black folks onto their boats and fetch them over here and sell 'em for slaves. Well, grandma was a little girl 'bout eight or nine years old and her parents had sent her out to get wood. Dey was going to have a feast. Dey was going to roast a baby. Wasn't that awful? Well, they captured her and put a stick in her mouth. The stick held her mouth wide open so she wouldn't cry out. When she got to de boat she was so tired out she didn't do nothing.

They was a lot of more colored folks on de boat. It took about four months to get across on de boat and Mr. John Mixon met the boat and bought her. I think he gave five hundred dollars for her. She was named Gigi, but Master John called her Gracie. She was so good and they thought so much of her dat they gave her a grand wedding when she was married. Master John told her he'd never sell none of her chillun. He kept dat promise and he never did sell any of her grandchillun either. He thought it was wrong to separate famblys. She was one hundred and three years old when she died. I guess her mind got kind of feeble 'cause she wandered off and fell into a mill race and was drowned.

Each family kept their own home and cooked and served their own meals. We used wooden trays and wooden spoons. Once a week all the cullud chillun went to the Big House to eat dinner. The table was out in de yard. My nickname was "Speck". I didn't like to eat bread and milk when I went up there and I'd just sit there. Finally they'd let me go in de house and my mother would feed me. She was the house woman and my Auntie was cook. I don't know why they had us up there unless it was so they could laugh at us.

Lizzie Farmer OK-22

When we went to cook our vegetables we would put a big piece of hog jowl in de pot. We'd put in a lot of snap beans and when dey was about half done we'd put in a mess of cabbage and when it was about half done we'd put in some squash and when

it was about half done we'd put in some okra. Then when it was done we would take it out a layer at a time. Go 'way! It makes me hungry to talk about it.

Master John Booker had two niggers what had a habit of slipping across de river and killing old Master's hogs and hiding de meat in de loft of de house. Master had a big blue hog and one day he missed him and he sent Ned to look fer him. Ned knowed all de time dat he had killed it and had it hid in his loft. He hunted and called "Pig-ooie, Pig." Somebody done stole old Master's big blue hog. Dey couldn't find it but old Master thought Ned knowed something 'bout it. One night he found out Ned was gonna kill another hog and had asked John to go with him. He borrowed John's clothes and blacked his face and met Ned at de river. Soon dey find a nice big one and Ned say, "John, I'll drive him round and you kill him." So he drove him past old Master but he didn't want to kill his own hog so he made lak he'd like to kill him but he missed him. Finally Ned got tired and said. "I'll kill him, you drive him by me." So Master John drove him by him and Ned knock de hog on de head and cut his throat and dey load him on de canoe. When dey was nearly 'cross de river Old Master dip up some water and wash his face a little, then he look at Ned and he say, "Ned you look sick, I believe you've got lepersy." Ned row on little more and he jump in de river and Master had a hard time finding him again. He had the overseer whip Ned for that.

Della Fountain OK-23

We saved all our oak-wood ashes, and would put a barrel on a slanting scaffold and put sticks and shucks in de bottom of de barrel and den fill it wid de ashes. We'd pour water in it and let it drip. Dese drippings made pure lye. We used dis wid cracklings and meat scraps to make our soap.

Father took a good-sized pine long and split it open, planed it down smooth and bored holes in de bottom and drove pegs in dem for legs; dis was our battling bench. We'd spread our wet clothes on dis and rub soap on 'em and take a paddle and beat de dirt out. We got 'em clean but had to be careful not to wear 'em out wid de paddle.

We had no tubs either, so father took a hollow log and split it open and put partitions in it. He bored a hole in each section and drove a peg in it. He next cut two forked poles and drove 'em in de ground and rested de ends of de hollow log in dese forks. We'd fill de log trough wid water and rinse our clothes. We could pull out de pegs and let de water out. We had no brooms either, so we made brush brooms to sweep our floors.

De grown folks used to have big times at log-rollings, corn-shuckings and quiltings. Dey'd have a big supper and a big dance at night. Us children would play ring plays, play with home-made rag dolls, or we'd take big leaves and pin 'em together wid thorns and make hats and dresses. We'd ride saplings, too. All of us would pull a sapling down and one would climb up in it near de top and git a good hold on it, and dey would turn it loose. It took a purty good holding to stay wid it, I can tell you.

Father knowed a man that stole his Master's horse out and rode him to a dance. For some reason de horse died. De poor man knowed he was up against it, and he let in to begging de men to help him git de horse on his back so he could put him back in his stable and his Master would think he died dere. Poor fellow, he really did think he could tote dat horse on his back. He couldn't git anybody to help him, so he went

to the woods. He was shot by a patroller 'cause he wouldn't surrender. Dey captured him but he died.

Nancy Gardner OK-24

It was thirty years before my pa knew if we was still living. Finally in some way he heard dat I was still alive, and he began writing me. Course I was grown and married den and me and my husband had moved to Missouri. Well, my pa started out to see me and on his way he was drowned in de Missouri River, and I never saw him alive after we was sold in Memphis.

Octavia George OK-25

We would take the money from our little crops and buy a few clothes and something for Christmas. The men would save enough money out of the crops to buy their Christmas whiskey. It was all right for the slaves to get drunk on Christmas and New Years Day; no one was whipped for getting drunk on those days.

If a slave once tried to run away and was caught, he would be whipped almost to death, and from then on if he was sent any place they would chain their meanest blood hound to him.

Mary Grayson OK-26

Of course I was too small to know what was going on then, but I could tell that all the masters and the Negroes seemed to be mighty worried and careful all the time. Of course I know now that the Creeks were all split up over the War, and nobody was able to tell who would be friendly to us or who would try to poison us or kill us, or at least rob us. There was a lot of bushwhacking all through that country by little groups of men who was just out to get all they could. They would appear like they was the enemy of anybody they run across, just to have an excuse to rob them or burn up their stuff. If you said you was with the South they would be with the North and if you claimed to be with the Yankees they would be with the South, so our party was kind of upset all the time we was passing through the country along the Canadian.

Robert R. Grinstead OK-27

One morning the breakfast was taken to the field and the slaves were hoeing cotton and among them was a lad about 15 years of age who could not hoe as fast as the older slaves and the breakfast was sat at the end of the rows and as they would hoe out to the end they would eat, and if you would be late hoeing to the end the first to go to the end would began eating and eat everything. So, this 15 year old lad in order to get out to eat before everything was gone did not hoe his row good and the overseer, who was white at this time, whipped him so severely that he could not eat nor work, that day.

When I was large enough to pay attention to my color and to that of the other slaves I wondered to myself why I was not black like the rest of the slaves and concluded to myself that I would when I got grown like they were as I knew not then that I was the son of my Master.

Mattie Hardman OK-28

Our Mistress would have one of the cooks to dish up vegetables and she herself would slice or serve the meat to see that it wasn't wasted, as seemingly it was thought so precious.

Annie Hawkins OK-29

I never had no whitefolks that was good to me. We all worked jest like dogs and had about half enough to eat and got whupped for everything. Our days was a constant misery to us.

I seen old Master git mad at Truman and he buckled him down across a barrel and whupped him till he cut the blood out of him and then he rubbed salt and pepper in the raw places. It looked like Truman would die it hurt so bad. I know that don't sound reasonable that a white man in a Christian community would do such a thing but you can't realize how heartless he was. People didn't know about it and we dassent tell for we knowed he'd kill us if we did. You must remember he owned us body and soul and they wasn't anything we could do about it. Old Mistress and her three girls was mean to us too.

One time me and my sister was spinning and old Mistress went to the well-house and she found a chicken snake and killed it. She brought it back and she threwed it around my sister's neck. She jest laughed and laughed about it. She thought it was a big joke.

Old Master stayed drunk all the time. I reckon that is the reason he was so fetched mean. My, how we hated him! He finally killed hisself drinking and I remember Old Mistress called us in to look at him in his coffin. We all marched by him slow like and I jest happened to look up and caught my sister's eye and we both jest natchelly laughed--Why shouldn't we? We was glad he was dead. It's a good thing we had our laugh fer old Mistress took us out and whupped us with a broomstick. She didn't make us sorry though.

During the War we seen lots of soldiers. Some of them was Yankees and some were Sesesh soldiers. My job every day was to take a big tray of food and set it on a stump about a quarter of a mile from our house. I done this twice a day and ever time I went back the dishes would be empty. I never did see nobody and didn't nobody tell me why I was to take the food up there but of course it was either for soliders [TR: sic] that was scouting 'round or it may been for some lowdown dirty bushwhacker, and again it might a been for some of old Master's folks scouting 'round to keep out of the army.

Ida Henry OK-30

Me Mistress was sometimes good and sometimes mean. One day de cook was waiting de table and when passing around de potatoes, old Mistress felt of one and as hit wasn't soft done, she exclaimed to de cook, "What you bring these raw potatoes out here for?" and grab a fork and stuck it in her eye and put hit out. She, de cook, lived about 10 years and died.

As me Master went to de War de old overseer tried himself in meanness over de slaves as seemingly he tried to be important. One day de slaves caught him and one held him whilst another knocked him in de head and killed him.

Close to our Master's plantation lived several families of old "poor white trash" who would steal me Master's hogs and chickens and come and tell me Mistress dat dey seen some of de slaves knock one of dere hogs in de head. Dis continued up till Master returned from de War and caught de old white trash stealing his hogs. De niggers did at times steal Master's hogs and chickens, and I would put biscuits and pieces of chicken in a sack under me dress dat hung from me waist, as I waited de table for me Mistress, and later would slip off and eat it as dey never gave de slaves none of dis sort of food.

De patrollers wouldn't allow de slaves to hold night services, and one night dey caught me mother out praying. Dey stripped her naked and tied her hands together and wid a rope tied to de hand cuffs and threw one end of de rope over a limb and tied de other end to de pommel of a saddle on a horse. As me mother weighed 'bout 200, dey pulled her up so dat her toes could barely touch de ground and whipped her. Dat same night she ran away and stayed over a day and returned.

Morris Hillyer OK-31

Old Judge bought every roguish nigger in the country. He'd take him home and give him the key to everything on de place and say to help hisself. Soon as he got all he wanted to eat he'd quit being a rogue. Old Judge said that was what made niggers steal--they was hungry.

They used to scare us kids by telling us dat a runaway nigger would git us. De timber was awful heavy in de river bottoms, and dey was one nigger dat run off from his master and lived for years in these bottoms. He was there all during de War and come out after de surrender. Every man in dat country owned him at some time or other. His owner sold him to a man who was sure he could catch him--he never did, so he sold him to another slave owner and so on till nearly everybody had him. He changed hands about six or seven times. They would come in droves with blood hounds and hunt for him but dey couldn't catch him for he knowed them woods too well. He'd feed de dogs and make friends with 'em and they wouldn't bother him. He lived on nuts, fruit, and wild game, and niggers would slip food to him. He'd slip into town and get whiskey and trade it to de niggers for food.

Judge Hillyer never 'lowanced his niggers and dey could always have anything on de place to eat. We had so much freedom dat other slave owners in our neighborhood didn't like for us to come among their slaves for they said we was free niggers and would make their slaves discontented.

After I went to live with Judge Hillyer's son, Dr. Hillyer, one of my jobs was to tote the girls books to school every morning. All the plantation owners had a colored boy dat did that. After we had toted de books to de school house we'd go back down de road a piece and line up and have the "gone-bying-est" fight you ever see. We'd have regular battles. If I got licked in de morning I'd go home and rest up and I'd give somebody a good licking dat evening. I reckon I caught up with my fighting for in all my working life I have always worked with gangs of men of from one to two-hundred and I never struck a man and no man ever struck me.

Jim Williams was a patroller, and how he did like to catch a nigger off de farm without a permit so he could whip him. Jim thought he was de best man in de country and could whip de best of 'em. One night John Hardin, a big husky feller, was out late. He met Jim and knowed he was in for it. Jim said, "John I'm gonna give

you a white man's chance. I'm gonna let you fight me and if you are de best man, well and good."

John say, "Master Jim, I can't fight wid you. Come on and give me my licking, and let me go on home."

But Jim wouldn't do it, and he slapped John and called him some names and told him he is a coward to fight him. All dis made John awful mad and he flew into him and give him the terriblest licking a man ever toted. He went on home but knew he would git into trouble over it.

Jim talked around over the country about what he was going to do to John but everybody told him dat he brought it all on hisself. He never did try to git another nigger to fight with him.

Hal Hutson OK-32

I learned to read, write and figger at an early age. Master Brown's boy and I were the same age you see (14 years old) and he would send me to school to protect his kids, and I would have to sit up there until school was out. So while sitting there I listened to what the white teacher was telling the kids, and caught on how to read, write and figger--but I never let on, 'cause if I was caught trying to read or figger dey would whip me something terrible. After I caught on how to figger the white kids would ask me to teach them. Master Brown would often say: "My God O'mighty, never do for that nigger to learn to figger."

We weren't allowed to count change. If we borrowed a fifty-cent piece, we would have to pay back a fifty-cent piece--not five dimes or fifty pennies or ten nickels.

The patroller rode all night and iffen we were caught out later than 10:00 o'clock they would beat us, but we would git each other word by sending a man round way late at night. Always take news by night.

That war was a awful thing. I used to pack them soldiers water on my head, and then I worked at Fort Sill and Fort Dawson in Tennessee. Those Yankees came by nights--got behind those rebels, and took their hams, drove horses in the houses, killed their chickens and ate up the rebels food, but the Yanks didn't bother us niggers.

When freedom come old Master called us all in from the fields and told us, "All of you niggers are free as frogs now to go wherever you choose.

William Hutson OK-33

They was a long platform made of heavy planks and all the slaves was lined up on the platform, and they was stripped to the waist, men, women, and children. One or two of the women folks was bare naked. They wasn't young women neither, just middle age ones, but they was built good. Some of them was well greased and that grease covered up many a scar they'd earned for some foolishment or other.

Then I moves on and meets the gal that maybe I been looking for, Louisa Baker, and right away she takes to me and we is married. Ain't been no other woman but her and she's waiting for me wherever the dead waits for the living.

Isabella Jackson OK-34

That's what they done to them mean, no account slaves--just send them to Texas. Them folks sure knew how for to handle 'em!

Don't nobody know what made the master mad at the old slave--one of the oldest on the place. Anyway, the master didn't whip him; instead of that he kills him with the gun and scares the others so bad most of 'em runs off and hides in the woods.

The drunk master just drags the old dead slave to the graveyard which is down in the corner away from the growing crops, and hunts up two of the young boys who was hiding in the barn. He takes them to dig the grave.

The master stands watching every move they make, the dead man lays there with his face to the sky, and the boys is so scared they could hardly dig. The master keeps telling them to hurry with the digging.

After while he tells them to stop and put the body in the grave. They wasn't no coffin, no box, for him. Just the old clothes that he wears in the fields.

But the grave was too short and they start to digging some more, but the master stop them. He says to put back the body in the grave, and then he jumps into the grave hisself. Right on the dead he jumps and stomps 'til the body is mashed and twisted to fit the hole. Then the old nigger is buried.

That's the way my Mammy hears it and told it to us children. She was a Christian and I know she told the truth.

Nellie Johnson OK-35

I never did see many soldiers during the War, and there wasn't any fighting close to where we live. It was kind of down in the bottoms, not far from the Verdigris and that Gar Creek, and the soldiers would have bad crossings if the come by our place.

Josie Jordan OK-36

Salina was my mammy's name, and she belonged to a Mister Clark, who sold her and pappy to Mark Lowery 'cause she was a fighting, mule-headed woman.

It wasn't her fault 'cause she was a fighter. The master who owned her before Mister Clark was one of them white mens who was always whipping and beating his slaves and mammy couldn't stand it no more.

That's the way she tells me about it. She just figgured she would be better off dead and out of her misery as to be whipped all the time, so one day the master claimed they was something wrong with her work and started to raise his whip, but mammy fought back and when the ruckus was over the Master was laying still on the ground and folks thought he was dead, he got such a heavy beating.

Mammy says he don't die and right after that she was sold to Mister Clark I been telling you about. And mammy was full of misery for a long time after she was carried to Mark Lowery's plantation where at I was born during of the War.

She had two children while belonging to Mister Clark and he wouldn't let them go with mammy and pappy. That's what caused her misery. Pappy tried to ease her mind but she jest kept a'crying for her babies, Ann and Reuban, till Mister Lowery got Clark to leave them visit with her once a month.

Mammy always says that Mark Lowery was a good master. But he'd heard things about mammy before he got her and I reckon was curious to know if they was all true. Mammy says he found out mighty quick they was.

It was mammy's second day on the plantation and Mark Lowery acted like he was going to whip her for something she'd done or hadn't, but mammy knocked him plumb through the open cellar door. He wasn't hurt, not even mad for mammy says

he climbed out the cellar a'laughing, saying he was only fooling to see if she would fight.

But mammy's troubles wasn't over then, for Mark Lowery he got himself a new young wife (his first wife was dead), and mammy was round of the house most of the time after that.

Right away they had trouble. The Mistress was trying to make mammy hurry up with the work and she hit mammy with the broom stick. Mammy's mule temper boiled up all over the kitchen and the Master had to stop the fighting.

He wouldn't whip mammy for her part in the trouble, so the Mistress she sent word to her father and brothers and they come to Mister Lowery's place.

They was going to whip mammy, they was good and mad. Master was good and mad, too, and he warned 'em home.

"Whip your own slaves." He told them. "Mine have to work and if they're beat up they can't do a days work. Get on home--I'll take care of this." And they left.

George G. King OK-37

The Mistress owned the slaves and they couldn't be sold without her say-so. That's the reason George was never sold, but the Master once tried to sell him 'cause the beatings was breaking him down. Old Mistress said "No", and used it for an excuse to whip his Mammy. Uncle George remembers that, too.

They crossed her wrists and tied them with a stout cord. They made her bend over so that her arms was sticking back between her legs and fastened the arms with a stick so's she couldn't straighten up.

He saw the Mistress pull his Mammy's clothes over her head so's the lash would reach the skin. He saw the overseer lay on the whip with hide busting blows that left her laying, all a shiver, on the ground, like a wounded animal dying from the chase.

He saw the Mistress walk away, laughing, while his Mammy screamed and groaned--the old Master standing there looking sad and wretched, like he could feel the blows on Mammy's bared back and legs as much as she.

"But they was other pappys (Mammy told him) when Eva was born long before any of us, and Laura come next, but from a white daddy. Mammy lost them when she was sold around on the markets.

"The Klan they done lots of riding round the country. One night the come down to the old slave quarters where the cabins is all squared round each other, and called everybody outdoors. They's looking for two women.

"They picks 'em out of the crowd right quick and say they been with white men. Says their children is by white men, and they're going to get whipped so's they'll remember to stay with their own kind. The women kick and scream, but the mens grab them and roll them over a barrel and let fly with the whip."

Martha King OK-38

When I was about five years old they brought my grandmother, my mother and my two aunts and two uncles to Tuskaloosa from Fayetteville, Alabama. We crossed a big river on a ferry boat. They put us on the "block" and sold us. I can remember it well. A white man "cried" me off just like I was a animal or varmint or something. He said, "Here's a little nigger, who will give me a bid on her. She will make a good house gal someday." Old man Davis give him \$300.00 for me. I don't know whether

I was afraid or not; I don't think I cared just so I had something to eat. I was allus hungry.

George Kye OK-39

Old Master was baptized almost every Sunday and cussed us all out on Monday. I didn't join the church until after freedom, and I always was a scoundrel for dancing.

Ben Lawson OK-40

I was treated most harshly 'mongst a group of just white people and who seemed to think me de old work ox for all de hardest work. De nearest other Negro slaves were 'bout 15 or 20 miles from me.

When I was grown I ran away one night and walked and rode de rods under stage coaches to Paducah, Kentucky. I got me a job and worked as a roustabout on a boat where I learned to gamble wid dice. I fought and gambled all up and down de Mississippi River, and in de course of time I had 'bout \$3,000, but I lost it.

I don't know de month or de year I was born in but I can 'member de sinking of de biggest circus show in de Mississippi River at Mobile, Alabama when I was 10 to 14 years old, I ain't sure which.

There wasn't no children for me to play with and it seem like I never was a child but was just always a man. I wasn't never told dat I was free, and I didn't know nothing 'bout de War much dat brought my freedom. Dey kept all of dat away from me and I couldn't read or write so I didn't know.

Mary Lindsay OK-41

Then one day Miss Mary run off with a man and married him, and old Master Sobe nearly went crazy! The man was name Bill Merrick, and he was a poor blacksmith and didn't have two pair of britches to his name, and old Master Sobe said he jest stole Miss Mary 'cause she was rich, and no other reason. 'Cause he was a white man and she was mostly Chickasaw Indian.

Anyways old Master Sobe wouldn't even speak to Mr. Bill, and wouldn't let him set foot on the place. He jest reared and pitched around, and threatened to shoot him if he set eyes on him, and Mr. Bill took Miss Mary and left out for Texas. He set up a blacksmith shop on the big road between Bonham and Honey Grove, and lived there until he died.

Miss Mary done took Vici along with her, and pretty soon she come back home and stay a while, and old Master Sobe kind of soften up a little bit and give her some money to git started on, and he give her me too.

Dat jest nearly broke my old mammy's and pappy's heart, to have me took away off from them, but they couldn't say nothing and I had to go along with Miss Mary back to Texas. When we git away from the Big House I jest cried and cried until I couldn't hardly see, my eyes was so swole up, but Miss Mary said she gwine to be good to me.

I ask her how come Master Sobe didn't give her some of the grown boys and she say she reckon it because he didn't want to help her husband out none, but jest wanted to help her. If he give her a man her husband have him working in the blacksmith shop, she reckon.

Master Bill Merrick was a hard worker, and he was more sober than most the men in them days, and he never tell me to do nothing. He jest let Miss Mary tell me what to do. They have a log house close to the shop, and a little patch of a field at first, but after awhile he git more land, and then Miss Mary tell me and Vici we got to help in the field too.

That sho' was hard living then! I have to git up at three o'clock sometimes so I have time to water the hosses and slop the hogs and feed the chickens and milk the cows, and then git back to the house and git the breakfast. That was during the times when Miss Mary was having and nursing her two children, and old Vici had to stay with her all the time. Master

Mattie Logan OK-42

My mother belonged to Mistress Jennie who thought a heap of her, and why shouldn't she? Mother nursed all Miss Jennie's children because all of her young ones and my mammy's was born so close together it wasn't no trouble at all for mammy to raise the whole kaboodle of them. I was born about the same time as the baby Jennie. They say I nursed on one breast while that white child, Jennie, pulled away at the other!

That was a pretty good idea for the Mistress, for it didn't keep her tied to the place and she could visit around with her friends most any time she wanted 'thout having to worry if the babies would be fed or not.

Mammy was the house girl and account of that and because her family was so large, the Mistress fixed up a two room cabin right back of the Big House and that's where we lived. The cabin had a fireplace in one of the rooms, just like the rest of the slave cabins which was set in a row away from the Big House. In one room was bunk beds, just plain old two-by-fours with holes bored through the plank so's ropes could be fastened in and across for to hold the corn-shuck mattress.

My brothers and sisters was allowed to play with the Master's children, but not with the children who belonged to the field Negroes. We just played yard games like marbles and tossing a ball. I don't rightly remember much about games, for there wasn't too much fun in them days even if we did get raised with the Master's family. We wasn't allowed to learn any reading or writing. They say if they caught a slave learning them things they'd pull his finger nails off! I never saw that done, though.

Each slave cabin had a stone fireplace in the end, just like ours, and over the flames at daybreak was prepared the morning meal. That was the only meal the field negroes had to cook.

All the other meals was fixed up by an old man and woman who was too old for field trucking. The peas, the beans, the turnips, the potatoes, all seasoned up with fat meats and sometimes a ham bone, was cooked in a big iron kettle and when meal time come they all gathered around the pot for a-plenty of helpings! Corn bread and buttermilk made up the rest of the meal.

Ten or fifteen hogs was butchered every fall and the slaves would get the skins and maybe a ham bone. That was all, except what was mixed in with the stews. Flour was given out every Sunday morning and if a family run out of that before the next week, well, they was just out that's all!

The slaves got small amounts of vegetables from the plantation garden, but they didn't have any gardens of their own. Everybody took what old Master rationed out.

Once in a while we had rabbits and fish, but the best dish of all was the 'possum and sweet potatoes--baked together over red-hot coals in the fireplace. Now, that was something to eat!

The Lewis plantation was about three hundred acres, with usually fifty slaves working on the place. Master Lewis was a trader. He couldn't sell of our family, for we belonged to Mistress Jennie. Negro girls, the fat ones who was kinder pretty, was the most sold. Folks wanted them pretty bad but the Mistress said there wasn't going to be any selling of the girls who was mammy's children.

There was no overseer on our place, just the old Master who did all the bossing. He wasn't too mean, but I've seen him whip Old John. I'd run in the house to get away from the sight, but I could still hear Old John yelling, 'Pray, Master! Oh! Pray, Master!', but I guess that there was more howling than there was hurting at that.

My uncle Ed Miles run away to the North and joined with Yankees during the War. He was lucky to get away, for lots of them who tried it was ketched up by the patrollers. I seen some of them once. They had chains fastened around their legs, fastened short, too, just long enough to take a short step. No more running away with them chains anchoring the feet!

And that makes me think about another cure they use to tell about. A cure for mean overseers. And I don't mean kill, just scare him, that's all. They say the cure was tried on an overseer who worked for Silas Stien, who was a slave owner living close by the Lewis plantation.

It seems like this overseer was of the meanest kind, always whipping the slaves for no reason at all, and the slaves tried to figure out a way to even up with him by chasing him off the place.

One of the slaves told how to cure him. Get a King snake and put the snake in the overseer's cabin. Slip the snake in about, no, not about, but just exactly nine o'clock at night. Seems like the time was important, why so, I don't remember now.

That's what the slaves did. Put in the snake and out went the overseer. Never no more did he whip the slaves on that plantation because he wasn't working there no more! When he went, when he went, or how he went nobody knows, but they all say he went. That's what counted--he was gone!

Kiziah Love OK-43

Master Frank told him that he never used white overseers, that he had one nigger that bossed around some when he didn't do it hisself. He also told the white man that he had one nigger named Bill that was kind of bad, that he was a good worker but he didn't like to be bothered as he liked to do his own work in his own way. The white boss told him he wouldn't have any trouble and that he could handle him all right.

Old Master hired him and things went very well for a few days. He hadn't said anything to Bill and they had got along fine. I guess the new boss got to thinking it was time for him to take Bill in hand so one morning he told him to hitch up another team before he caught his own team to go to work.

Uncle Bill told him that he didn't have time, that he had a lot of plowing to git done that morning and besides it was customary for every man to catch his own team. Of course this made the overseer mad and he grabbed a stick and started cussing and run at Uncle Bill. Old Bill grabbed a single-tree and went meeting him. Dat white man all on a sudden turned 'round and run fer dear life and I tell you, he

fairly bust old Red River wide open gitting away from there and nobody never did see hide nor hair of him 'round to this day.

Master Frank had a half brother that was as mean as he was good. I believe he was the meanest man the sun ever shined on. His name was Buck Colbert

One time he got mad at his baby's nurse because she couldn't git the baby to stop crying and he hit her on the head with some fire-tongs and she died. His wife got sick and she sent for me to come and take care of her baby. I sho' didn't want to go and I begged so hard for them not to make me that they sent an older woman who had a baby of her own so she could nurse the baby if necessary.

In the night the baby woke up and got to crying and Master Buck called the woman and told her to git him quiet. She was sleepy and was sort of slow and this made Buck mad and he made her strip her clothes off to her waist and he began to whip her. His wife tried to git him to quit and he told her he'd beat her iffen she didn't shut up. Sick as as she was she slipped off and went to Master Frank's and woke him up and got him to go and make Buck quit whipping her. He had beat her so that she was cut up so bad she couldn't nurse her own baby any more.

Daniel Wiliam Lucas OK-44

The Master Doctor done owned about two hundred slaves and sometimes he sell some for to beat the bad crops.

Bert Luster OK-45

My mother took me to Greenville, Texas, 'cause my step-pappy was one of dem half smart niggers round dere trying to preach and de Ku Klux Klan beat him half to death.

Stephen McCray OK-46

My parents was Wash and Winnie McCray. They was the mother and father of 22 chillun. Jest five lived to be grown and the rest died at baby age.

Bushwhacker, nothing but poor white trash, come thoo' and killed all the little nigger chillun they could lay hands on. I was hid under the house with a big rag on my mouf many a time.

Hannah McFarland OK-47

I can't say I lak white people even now, 'cause dey done done so much agin us.

More devilment in Oklahoma than any place I know. South got more religion too. I jest as soon be back with the Rebels.

The overseer was sho' nothing but poor white trash, the kind who didn't lak niggers and dey still don't, old devils. Don't let 'em fool you, dey don't lak a nigger a'tall.

Marshall Mack OK-48

My Mistress was named Nancy Mack. She was the mother of six children, four boys and two girls. Three of dem boys went to the War and one packed and went off somewhar and nobody heard from him doing of the whole War. But soon as the War was over he come home and he never told whar he had been.

I never saw but one grown person flogged during slavery and dat was my mother. The younger son of my mistress whipped her one morning in de kitchen. His name was Jack. De slaves on Mistress' place was treated so good, all de people round and 'bout called us "Mack's Free Niggers." Dis was 14 miles northwest of Liberty, county seat of Bedford County, Virginia.

One day while de War was going on, my Mistress got a letter from her son Jim wid jest one line. Dat was "Mother: Jack's brains spattered on my gun this morning." That was all he written.

Allen V. Manning OK-49

I always been somewhar in the South, mostly in Texas when I was a young man, and of course us Negroes never got much of a show in court matters, but I reckon if I had of had the chance to set on a jury I would of made a mighty poor out at it.

No sir, I jest can't set in judgement on nobody, 'cause I learned when I was jest a little boy that good people and bad people--makes no difference which--jest keep on living and doing like they been taught, and I jest can't seem to blame them none for what they do iffen they been taught that way.

I was born in slavery, and I belonged to a Baptist preacher. Until I was fifteen years old I was taught that I was his own chattel-property, and he could do with me like he wanted to, but he had been taught that way too, and we both believed it. I never did hold nothing against him for being hard on Negroes sometimes, and I don't think I ever would of had any trouble even if I had of growed up and died in slavery.

Old Master's place was right at the corner where Coryell and McLennan and Bosque Counties come together, and we raised mostly cotton and jest a little corn for feed. He seem like he changed a lot since we left Mississippi, and seem like he paid more attention to us and looked after us better. But most the people that already live there when we git there was mighty hard on their Negroes. They was mostly hard drinkers and hard talkers, and they work and fight jest as hard as they talk, too!

Salomon Oliver OK-53

Master John was quite a character. The big plantation didn't occupy all his time. He owned a bank in Vicksburg and another in New Orleans, and only came to the plantation two or three times a year for a week or two visit.

Things happened around there mighty quick when the Master showed up. If the slaves were not being treated right--out go the white overseer. Fired! The Master was a good man and tried to hire good boss men. Master John was bad after the slave women. A yellow child show up every once in a while. Those kind always got special privileges because the Master said he didn't want his children whipped like the rest of them slaves.

My own Mammy, Mary, was the Master's own daughter! She married Salomon Oliver (who took the name of Oliver after the War), and the Master told all the slave drivers to leave her alone and not whip her. This made the overseers jealous of her and caused trouble. John Santhers was one of the white overseers who treated her bad, and after I was born and got strong enough (I was a weakling for three-four years after birth), to do light chores he would whip me just for the fun of it. It was fun for him but not for me. I hoped to whip him when I grew up. That is the one

thing I won't ever forget. He died about the end of the War so that's one thing I won't ever get to do.

My mother was high-tempered and she knew about the Master's orders not to whip her. I guess sometimes she took advantage and tried to do things that maybe wasn't right. But it did her no good and one of the white men flogged her to death. She died with scars on her back!

Phyllis Petite OK-54

I remember when old Mistress Harnage tried me out sweeping up the front rooms. They had two or three great big pictures of some old people hanging on the wall. They was full blood Indians it look like, and I was sure scared of them pictures! I would go here and there and every which-a-way, and anywheres I go them big pictures always looking straight at me and watching me sweep! I kept my eyes right on them so I could run if they moved, and old Mistress take me back to the kitchen and say I can't sweep because I miss all the dirt.

That skinned corn aint like the boiled hominy we have today. To make it you boil some wood ashes, or have some drip lye from the hopper to put in the hot water. Let the corn boil in the lye water until the skin drops off and the eyes drop out and then wash that corn in fresh water about a dozen times, or just keep carrying water from the spring until you are wore out, like I did. Then you put the corn in a crock and set it in the spring, and you got good skinned corn as long as it last, all ready to warm up a little batch at a time.

My husband was George Petite. He tell me his mammy was sold away from him when he was a little boy. He looked down a long lane after her just as long as he could see her, and cried after her. He went down to the big road and set down by his mammy's barefooted tracks in the sand and set there until it got dark, and then he come on back to the quarters.

Matilda Poe OK-55

Old Master never hired no overseer for his slaves, but he looked after 'em hisself. He punished dem hisself too. He had to go away one time and he hired a white man to oversee while he was gone. The only orders he left was to keep dem busy. Granny Lucy was awful old but he made her go to the field. She couldn't hold out to work so he ups and whips her. He beat her scandalous. He cut her back so bad she couldn't wear her dress. Old Master come home and my, he was mad when he see Granny Lucy. He told de man to leave and iffen he ever set foot on his ground again he's shoot him, sure!

A owner once sold several babies to traders. Dey stopped at our plantation to stay awhile. My mammy and de other women had to take care of dem babies for two days, and teach dem to nuss a bottle or drink from a glass. Dat was awful, dem little children crying for they mothers.

Henry F. Pyles OK-56

Little pinch o' pepper----

Little bunch o' wool----

Mumbledy--Mumbledy----

Two, three Pammy Christy beans----
Little piece o' rusty iron----

Mumbledy--Mumbledy----

Wrop it in a rag and tie it wid hair,
Two fum a hoss an' one fum a mare----

Mumbledy, Mumbledy, Mumbledy----

Wet it in whiskey
Boughten wid silver;
Dat make you wash so hard your sweat pop out,
And he come to pass, sho'!

That's how the niggers say old Bab Russ used to make the hoodoo "hands" he made for the young bucks and wenches, but I don't know, 'cause I was too trusting to look inside de one he make for me, and anyways I lose it, and it no good nohow!

Old Bab Russ live about two mile from me, and I went to him one night at midnight and ask him to make me de hand. I was a young strapper about sixteen years old, and thinking about wenches pretty hard and wanting something to help me out wid the one I liked best.

Old Bab Russ charge me four bits for dat hand, and I had to give four bits more for a pint of whiskey to wet it wid, and it wasn't no good nohow!

Course dat was five-six years after de War. I wasn't yet quite eleven when de War close. Most all the niggers was farming on de shares and whole lots of them was still working for their old Master yet. Old Bab come in there from deep South Carolina two-three years befo', and live all by hisself. De gal I was worrying about had come wid her old pappy and mammy to pick cotton on de place, and dey was staying in one of de cabins in the "settlement", but dey didn't live there all de time.

I don't know whether I believed in conjure much or not in dem days, but anyways I tried it that once and it stirred up sech a rumpus everybody called me "Hand" after that until after I was married and had a pack of children.

Old Bab Russ was coal black, and he could talk African or some other unknown tongue, and all the young bucks and wenches was mortal 'fraid of him!

Well sir, I took dat hand he made for me and set out to try it on dat gal. She never had give me a friendly look even, and when I would speak to her polite she just hang her head and say nothing!

We was all picking cotton, and I come along up behind her and decided to use my "Hand." I had bought me a pint of whiskey to wet the hand wid, but I was scared to take out of my pocket and let the other niggers see it, so I jest set down in de cotton row and taken a big mouthful. I figgered to hold it in my mouth until I caught up wid that gal and then blow it on the hand jest before I tech her on the arm and speak to her.

Well, I take me a big mouthful, but it was so hot and scaldy it jest slip right on down my throat! Then I had to take another, and when I was gitting up I kind of stumbled and it slip down, too!

Then I see all the others get way on ahead, and I took another big mouthful--the last in the bottle--and drap the bottle under a big stalk and start picking fast and holding the whiskey in my mouth this time. I missed about half the cotton I guess, but at last I catch up with de rest and git close up behind dat purty gal. Then I started to speak to her, but forgot I had de whiskey in mouth and I lost most of it down my neck and all over my chin, and then I strangled a little on the rest, so as when I went to squirt it on de "hand" I didn't have nothing left to squirt but a little spit.

That make me a little nervous right then, but anyways I step up behind dat gal and lay my hand on her arm and speak polite and start to say something, but I finish up what I start to say laying on my neck with my nose shoved up under a cotton stalk about four rows away!

De way that gal lam me across the head was a caution! We was in new ground, and she jest pick up a piece of old root and whopped me right in de neck with it!

That raise sech a laugh on me that I never say nothing to her for three-four days, but after while I gets myself wound up to go see her at her home. I didn't know how she going to act, but I jest took my foot in my hand and went on over.

Her old pappy and mammy was asleep in the back of the room on a pallet, and we set in front of the fireplace on our hunches and jest looked at the fire and punched it up a little. It wasn't cold, but de malary fog was thick all through de bottoms.

After while I could smell the whiskey soaked up in dat "hand" I had in my pocket, and I was scared she could smell it too. So I jest reached in my pocket and teched it for luck, then I reached over and teched her arm. She jerked it back so quick she knocked over the churn and spilled buttermilk all over de floor! Dat make de old folks mad, and dey grumble and holler and told de gal, "Send dat black rapscaillon on out of here!" But I didn't go.

I kept on moving over closer and she kept on backing away, but after while I reach over and put my hand on her knee. All I was going to do was say something but I shore forgot what it was the next minnit, 'cause she jest whinnied lak a scared hoss and give me a big push. I was settin straddledy-legged on the floor, and that push sent me on my head in the hot ashes in the fur corner of the chimney.

Then the old man jump up and make for me and I make for the door! It was dark, all 'cepting the light from the chimney, and I fumble all up and down the door jamb before I find de latch pin. The old man shorely git me if he hadn't stumble over the eating table and whop his hand right down in de dish of fresh made butter. That make him so mad he jest stand and holler and cuss.

I git de pin loose and jerk de door open so quick and hard I knock de powder gourd down what was hanging over it, and my feet git caught in the string. The stopper gits knocked out, and when I untangle it from my feet and throw it back in de house it fall in the fireplace.

I was running all de time, but I hear dat gourd go "Blammity Blam!" and then all de yelling, but I didn't go back to see how dey git the hot coals all put out what was scattered all over de cabin!

I done drap dat "hand" and I never did see it again. Never did see the gal but two-three times after that, and we never mention about dat night. Her old pappy was too old to work, so I never did see him neither, but she must of told about it because all the young bucks called me "Hand" after that for a long time.

We had a white doctor lived at de next plantation, and old Master had a contract with old Dr. Brown to look after us. He had a beard as long as your arm. He come for all kinds of misery except bornings. Then we had a mid-wife who was a white woman lived down below us. They was poor people renting or living on war land. Nearly all de white folks in that country been there a long time and their old people got de land from de government for fighting in the Revolutionary War. Most all was from North Carolina--way back. I think old Master's pappy was from dere in de first place.

I was in de field hoeing, and I remember I hadn't watered the cows we had hid way down in de woods, so I started down to water them when I first heard de shooting.

We had de stock hid down in de woods and all de corn and stuff hid too, 'cause the Yankees and the Sesesh had been riding through quite a lot, and either one take anything they needed iffen they found it.

First I hear something way off say "Br-r-rump!" Then again, and again. Then something sound like popcorn beginning to pop real slow. Then it git faster and I start for de settlement and de big house.

All Master's folks was staying at de big house then, and couldn't git back to town 'count of de soldiers, so they all put on they good clothes, with de hoop skirts and little sunshades and the lace pantaloons and got in the buggy to go see de battle!

They rid off and it wasn't long till all the niggers was following behind. We all got to a hill 'bout a half a mile from the crossroads and stopped when we couldn't see nothing but thick smoke all over de whole place.

We could see men on horses come in and out of de smoke, going this way and that way, and then some Yankees on horses broke through de woods right close to us and scattered off down through de field. One of de white officers rid up close and yelled at us and took off his hat, but I couldn't hear nothing he said.

Then he rid on and catch up with his men. They had stopped and was turning off to one side. He looked back and waved his hat again for us to git away from that, and jest then he clapped his hand to his belly and fell off his hoss.

Our white folks turned their buggy round and made it for home and no mistake! The niggers wasn't fur behind neither!

They fit on back toward our plantation, and some of the fighting was inside it at one corner. For three-four days after that they was burying soldiers 'round there, and some of de graves was on our old place.

Long time afterwards people come and moved all them to other graveyards at Shiloh and Corinth and other places. They was about a hundred killed all around there.

Chaney Richardson OK-57

I didn't know nothing else but some kind of war until I was a grown woman, because when I first can remember my old Master, Charley Rogers, was always on the lookout for somebody or other he was lined up against in the big feud.

My master and all the rest of the folks was Cherokees, and they'd been killing each other off in the feud ever since long before I was borned, and jest because old Master have a big farm and three-four families of Negroes them other Cherokees keep on pestering his stuff all the time. Us children was always afear'd to go any place less'n some of the grown folks was along.

When I was about 10 years old that feud got so bad the Indians was always talking about getting their horses and cattle killed and their slaves harmed. I was too little to know how bad it was until one morning my own mammy went off somewhere down the road to git some stuff to dye cloth and she didn't come back.

Lots of the young Indian bucks on both sides of the feud would ride around the woods at night, and old Master got powerful oneasy about my mammy and had all the neighbors and slaves out looking for her, but nobody find her.

It was about a week later that two Indian men rid up and ast old master wasn't his gal Ruth gone. He says yes, and they take one of the slaves along with a wagon to show where they seen her.

They find her in some bushes where she'd been getting bark to set the dyes, and she been dead all the time. Somebody done hit her in the head with a club and shot her through and through with a bullet too. She was so swole up they couldn't lift her up and jest had to make a deep hole right along side of her and roll her in it she was so bad mortified.

Old Master nearly go crazy he was so mad, and the young Cherokee men ride the woods every night for about a month, but they never catch on to who done it.

Then one day they had to bust up the camp and some Federal soldiers go with us and we all start back home. We git to a place where all the houses is burned down and I ask what is that place. Miss Hannah say: "Skullyville, child. That's where they had part of the War."

Gibson

I didn't want slavery to be over with, mostly because we had the War I reckon. All that trouble made me the loss of my mammy and pappy, and I was always treated good when I was a slave. When it was over I had rather be at home like I was. None of the Cherokees ever whipped us, and my mistress give me some mighty fine rules to live by to git along in this world, too.

Betty Robertson OK-59

I was born close to Webber's Falls, in the Canadian District of the Cherokee Nation, in the same year that my pappy was blowed up and killed in the big boat accident that killed my old Master.

I never did see my daddy excepting when I was a baby and I only know what my mammy told me about him. He come from across the water when he was a little boy, and was grown when old Master Joseph Vann bought him, so he never did learn to talk much Cherokee. My mammy was a Cherokee slave, and talked it good. My husband was a Cherokee born negro, too, and when he got mad he forgit all the English he knowed.

Old Master Joe had a mighty big farm and several families of negroes, and he was a powerful rich man. Pappy's name was Kalet Vann, and mammy's name was Sally. My brothers was name Sone and Frank. I had one brother and one sister sold when I was little and I don't remember the names. My other sisters was Polly, Ruth and

Liddie. I had to work in the kitchen when I was a gal, and they was ten or twelve children smaller than me for me to look after, too. Sometime Young Master Joe and the other boys give me a piece of money and say I worked for it, and I reckon I did for I have to cook five or six times a day. Some of the Master's family was always going down to the river and back, and every time they come in I have to fix something to eat. Old Mistress had a good cookin' stove, but most Cherokees had only a big fireplace and pot hooks. We had meat, bread, rice, potatoes and plenty of fish and chicken. The spring time give us plenty of green corn and beans too. I couldn't buy anything in slavery time, so I jest give the piece of money to the Vann children. I got all the clothes I need from old Mistress, and in winter I had high top shoes with brass caps on the toe. In the summer I wear them on Sunday, too. I wore loom cloth clothes, dyed in copperas what the old negro women and the old Cherokee women made.

The slaves had a pretty easy time I think. Young Master Vann never very hard on us and he never whupped us, and old Mistress was a widow woman and a good Christian and always kind. I sure did love her. Maybe old Master Joe Vann was harder, I don't know, but that was before my time. Young Master never whip his slaves, but if they don't mind good he sell them off sometimes. He sold one of my brothers and one sister because they kept running off. They wasn't very big either, but one day two Cherokees rode up and talked a long time, then young Master came to the cabin and said they were sold because mammy couldn't make them mind him. They got on the horses behind the men and went off.

Old Master Joe had a big steam boat he called the Lucy Walker, and he run it up and down the Arkansas and the Mississippi and the Ohio river, old Mistress say. He went clean to Louisville, Kentucky, and back. My pappy was a kind of a boss of the negroes that run the boat, and they all belong to old Master Joe. Some had been in a big run-away and had been brung back, and wasn't so good, so he keep them on the boat all the time mostly. Mistress say old Master and my pappy on the boat somewhere close to Louisville and the boiler bust and tear the boat up. Some niggers say my pappy kept hollering, "Run it to the bank! Run it to the bank!" but it sunk and him and old Master died.

Old Master Joe was a big man in the Cherokees, I hear, and was good to his negroes before I was born. My pappy run away one time, four or five years before I was born, mammy tell me, and at that time a whole lot of Cherokee slaves run off at once. They got over in the Creek country and stood off the Cherokee officers that went to git them, but pretty soon they give up and come home. Mammy say they was lots of excitement on old Master's place and all the negroes mighty scared, but he didn't sell my pappy off. He jest kept him and he was a good negro after that. He had to work on the boat, though, and never got to come home but once in a long while.

Young Master Joe let us have singing and be baptized if we want to, but I wasn't baptized till after the War. But we couldn't learn to read or have a book, and the Cherokee folks was afraid to tell us about the letters and figgers because they have a law you go to jail and a big fine if you show a slave about the letters.

When the War come they have a big battle away west of us, but I never see any battles. Lots of soldiers around all the time though.

Harriet Robinson OK-60

I was born September 1, 1842, in Bastrop, Texas, on Colorado River. My pappy was named Harvey Wheeler and my mammy was named Carolina Sims. My brothers and sisters was named Alex, Taylor, Mary, Cicero, Tennessee, Sarah, Jeff, Ella and Nora. We lived in cedar log houses with dirt floors and double chimneys, and doors hung on wooden hinges. One side of our beds was bored in the walls and had one leg on the other. Them white folks give each nigger family a blanket in winter.

I nussed 3 white chillun, Lulu, Helen Augusta, and Lola Sims. I done this before that War that set us free. We kids use to make extra money by toting gravel in our aprons. They'd give us dimes and silver nickles.

Our clothes was wool and cotton mixed. We had red rustic shoes, soles one-half inch thick. They'd go a-whick a-whack. The mens had pants wid one seam and a right-hand pocket. Boys wore shirts.

Women broke in mules throwed 'em down and roped 'em. They'd do it better'n men. While mammy made some hominy one day both my foots was scalded and when they clipped them blisters, they jest put some cotton round them and caught all dat yellow water and made me a yellow dress out of it. This was 'way back yonder in slavery, before the War.

Whenever white folks had a baby born den all de old niggers had to come thoo the room and the master would be over 'hind the bed and he'd say, "Here's a new little mistress or master you got to work for." You had to say, "Yessuh Master" and bow real low or the overseer would crack you. Them was slavery days, dog days.

Master Sam didn't never whip me, but Miss Julia whipped me every day in the mawning. During the war she beat us so terrible. She say, "Your master's out fighting and losing blood trying to save you from them Yankees, so you kin git your'n here." Miss Julia would take me by my ears and butt my head against the wall.

One, my sister Liza, was mulatto and Master Colonel Sims' son had 3 chillun by her. We never seen her no more after her last child was born. I found out though that she was in Canada.

One day whiles master was gone hunting, Mistress Julia told her brother to give Miss Harriett (me) a free whipping. She was a nigger killer. Master Colonel Sam come home and he said, "You infernal sons o' bitches don't you know there is 300 Yankees camped out here and iffen they knowed you'd whipped this nigger the way you done done, they'd kill all us. Iffen they find it out, I'll kill all you all." Old rich devils, I'm here, but they is gone.

Our overseer was a poor man. Had us up before day and lak-a-that. He was paid to be the head of punishment. I jest didn't like to think of them old slavery days, dogs' days.

Katie Rowe OK-61

I can set on de gallery, whar de sunlight shine bright, and sew a powerful fine seam when my grandchillun wants a special purty dress for de school doings, but I ain't worth much for nothing else I reckon.

These same old eyes seen powerful lot of tribulations in my time, and when I shets 'em now I can see lots of l'il chillun jest lak my grandchillun, toting hoes bigger dan dey is, and dey pore little black hands and legs bleeding whar dey scratched by

de brambledy weeds, and whar dey got whuppings 'cause dey didn't git out all de work de overseer set out for 'em.

I was one of dem little slave gals my own self, and I never seen nothing but work and tribulations till I was a grown up woman, jest about.

De niggers had hard traveling on de plantation whar I was born and raised, 'cause old Master live in town and jest had de overseer on de place, but iffen he had lived out dar hisself I speck it been as bad, 'cause he was a hard driver his own self.

He git biling mad when de Yankees have dat big battle at Pea Ridge and scatter de 'Federates all down through our country all bleeding and tied up and hungry, and he jest mount on his hoss and ride out to de plantation whar we all hoeing corn.

He ride up and tell old man Saunders--dat de overseer--to bunch us all up round de lead row man--dat my own uncle Sandy--and den he tell us de law!

"You niggers been seeing de 'Federate soldiers coming by here looking purty raggedy and hurt and wore out," he say, "but dat no sign dey licked!

"Dem Yankees ain't gwine git dis fur, but iffen dey do you all ain't gwine git free by 'em, 'cause I gwine free you befo' dat. When dey git here dey going find you already free, 'cause I gwine line you up on de bank of Bois d' Arc Creek and free you wid my shotgun! Anybody miss jest one lick wid de hoe, or one step in de line, or one clap of dat bell, or one toot of de horn, and he gwine be free and talking to de debil long befo' he ever see a pair of blue britches!"

Dat de way he talk to us, and dat de way he act wid us all de time.

We live in de log quarters on de plantation, not far from Washington, Arkansas, close to Bois d' Arc Creek, in de edge of de Little River bottom.

Old Master's name was Dr. Isaac Jones, and he live in de town, whar he keep four, five house niggers, but he have about 200 on de plantation, big and little, and old man Saunders oversee 'em at de time of de War. Old Mistress name was Betty, and she had a daughter name Betty about grown, and then they was three boys, Tom, Bryan, and Bob, but they was too young to go to de War. I never did see 'em but once or twice 'til after de War.

Old Master didn't go to de War, 'cause he was a doctor and de onliest one left in Washington, and purty soon he was dead anyhow.

Next fall after he ride out and tell us dat he gwine shoot us befo' he let us free he come out to see how his steam gin doing. De gin box was a little old thing 'bout as big as a bedstead, wid a long belt running through de side of de gin house out to de engine and boiler in de yard. De boiler burn cord wood, and it have a little crack in it whar de nigger ginner been trying to fix it.

Old Master come out, hopping mad 'cause de gin shet down, and ast de ginner, old Brown, what de matter. Old Brown say de boiler weak and it liable to bust, but old Master jump down off'n his hoss and go 'round to de boiler and say, "Cuss fire to your black heart! Dat boiler all right! Throw on some cordwood, cuss fire to your heart!"

Old Brown start to de wood pile grumbling to hisself and old Master stoop down to look at de boiler again, and it blow right up and him standing right dar!

Old Master was blowed all to pieces, and dey jest find little bitsy chunks of his clothes and parts of him to bury.

De wood pile blow down, and old Brown land way off in de woods, but he wasn't killed.

Two wagons of cotton blowed over, and de mules run away, and all de niggers was scared nearly to death 'cause we knowed de overseer gwine be a lot worse, now dat old Master gone.

My uncle Sandy was de lead row nigger, and he was a good nigger and never would tech a drap of likker. One night some de niggers git hold of some likker somehow, and dey leave de jug half full on de step of Sandy's cabin. Next morning old man Saunders come out in de field so mad he was pale.

He jest go to de lead row and tell Sandy to go wid him, and start toward de woods along Bois d' Arc Creek wid Sandy follering behind. De overseer always carry a big heavy stick, but we didn't know he was so mad, and dey jest went off in de woods.

Purty soon we hear Sandy hollering and we know old overseer pouring in on, den de overseer come back by his self and go on up to de house.

Come late evening he come and see what we done in de day's work, and go back to de quarters wid us all. Then he git to mammy's cabin, whar grandmammy live too, he say to grandmammy, "I sent Sandy down in de woods to hunt a hoss, he gwine come in hungry purty soon. You better make him a extra hoe cake," and he kind of laugh and go on to his house.

Jest soon as he gone we all tell grandmammy we think he got a whipping, and sho' nuff he didn't come in.

De next day some white boys find uncle Sandy whar dat overseer done killed him and throwed him in a little pond, and dey never done nothing to old man Saunders at all!

Later on in de War de Yankees come in all around us and camp, and de overseer git sweet as honey in de comb! Nobody git a whipping all de time de Yankees dar!

Dey come and took all de meat and corn and 'taters dey want too, and dey tell us, "Why don't you poor darkeys take all de meat and molasses you want? You made it and it's your's much as anybody's!" But we know dey soon be gone, and den we git a whipping iffen we do.

Morris Sheppard OK-62

Us slaves lived in log cabins dat only had one room and no windows so we kept de doors open most of de time. We had home-made wooden beds wid rope springs, and de little ones slept on trundle beds dat was home made too.

At night dem trundles was jest all over de floor, and in de morning we shove dem back under de big beds to git dem out'n de way. No nails in none of dem nor in de chairs and tables. Nails cost big money and old Master's blacksmith wouldn't make none 'cepting a few for old Master now and den, so we used wooden dowels to put things together.

Everything was stripedey 'cause Mammy like to make it fancy. She dye wid copperas and walnut and wild indigo and things like dat and make pretty cloth. I wore a stripedey shirt till I was about eleven years old, and den one day while we was down in de Choctaw Country old Mistress see me and nearly fall off'n her horse! She holler, "Easter, you go right now and make dat big buck of a boy some britches!"

[D]ey was a lot of dem Pin Indians all up on de Illinois River and dey was wid de North and dey taken it out on de slave owners a lot before de War and during it too.

Dey would come in de night and hamstring de horses and maybe set fire to de barn, and two of 'em named Joab Scarrel and Tom Starr killed my pappy one night just before de War broke out.

I don't know what dey done it for, only to be mean, and I guess they was drunk.

When de War come old Master seen he was going into trouble and he sold off most of de slaves. In de second year of de War he sold my mammy and my aunt dat was Uncle Joe's wife and my two brothers and my little sister. Mammy went to a mean old man named Peper Goodman and he took her off down de river, and pretty soon Mistress tell me she died 'cause she can't stand de rough treatment.

Andrew Simms OK-63

Somehow or other mammy and pappy meets 'round the place and the first thing happens they is in love. That's what mammy say. And the next thing happen is me. They didn't get married. The Master's say it is alright for them to have a baby. They never gets married, even after the War. Just jumped the broomstick and goes to living with somebody else I reckon.

There wasn't any Sunday Schooling. There was no place to learn to read and write--no big brick schools like they is now. The old Master say we can teach ourselves but we can't do it. Old Elam Bowman owned the place next door to Mister Driver. If he catch his slaves toying with the pencil, why, he cut off one of their fingers. Then I reckon they lost interest in education and get their mind back on the hoe and plow like he say for them to do.

Lou Smith OK-65

My old Mistress bought my grandmother and old Mistress' sister bought my grandma's sister. These white women agreed that they would never go off so far that the two slave women couldn't see each other. They allus kept this promise.

Miss Jo wasn't a good Mistress and mother and me wasn't happy. When young Master was there he made her treat us good but when he was gone she made our lives a misery to us. She was what we called a "low-brow." She never had been used to slaves and she treated us like dogs. She said us kids didn't need to wear any clothes and one day she told us we could jest take'em off as it cost too much to clothe us. I was jest a little child but I knowed I oughten to go without my clothes. We wore little enough as it was. In summer we just wore one garment, a sort of slip without any sleeves. Well, anyway she made me take off my clothes and I just crept off and cried. Purty soon young Master come home.

Young Master drewed my mother's name and they all agreed that I should go with her, so back we went to Miss Jo. She wouldn't feed us niggers. She'd make me set in a corner like a little dog. I got so hungry and howled so loud they had to feed me.

They was a white man come into our settlement and bought a plantation and some slaves. My, but he treated them bad. He owned a boy about fifteen years old. One day he sent him on a errand. On the way home he got off his mule and set down in the shade of a tree to rest. He fell asleep and the mule went home. When he woke up he was scared to go home and he stayed out in de woods for several days. Finally they caught him and took him home and his master beat him nearly to death. He then dug a hole and put him in it and piled corn shucks all around him. This nearly killed him 'cause his body was cut up so with the whip. One of the niggers slipped off and

went to the jining plantation and told about the way the boy was being treated and a bunch of white men came over and made him take the child out and doctor his wounds. This man lived there about ten years and he was so mean to his slaves 'til all the white men round who owned niggers finally went to him and told him they would just give him so long to sell out and leave. They made him sell his slaves to people there in the community, and he went back north.

My mother told me that he owned a woman who was the mother of several chillun and when her babies would get about a year or two of age he'd sell them and it would break her heart. She never got to keep them. When her fourth baby was born and was about two months old she just studied all the time about how she would have to give it up and one day she said, "I just decided I'm not going to let old Master sell this baby; he just ain't going to do it." She got up and give it something out of a bottle and purty soon it was dead. 'Course didn't nobody tell on her or he'd of beat her nearly to death. There wasn't many folks that was mean to their slaves.

Times was awful hard during the War. We actually suffered for some salt. We'd go to the smoke house where meat had been salted down for years, dig a hole in the ground and fill it with water. After it would stand for a while we'd dip the water up carefully and strain it and cook our food in it.

When the War was over you'd see men, women and chillun walk out of their cabins with a bundle under their arms. All going by in droves, just going nowhere in particular.

James Southall OK-66

We had what was known as Georgia bedsteads. Dey was wooden bedsteads wid holes bored in de side pieces and in de foot and head-boards. Ropes was laced back and forth across and this took de place of both slats and springs. De ropes would git loose and we had what was called a "following-pin" to tighten 'em wid. We'd take a block of wood wid a notch in it and catch de rope and hold it till de following-pin could be driven in and den we'd twist de ropes tight again. We had grass or cotton beds and we slept good, too.

We was never punished. Just iffen dey didn't work dey didn't have nothing to eat and wear and de hands what did work wouldn't divide wid 'em iffen dey didn't work.

Niggers was very religious and dey had church often. Dey would annoy de white folks wid shouting and singing and praying and dey would take cooking pots and put over dey mouths so de white folks couldn't hear 'em. Dey would dig holes in de ground too, and lie down when dey prayed.

Old Master kept us through de War. We saw Yankee soldiers come through in droves lak Coxsey's Army. We wasn't afraid for ourselves but we was afraid dey would catch old Master or one of de boys when dey would come home on a furlough. We'd hep 'em git away and just swear dat dey hadn't been home a-tall.

God created us all free and equal. Somewhere along de road we lost out.

Beauregard Tennyson OK-67

Master fix up a cotton gin right on the place. It was an old-fashioned press. Six horses run it with two boys tromping down the cotton with their feet.

Master Jess didn't work his slaves like other white folks done. Wasn't no four o'clock wake-up horns and the field work started at seven o'clock. Quitting time was five o'clock--just about union hours nowadays.

William Walters OK-68

Nashville was a fort town, filled with trenches and barricades. Right across the road from where we stayed was a vacant block used by the Rebs as an emergency place for treating the wounded.

I remember the boom of cannons one whole day, and I heard the rumble of army wagons as they crossed through the town. But there was nothing to see as the fog of powder smoke became thicker with every blast of Sesesh cannon.

When the smoke fog cleared away I watched the wounded being carried to the clearing across the road--fighting men with arms shot off, legs gone, faces blood smeared--some of them just laying there cussing God and Man with their dying breath!

Mary Frances Webb OK-69

My grandmother was a field hand. She plowed and hoed the crops in the summer and spring, and in the winter she sawed and cut cord wood just like a man. She said it didn't hurt her as she was as strong as an ox.

She could spin and weave and sew. She helped make all the cloth for their clothes and in the spring one of the jobs for the women was to weave hats for the men. They used oat-straw, grass, and cane which had been split and dried and soaked in hot water until it was pliant, and they wove it into hats. The women wore a cloth tied around their head.

They didn't have many matches so they always kept a log heap burning to keep a fire. It was a common thing for a neighbor to come in to borrow a coal of fire as their fire had died out.

The colored men went with their master to the army. They made regular soldiers and endured the same hardships that the white soldiers did. They told of one battle when so many men were killed that a little stream seemed to be running pure blood as the water was so bloody.

After the war the slaves returned home with their masters and some of the older ones stayed on with them and helped them to rebuild their farms. None of them seemed to think it strange that they had been fighting on the wrong side in the army as they were following their white folks.

Easter Wells OK-70

I was born in Arkansas, in 1854, but we moved to Texas in 1855. I've heard 'em tell about de trip to Texas. De grown folks rode in wagons and carts but de chaps all walked dat was big enuff. De men walked and toted their guns and hunted all de way. Dey had plenty of fresh game to eat.

Once one of de men got his 'lowance and he decided he'd have de meat all cooked at once so he come to our cabin and got mammy to cook it for him. She cooked it and he took it home. One day he was at work and a dog got in and et de meat all up. He didn't have much food for de rest of de week. He had to make out wid parched corn.

Old Mistress and old Master had three children. Dey was two children dead between Master Jason and Miss Jane. Dey was a little girl 'bout my age, named Arline. We played together all de time. We used to set on de steps at night and old Mistress would tell us about de stars. She'd tell us and show us de Big Dipper, Little Dipper, Milky Way, Ellen's Yard, Job's Coffin, and de Seven Sisters. I can show 'em to you and tell you all about 'em yet.

I scared Arline and made her fall and break her leg twice. One time we was on de porch after dark one night and I told her dat I heard something and I made like I could see it and she couldn't so she got scared and run and hung her toe in a crack and fell off de high porch and broke her leg. Another time while de War was going on we was dressed up in long dresses playing grown-ups. We had playhouses under some big castor-bean bushes. We climbed up on de fence and jest for fun I told her dat I seen some Yankees coming. She started to run and got tangled up in her long dress and fell and broke her leg again. It nigh broke my heart for I loved her and she loved me and she didn't tell on me either time. I used to visit her after she was married and we'd sure have a good visit talking 'bout de things we used to do. We was separated when we was about fifteen and didn't see [HW: each] other any more till we was both married and had children. I went to visit her at Bryant, Brazos County, Texas and I ain't seen her since. I don't know whether she is still living or not.

I 'members hearing a man say dat once he was a nigger trader. He'd buy and trade or sell 'em like they was stock. He become a Christian and never sold any more.

Our young Master went to de War and got wounded and come home and died. Old Master den took full charge of us and when de War ended he kept us because he said we didn't have no folks and he said as our owner was dead we wasn't free. Mother died about a year after de War, and some white folks took my sister but I was afraid to go. Old Master told me iffen I left him he would cut my ears off end I'd starve and I don't know what all he did tell me he'd do. I must a-been a fool but I was afraid to try it.

John White OK-71

I remembers the house. A heavy log house with a gallery clear across the front. The kitchen was back of the house. I work in there and I live in there. It wasn't built so good as the Master's house. The cold winds in the winter go through the cracks between the logs like the walls was somewheres else, and I shivers with the misery all the time.

The cooking got to be my job. The washing too. Washday come around and I fills the tub with clothes. Puts the tub on my head and walks half a mile to the spring where I washes the clothes. Sometimes I run out of soap. Then I make ash soap right by the spring. I learns to be careful about streaks in the clothes. I learns by the bull whip. One day the Master finds a soapy streak in his shirt. Then he finds me.

The Military Road goes by the place and the Master drives me down the road and ties me to a tree. First he tears off the old shirt and then he throws the bull whip to me. When he is tired of beating me more torture is a-coming. The salt water cure. It don't cure nothing but that's what the white folks called it. "Here's at you," the Master say, and slap the salt water into the bleeding cuts. "Here's at you!" The blisters burst every time he slap me with the brine.

Then I was loosened to stagger back into the kitchen. The Mistress couldn't do nothing about it 'cept to lay on the grease thick, with a kind word to help stop the misery.

Ration time was Saturday night. Every slave get enough fat pork, corn meal and such to last out the week. I reckon the Master figure it to the last bite because they was no leavings over. Most likely the shortage catch them!

Sometimes they'd borrow, sometimes I'd slip somethings from out the kitchen. The single women folks was bad that way. I favors them with something extra from the kitchen. Then they favors me--at night when the overseer thinks everybody asleep in they own places!

I was always back to my kitchen bed long before the overseer give the get-up-knock. I hear the knock, he hear me answer. Then he blow the horn and shout the loud call, ARE YOU UP, and everybody know it was four o'clock and pour out of the cabins ready for the chores.

Sometimes the white folks go around the slave quarters for the night. Not on the Davenport plantation, but some others close around. The slaves talked about it amongst themselves.

After a while they'd be a new baby. Yellow. When the child got old enough for chore work the master would sell him (or her). No difference was it his own flesh and blood--if the price was right!

I traffic with lots of the women, but never marries. Not even when I was free after the War. I sees too many married troubles to mess up with such doings!

Sometimes the master sent me alone to the grinding mill. Load in the yellow corn, hitch in the oxen, I was ready to go. I gets me fixed up with a pass and takes to the road.

That was the trip I like best. On the way was a still. Off in the bresh. If the still was lonely I stop, not on the way to but on the way back. Mighty good whiskey, too! Maybe I drinks too much, then I was sorry.

Not that I swipe the whiskey, just sorry because I gets sick! Then I figures a woods camp meeting will steady me up and I goes.

The preacher meet me and want to know how is my feelings. I says I is low with the misery and he say to join up with the Lord.

I never join because he don't talk about the Lord. Just about the Master and Mistress. How the slaves must obey around the plantation--how the white folks know what is good for the slaves. Nothing about obeying the Lord and working for him.

I reckon the old preacher was worrying more about the bull whip than he was the Bible, else he say something about the Lord! But I always obeys the Lord--that's why I is still living!

The slaves would pray for to get out of bondage. Some of them say the Lord told them to run away. Get to the North. Cross the Red River. Over there would be folks to guide them to the Free State (Kansas).

The Lord never tell me to run away. I never tried it, maybe, because mostly they was caught by patrollers and fetched back for a flogging--and I had whippings enough already!

Before the Civil War was the fighting with Mexico. Some of the troops on they way south passed on the Military Road. Wasn't any fighting around Linden or Jefferson during the time.

They was lots of traveling on the Military Road. Most of the time you could see covered wagons pulled by mules and horses, and sometimes a crawling string of wagons with oxen on the pulling end.

From up in Arkansas come the stage coach along the road. To San Antonio. The drivers bring news the Mexicans just about all killed off and the white folks say Texas was going to join the Union. The country's going to be run different they say, but I never see no difference. Maybe, because I ain't white folks.

Wasn't many Mexicans around the old plantation. Come and go. Lots of Indians. Cherokees and Choctaws. Living in mud huts and cabin shacks. I never see them bother the whites, it was the other way around.

During the Civil War, when the Red River was bank high with muddy water, the Yankee's made a target of Jefferson. That was a small town down south of Linden.

Down the river come a flat barge with cannon fastened to the deck. The Yankee soldiers stopped across the river from Jefferson and the shooting started.

When the cannon went to popping the folks went arunning--hard to tell who run the fastest, the whites or the blacks! Almost the town was wiped out. Buildings was smashed and big trees cut through with the cannon balls.

And all the time the Yankee drums was a-beating and the soldiers singing:

We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree,
As we go marching on!

Before the Civil War everybody had money. The white folks, not the negroes. Sometimes the master take me to the town stores. They was full of money. Cigar boxes on the counter, boxes on the shelf, all filled with money. Not the crinkley paper kind, but hard, jingley gold and silver! Not like these scarce times!

After the War I stay on the plantation 'til a soldier man tells me of the freedom. The master never tell us--negroes working just like before the War.

That's when I leave the first time. Slip off, saying nothing, to Jefferson. There I found some good white folks going to New Orleans. First place we go is Shreveport, by wagon. They took me because I fix up with them to do the cooking.

On to the Big River (Mississippi) and boards a river steamboat for New Orleans. Lots of negroes going down there--to work on the canal.

The whole town was built on logs covered with dirt. Trying to raise itself right out of the swamp. Sometimes the water get high and folks run for the hills. When I got there almost was I ready to leave.

I like Texas the best. Back to Jefferson is where I go. Fifteen-twenty mile below Linden. Almost the first person I see was Master Davenport.

He says, "Black rascal, you is coming with me." And I do. He tried to keep his slaves and just laugh when I tell him about the freedom. I worked for food and quarters 'til his meanness come cropping out again.

That wasn't long and he threatened me with the whip and the buck and gag. The buck and gag was maybe worse. I got to feeling that iron stick in my mouth, fastened

around my head with chains, pressing hard on my tongue. No drinking, no eating, no talking!

So I slip off again. That night I goes through Linden. Crawling on my hands and knees! Keeping in the dark spots, hiding from the whites, 'til I pass the last house, then my feets hurries me to Jefferson, where I gets a ride to Arkansas.

In Russelville is where I stop. There I worked around in the yards, cutting the grass, fancying the flower beds, and earned a little money for clothes and eats, with some of it spent for good whiskey.

That was the reason I left Arkansas. Whiskey. The law got after me to tell where was a man's whiskey still. I just leave so's I won't have to tell.

But while I was making a little money in Russelville, I lose out on some big money, account some white folks beat me to it.

I was out in the hills west of town, walking along the banks of a little creek, when I heard a voice. Queer like. I called out who is that talking and I hears it again.

"Go to the white oak tree and you will find Ninety Thousand Dollars!" That's what I hear. I look around, nobody in sight, but I see the tree. A big white oak tree standing taller than all the rest 'round about.

Under the tree was a grave. An old grave. I scratch around but finds no money and thinks of getting some help.

I done some work for a white man in town and told him about the voice. He promised to go with me, but the next day he took two white mens and dug around the tree. Then he says they was nothing to find.

To this day I know better. I know wherever they's a ghost, money is around someplace! That's what the ghost comes back for.

Somebody dies and leaves buried money. The ghost watches over it 'til it sees somebody it likes. Then ghost shows himself--lets know he's around. Sometimes the ghost tells where is the money buried, like that time at Russelville.

That ain't the only ghost I've seen or heard. I see one around the yard where I is living now. A woman. Some of these times she'll tell me where the buried money is.

Maybe the ghost woman thinks I is too old to dig. But I been a-digging all these long years. For a bite to eat and a sleep-under cover.

I reckon pretty soon she's going to tell where to dig. When she does, then old Uncle John won't have to dig for the eats no more!

Charley Williams OK-72

De big house was made out'n square hewed logs, and chinked wid little rocks and daubed wid white clay, and kivered wid cypress clapboards. I remember one time we put on a new roof, and de niggers hauled up de cypress logs and sawed dem and frowed out de clapboards by hand.

Jest one big chimbley was all he had, and it was on de kitchen end, and we done all de cooking in a fireplace dat was purty nigh as wide as de whole room.

Master never did make a big gallery on de house, but our white folks would set out in de yard under de big trees in de shade. They was long benches made out'n hewed logs and all padded wid gray moss and corn shuck padding, and dey set pretty soft. All de furniture in de house was home-made, too. De beds had square posts as big around as my shank and de frame was mortised into 'em, and holes bored in de frame and home-made rope laced in to make it springy. Den a great big mattress full

of goose feathers and two--three comforts as thick as my foot wid carded wool inside! Dey didn't need no fireplaces!

I can see old Master setting out under a big tree smoking one of his long cheroots his tobacco nigger made by hand, and fanning hissself wid his big wide hat another nigger platted out'n young inside corn shucks for him, and I can hear him holler at a big bunch of white geeses what's gitting in his flower beds and see 'em string off behind de old gander towards de big road.

In Shreveport old Master git his cotton and tobacco money what he been afraid to have sent back to de plantation when he sell his stuff, and we strike out north through Arkansas.

Dat was de awfulest trip any man ever make! We had to hide from everybody until we find out if dey Yankees or Sesesh, and we go along little old back roads and up one mountain and down another, through de woods all de way.

Dat place is in New Mexico now, but old Master jest called it Mexico. Somebody showed me whar it is on de map, and it look lak it a long ways off'n our road to Colorado Springs, but I guess de road jest wind off down dat ways at de time we went over it. It was jest two or three houses made out'n mud at dat time, and a store whar de soldiers and de Indians come and done trading.

About dat time old Master sell off some of de stuff he been taking along, 'cause de wagons loaded too heavy for de mountains and he figger he better have de money than some of de stuff, I reckon.

On de way north it was a funny country. We jest climb all day long gitting up one side of one bunch of mountains, and all de nigger men have to push on de wheels while de mules pull and den scotch de wheels while de mules rest. Everybody but de whitefolks has to walk most de time.

Down in de valleys it was warm like in Louisiana, but it seem lak de sun aint so hot on de head, but it look lak every time night come it ketch us up on top of one of dem mountains, and it almost as cold as in de winter time!

All de niggers had shoes and plenty warm clothes and we wrop up at night in everything we can git.

Sarah Wilson OK-73

Old Master Ben come from Tennessee when he was still a young man, and he bring a whole passel of slaves and my mammy say they all was kin to one another, all the slaves I mean. He was a white man that married a Cherokee woman, and he was a devil on this earth. I don't want to talk about him none.

White folks was mean to us like the devil, and so I jest let them pass. When I say my brothers and sisters I mean my half brothers and sisters, you know, but maybe some of them was my whole kin anyways, I don't know. They was Lottie that was sold off to a Starr because she wouldn't have a baby, and Ed, Dave, Ben, Jim and Ned.

The Negroes lived all huddled up in a bunch in little one-room log cabins with stick and mud chimneys. We lived in one, and it had beds for us children like shelves in the wall. Mammy need to help us up into them.

They lived in a double log house made out of square hewed logs, and with a double fireplace out of rock where they warmed theirselves on one side and cooked

on the other. They had a long front porch where they set most of the time in the summer, and slept on it too.

They would have hangings at Fort Smith courthouse, and old Master would take a slave there sometimes to see the hanging, and that slave would come back and tell us all scary stories about the hanging.

Old Master wasn't the only hellion neither. Old Mistress just as bad, and she took most of her wrath out hitting us children all the time. She was afraid of the grown Negroes. Afraid of what they might do while old Master was away, but she beat us children all the time.

She would call me, "Come here Annie!" and I wouldn't know what to do. If I went when she called "Annie" my mammy would beat me for answering to that name, and if I didn't go old Mistress would beat me for that. That made me hate both of them, and I got the devil in me and I wouldn't come to either one. My grandmammy minded the Master's yard, and she set on the front porch all the time, and when I was called I would run to her and she wouldn't let anybody touch me.

When I was eight years old old Mistress died, and Grandmammy told me why old Mistress picked on me so. She told me about me being half Mister Ned's blood. Then I knowed why Mister Ned would say, "Let her along, she got big big blood in her", and then laugh.

Young Mister Ned was a devil, too. When his mammy died he went out and "blanket married." I mean he brung in a half white and half Indian woman and just lived with her.

One day I was carrying water from the spring and I run up on Grandmammy and Uncle Nick skinning a cow. "What you-all doing?", I say, and they say keep my mouth shut or they kill me. They was stealing from the Master to piece out down at the quarters with. Old Master had so many cows he never did count the difference.

When the War was ended we was still in Texas, and when old Master got a letter from Fort Smith telling him the slaves was free he couldn't read, and Young Miss read it to him. He went wild and jumped on her and beat the devil out of her. Said she was lying to him. It near about killed him to let us loose, but he cooled down after awhile and said he would help us all get back home if we wanted to come.

Mammy told him she could bear her own expenses. I remember I didn't know what "expenses" was, and I thought it was something I was going to have to help carry all the way back.

It was a long time after he knew we was free before he told us. He tried to keep us, I reckon, but had to let us go. He died pretty soon after he told us, and some said his heart just broke and some said some Negroes poisoned him. I didn't know which.

I heard a lot about Jefferson Davis in my life. During the War we hear the Negroes singing the soldier song about hand Jeff Davis to a apple tree, and old Master tell about the time we know Jeff Davis. Old Master say Jeff Davis was just a dragoon soldier out of Fort Gibson when he bring his family out here from Tennessee, and while they was on the road from Fort Smith to where they settled young Jeff Davis and some more dragoon soldiers rid up and talked to him a long time. He say my grandmammy had a bundle on her head, and Jeff Davis say, "Where you going Aunty?" and she was tired and mad and she said, "I don't know, to Hell I reckon", and all the white soldiers laughed at her and made her that much madder.

Tom W. Woods OK-74

Lady, if de nigger hadn't been set free dis country wouldn't ever been what it is now! Poor white folks wouldn't never had a chance. De slave holders had most of de money and de land and dey wouldn't let de poor white folks have a chance to own any land or anything else to speak of. Dese white folks wasn't much better off den we was. Dey had to work hard and dey had to worry 'bout food, clothes and shelter and we didn't. Lots of slave owners wouldn't allow dem on deir farms among deir slaves without orders from de overseer. I don't know why, unless he was afraid dey would stir up discontent among de niggers. Dere was lots of "underground railroading" and I rekon dat was what Old Master and others was afraid of.

Us darkies was taught dat poor white folks didn't amount to much. Course we knowed dey was white and we was black and dey was to be respected for dat, but dat was about all.

White folks as well as niggers profited by emancipation. Lincoln was a friend to all poor white folks as well as black ones and if he could a' lived things would a'been different for ever'body.

Master Wash was a poor man when he married Miss Sarah Watkins of Richmond, Virginia. Her father was as rich as cream, he owned 7 plantations and 200 slaves to each plantation. When Master Wash and Miss Sarah got married her father give her 50 slaves. Ever'body said Miss Mary jest married Master Wash because he was a purty boy, and he sure was a fine looking man.

He was good and kind to all his slaves when he was sober, but he was awful crabbed and cross when he was drunk, and he was drunk most of de time. He was hard to please and sometimes he would whip de slaves. I remember seeing Master Wash whup two men once. He give 'em 200 lashes.

Miss Sarah was de best woman in de world. It takes a good woman to live wid a drunkard.

Two of the men ran away one time and was gone till dey got tired of staying away. Master Wash wouldn't let anyone hunt 'em. When dey finally come home he had dem strapped in stocks and den deir bodies bared to de waist and he sure did ply de lash. I guess he whupped 'em harder dan he would if he hadn't been so full of whisky.

Dey was about thirty children on our plantation. Two women looked after us and took care of us till our parents come in from de field. Dey cooked for us and always gave us our supper and sent us home to our parents for de night.

Our food was placed on a long table in a trough. Each child had a spoon and four of us eat out of one trough. Our food at night was mostly milk and bread. At noon we had vegetables, bread, meat and milk. He gave us more and better food than he did his field hands. He said he didn't want none of us to be stunted in our growing.

Annie Young OK-75

I remember in time of de War dey'd send me down in de woods to pick up chips and git wood. All de men had gone to de army. One morning and t'was cold dey sent me down in de woods and my hands got frostbitten. All de skin come off and dey had to tie my hands up in roasted turnips. Sallie she had gloves, and didn't get frostbitten. After my old master died, Master Donnahue was his name, his old son-in-law come to take over de plantation. He was mean, but my sister whipped him.

At night when we'd go to our cabins we'd pick cotton from de seeds to make our clothes. Boys and girls alike wore dem long shirts slit up de side nearly to your necks. They'd have cornshuckings sometimes all night long. You see I didn't have no mother, no father, nobody to lead me, teach me or tell me, and so jest lived with anybody was good enough to let me stay and done what they did. They'd have log rollings, with all de whiskey dey could drink.

I don't remember never seeing no funerals. Jest took 'em off and buried 'em. I remember dat old Master's son-in-law dat my sister whipped, he called hisself a doctor and he killed Aunt Clo. Give her some medicine but he didn't know what he was doing and killed her.

I can remember once my auntie's old Master tried to have her and she run off out in de woods, and when he put those blood hounds or nigger hounds on her trail he caughted her and hit her in de head wid something like de stick de police carry, and he knocked a hole in her head and she bled like a hog, and he made her have him. She told her mistress, and mistress told her to go ahead and be wid him 'cause he's gonna kill you. And he had dem two women and she had some chillun nearly white, and master and dey all worked in de fields side by side.