JEPTHA CHOICE, 1117 Brashear St., Houston, Texas, was born in slavery, on the plantation of Jezro Choice, about 6 miles south of Henderson, Texas. Jeptha was sent to school with the white children, and after he was freed, he was sent to school for several years, and became a teacher. He moved to Houston in 1888 and opened a barber shop. Jeptha claims to have been born on Oct. 17, 1835, which would make him 101 years old. He has the appearance of extreme age, but has a retentive memory, and his manner of speaking varies from fairly good English to typical Negro dialect and idiom.

"I'll be 102 years old, come fall, 'cause my mother told me I was born on Oct. 17, 1835, and besides, I was about 30 years old at the end of the Civil War. We belonged to the Choices and I was born on their plantation. My mother's name was Martha and she had been brought here from Serbia. My father's name was John and he was from the East Indies. They was brought to this country in a slave boat owned by Captain Adair and sold to someone at New Orleans before Master Jezro Choice bought them. I had five sisters and one brother but they are all dead, 'cepting one brother who lives near Henderson.

"Master Jezro was right kind. He had 50 or 60 slaves and a grist mill and tannery besides the plantation. My white folks sort of picked me out and I went to school with the white children. I went to the fields when I was about 20, but I didn't do much field works, 'cause they was keepin' me good and they didn't want to strain me.

"On Sunday we just put an old Prince Albert coat on some good nigger and made a preacher out of him. We niggers had our band, too, and I was [Pg 218] one of the players.

"The master was mighty careful about raisin' healthy nigger families and used us strong, healthy young bucks to stand the healthy nigger gals. When I was young they took care not to strain me and I was as handsome as a speckled pup and was in demand for breedin'. Later on we niggers was 'lowed to marry and the master and missus would fix the nigger and gal up and have the doin's in the big house. The white folks would gather round in a circle with the nigger and gal in the center and then master laid a broom on the floor and they held hands and jumped over it. That married 'em for good.

"When babies was born old nigger grannies handled them cases, but until they was about three years old they wasn't 'lowed round the quarters, but was wet nursed by women who didn't work in the field and kept in separate quarters and in the evenin' their mammies were let to see 'em.

"We was fed good and had lots of beef and hawg meat and wild game. Possum and sweet yams is mighty good. You parboil the possum about half done and put him in a skewer pan and put him in a hot oven and just 'fore he is done you puts the yams in the pan and sugar on 'em. That's a feast.

"Sometimes when they's short of bread the old missus would say, 'How 'bout some ash cakes?' Then they'd mix cornmeal and water and sweep ashes out of the open hearth and bake the ash cakes.

"The master and his boys was all kilt in the war and after freedom I stayed all summer. It was pretty tough on us niggers for a while, 'cause the womenfolks what was left after the war didn't have money. But Colonel Jones, the master's son-in-law, took me to live in Henderson and paid twenty-five cents a week for more schoolin' for me and I learned through fractions. [Pg 219] Then I got me a job teachin' school about six months a year and in off times I'd farm. I did lots of different kinds of work, on the narrow gauge railroad out of Longview and I learned to be a barber, too. But I had to give it up a few years back 'cause I can't stand up so long any more and now I'm tryin' to help my people by divine healing. [Pg 220]

420243

Amos Clark's Sorghun Mill

Amos Clark

AMOS CLARK, 96, was born a slave of Robert Clark, in Washington County, Texas. After Amos was freed, he farmed near Belton, Texas. Amos now lives in Waco.

"I was borned on the second of April, in 1841. Mammy say dat de year, 'cause Marse Bob's brother, Tom, done go tradin' and has a lot of trouble with de Indians, and come back with scars all over he arms. It warn't all dey fault, 'cause Marse Tom allus gittin' in trouble with somebody.

"When I was still half-growed, Marse Bob traded me to Marse Ed Roseborough, and we come to Belton to live. Us piled ox wagons high with beddin' and clothes and sich, and Old Marse had he books in a special horsehair trunk, what de hide still had hair on. It had brass tacks all trimmin' it up, and it was sho' a fine trunk, and he say, 'Amos, you black rascal, keep you eye on dat trunk, and don't git it wet crossin' de water and don't let no Indian git it.' Us had a sizeable drove of cattle and some sheep and pigs and chickens and ducks.

"Marse and Missis finds where dey wants de house and us gits dem axes out and in a few days dere am a nice log house with two big rooms and a hall 'tween dem, mos' as big as de rooms. Us been on de road 'bout six weeks and Missis sho' proud of her new house. Den us makes logs into houses for us and a big kitchen close to de big house. Den us builds a office for Old Marse and makes chairs and beds and tables for everybody. Old Miss brung her bed and a spindly, li'l table, and us make all de rest. [Pg 221]

"For eatin' de good shooters and scouters gits birds and rabbits and wild turkeys and sometimes a lot of wild eggs or honey, when dey chops a bee tree down. A old Indian come to holp us hunt. He'd work a week if Marse Ed give him some red calico or a hatchet. Old Miss done bring a dozen hens and a bag of seeds, and folks come ridin' twenty miles to swap things.

"Dere warn't no mill to grind corn, so de boss carpenter, he hollows out a log and gits some smooth, hard rocks and us grind de corn like it was a morter. Old Man Stubblefield builded a watermill on de creek 'bout eight miles from us, and den us tooken de corn dere.

"Dere was three hundred acres and more'n fifty slaves, and lots of work, clearin' and buildin' and plantin'. Some de cabins didn't git no floor for two years. Jes' quick as dey could, de men gits out clapboards for de walls and split puncheon slabs for floors and palin's for fences.

"Missis, she takes two de likelies' young slaves and makes a garden, come spring. Somehow she git herself roses and posies and vegetables.

"Dere warn't no overseer. Marse Ed, he jes' ride round on he big hoss and see to things. Us didn't know nothin 'bout de war much, 'cause none us could read or write.

"Dere was two fiddlers 'mongst us, Jim Roseborough and Tom. Dey'd have de big barbecue for folks come from miles round, and coffee and chicken and turkey and dancin' and fiddlin' all night. Come daybreak, dey jes' goin' good. Us niggers dance back de quarters, and call

"'All eight balance and all eight swing,
All left allemond and right hand grand,
Meet your partner and prom'nade, eight,
[Pg 222]Den march till you come straight.

"'First lady out to couple on de right,
Swing Mr. Adam and swing Miss Eve,
Swing Old Adam befo' you leave,
Don't forgit your own—now you're home.'

"Two, three years after dat I marries Liza Smith. Us has four chillen and all dead 'cept John, and he lives out west.

"After freedom Old Marse say kill a yearlin' and have de big dinner and dance. De young ones he told to scatter out and hunt work, not to steal and work hard. Some de oldes' ones he give a cabin and a patch of land. He say de niggers what want to stay on and work for him can, iffen he make enough to feed dem. I stays with Marse Ed, but he give me a patch of twenty acres and a sorghum mill to make a livin' on. Dat how I gits on my way after freedom.

"I gits dat sorghum mill to workin' good and works de Roseborough land and my patch, and raises corn and cotton and wheat. I was plumb good at farmin'. I allus had a piece or two of money in my pocket since I can 'member, but now de old man's too old. De gov'ment gives me seven or eight dollars a month and I has a few chickens and gits by, and de good white folks nigh by sees dat dis old boy don't git cold.[Pg 223]

Sensitive Data Contained

Anne Clark

Anne Clark

MOTHER ANNE CLARK, 112 years old, lives at 3602 Alameda Ave., El Paso, Texas. She is too crippled to walk, but a smile lights up the tired old eyes that still see to sew without glasses. One tooth of a third set is in her upper gum. She is deaf, but can hear if you speak close to her ear. She says, "Lemma git my ears open, bofe of 'em," wets her finger, then pulls so hard on the ear lobes it seems they would be injured.

"I'll be 112 years old, come first day of June (1937). Bo'n in Mississippi. I had two marsters, but I've been free nearly 80 years. I was freed in Memphis.

"My marster was a Yankee. He took me to Louisiana and made a slave outta me. But he had to go to war. He got in a quarrel one day and grabbed two six-shooters, but a old white man got him down and nearly kilt him. Our men got him and gave him to the Yankees.

"Capt. Clark, my second marster, took a shot at him and he couldn' come south no more. You don' know what a time I seen! I don' wanna see no more war. Why, we made the United States rich but the Yankees come and tuk it. They buried money and when you bury money it goes fu'ther down, down, down, and then you cain't fin' it.

"You know, the white folks hated to give us up worse thing in the world. I ploughed, hoed, split rails. I done the hardest work ever a man ever did. I was so strong, iffen he needed me I'd pull the men down so the marster could handcuff 'em. [Pg 224] They'd whop us with a bullwhip. We got up at 3 o'clock, at 4 we done et and hitched up the mules and went to the fiel's. We worked all day pullin' fodder and choppin' cotton. Marster'd say, 'I wan' you to lead dat fiel' today, and if you don' do it I'll put you in de stocks.' Then he'd whop me iffen I didn' know he was talkin' to me.

"My poppa was strong. He never had a lick in his life. He helped the marster, but one day the marster says, 'Si, you got to have a whoppin', and my poppa says, 'I never had a whoppin' and you cain't whop me.' An' the marster says, 'But I kin kill you,' an' he shot my poppa down. My mama tuk him in the cabin and put him on a pallet. He died.

"My mama did the washin' for the big house. She tuk a big tub on her head and a bucket of water in her hand. My mama had two white chillen by marster and they were sold as slaves. I had two chillen, too. I never married. They allus said we'd steal, but I didn' take a thing. Why, they'd put me on a hoss with money to take into town and I'd take it to the store in town, and when I'd git back, marster'd say, 'Anne, you didn' take a thing.'

"When women was with child they'd dig a hole in the groun' and put their stomach in the hole, and then beat 'em. They'd allus whop us."

"Don' gring me anything fine to wear for my birthday. I jus' wan' some candy. I'm lookin' for Him to take me away from here."[Pg 225]

420293

THOMAS COLE was born in Jackson Co., Alabama, on the 8th of August, 1845, a slave of Robert Cole. He ran away in 1861 to join the Union Army. He fought at Chickamauga, under Gen. Rosecran and at Chattanooga, Look Out Mt. and Orchard Knob, under Gen. Thomas. After the war he worked as switchman in Chattanooga until his health failed due to old age. He then came to Texas and lives with his daughter, in Corsicana. Thomas is blind.

"I might as well begin far back as I remember and tell you all about myself. I was born over in Jackson County, in Alabama, on August 8, 1845. My mother was Elizabeth Cole, her bein' a slave of Robert Cole, and my father was Alex Gerrand, 'cause he was John Gerrand's slave. I was sposed to take my father's name, but he was sech a bad, ornery, no-count sech a human, I jes' taken my old massa's name. My mother was brung from Virginny by Massa Dr. Cole, and she nussed all his six chillen. My sister's name

was Sarah and my brother's name was Ben and we lived in one room of the big house, and allus had a good bed to sleep in and good things to eat at the same table, after de white folks gits through.

"I played with Massa Cole's chillen all de time, and when I got older he started me workin' by totin' wood and sech odd jobs, and feedin' de hawgs. Us chillen had to pick cotton every fall. De big baskets weigh about seventy-five to a hundred pounds, but us chillen put our pickin's in some growed slave's basket. De growed slaves was jes' like a mule. He work for grub and clothes, and some of dem didn't have as easier a time as a mule, for mules was fed good and slaves was sometimes half starved. [Pg 226] But Massa Cole was a smart man and a good man with it. He had 'spect for the slaves' feelin's and didn't treat dem like dumb brutes, and 'lowed dem more privileges dan any other slaveholder round dere. He was one of de best men I ever knows in my whole life and his wife was jes' like him. Dey had a big, four-room log house with a big hall down the center up and down. De logs was all peeled and de chinkin' a diff'rent color from de logs and covered with beads. De kitchen am a one-room house behin' de big house with de big chimney to cook on. Dat where all de meals cooked and carry to de house.

"In winter massa allus kill from three to four hundred hawgs, de two killin's he done in November and January. Some kill and stick, some scald and scrape, and some dress dem and cut dem up and render de lard. Dey haul plenty hick'ry wood to de smokehouse and de men works in shifts to keep de smoke fire goin' sev'ral days, den hangs de meat in de meathouse. First us eat all de chitlin's, den massa begin issuin' cut-back bones to each fam'ly, and den 'long come de spareribs, den de middlin' or a shoulder, and by dat time he kill de second time and dis was to go all over 'gain. Each fam'ly git de same kind of meat each week. Iffen one git a ham, dey all git a ham. All de ears and feet was pickle and we eats dem, too. If de meat run out 'fore killin' time, us git wild turkeys or kill a beef or a goat, or git a deer.

"Massa let us plant pumpkins and have a acre or two for watermelons, iffen us work dem on Saturday evenin's. Dere a orchard of 'bout five or six acres peaches and apples and he 'low us to have biscuits once a week. Yes, we had good eatin' and plenty of it den.

"Massa had one big, stout, healthy lookin' slave 'bout six foot, four inches tall, what he pay $3,000 for. He bought six slaves I knows of and give[Pg 227] from $400 up for dem. He never sold a slave 'less he git onruly.

"Massa allus give us cotton clothes for summer and wool for winter, 'cause he raised cotton and sheep. Den each fam'ly have some chickens and sell dem and de eggs and maybe go huntin' and sell de hides and git some money. Den us buy what am Sunday clothes with dat money, sech as hats and pants and shoes and dresses.

"We'd git up early every day in de year, rain or shine, hot or cold. A slave blowed de horn and dere no danger of you not wakin' up when dat blowed long and loud. He climb up on a platform 'bout ten feet tall to blow dat bugle. We'd work till noon and eat in de shade and rest 'bout a hour or a little more iffen it hot, but only a hour if it cold. You is allus tired when you makes de day like dat on de plantation and you can't play all night like de young folks does now. But us lucky, 'cause Massa Cole don't whip us. De man what have a place next ours, he sho' whip he slaves. He have de cat-o-nine tails of rawhide leather platted round a piece of wood for a handle. De wood 'bout ten inches long and de leather braided on past de stock quite a piece, and 'bout a foot from dat all de strips tied in a knot and sprangle out, and makes de tassle. Dis am call de cracker and it am what split de hide. Some folks call dem bullwhips,

'stead of cat-o-nine tails. De first thing dat man do when he buy a slave, am give him de whippin'. He call it puttin' de fear of Gawd in him.

"Massa Cola 'low us read de Bible. He awful good 'bout dat. Most de slaveowners wouldn't 'low no sech. Uncle Dan he read to us and on Sunday we could go to church. De preacher baptize de slaves in de river. Dat de[Pg 228] good, old-time 'ligion, and us all go to shoutin' and has a good time. Dis gen'ration too dig'fied to have de old-time 'ligion.

"When baptizin' comes off, it almost like goin' to de circus. People come from all over and dey all singin' songs and everybody take dere lunch and have de good time. Massa Cole went one time and den he git sick, and next summer he die. Missy Cole, she moves to Huntsville, in Alabama. But she leave me on de plantation, 'cause I'm big and stout den. She takes my mother to cook and dat de last time I ever seed my mother. Missy Cole buys de fine house in Huntsville my mother tells me to be good and do all de overseer tells me. I told her goodbye and she never did git to come back to see me, and I never seed her and my brother and sister 'gain. I don't know whether dey am sold or not.

"I thinks to myself, dat Mr. Anderson, de overseer, he'll give me dat cat-o-nine tails de first chance he gits, but makes up my mind he won't git de chance, 'cause I's gwine run off de first chance I gits. I didn't know how to git out of dere, but I's gwine north where dere ain't no slaveowners. In a year or so dere am 'nother overseer, Mr. Sandson, and he give me de log house and de gal to do my cookin' and sich. Dere am war talk and we 'gins gwine to de field earlier and stayin' later. Corn am haul off, cotton am haul off, hawgs and cattle am rounded up and haul off and things 'gins lookin' bad. De war am on, but us don't see none of it. But 'stead of eatin' cornbread, us eats bread out of kaffir corn and maize.
""We raises lots of okra and dey say it gwine be parch and grind to make coffee for white folks. Dat didn't look good either. Dat winter, 'stead of killin' three or four hundred hawgs[Pg 229] like we allus done befo', we only done one killin' of a hundred seventy-five, and dey not all big ones, neither. When de meat supply runs low, Mr. Sandson sends some slaves to kill a deer or wild hawgs or jes' any kind of game. He never sends me in any dem bunches but I hoped he would and one day he calls me to go and says not to go off de plantation too far, but be sho' bring home some meat. Dis de chance I been wantin', so when we gits to de huntin' ground de leader says to scatter out, and I tells him me and 'nother man goes north and make de circle round de river and meet 'bout sundown. I crosses de river and goes north. I's gwine to de free country, where dey ain't no slaves. I travels all dat day and night up de river and follows de north star. Sev'ral times I thunk de blood houn's am trailin' me and I gits in de big hurry. I's so tired I couldn't hardly move, but I gits in a trot.

"I's hopin' and prayin' all de time I meets up with dat Harriet Tubman woman. She de cullud women what takes slaves to Canada. She allus travels de underground railroad, dey calls it, travels at night and hides out in de day. She sho' sneaks dem out de South and I thinks she's de brave woman.

"I eats all de nuts and kills a few swamp rabbits and cotches a few fish. I builds de fire and goes off 'bout half a mile and hides in de thicket till it burns down to de coals, den bakes me some fish and rabbit. I's shakin' all de time, 'fraid I'd git cotched, but I's nearly starve to death. I puts de rest de fish in my cap and travels on dat night by de north star and hides in a big thicket de nex' day and along evenin' I hears guns shootin'. I sho' am scart dis time, sho' 'nough. I's scart to come in and scart to go out, and while I's standin' dere, I hears two men say, 'Stick you hands up, boy. What you doin?' I says, 'Uh-uh-uh, I dunno.[Pg 230] You ain't gwine take me back to de plantation, is you?' Dey says, 'No. Does you want to fight for de North?' I says I will, 'cause dey talks like northern men. Us walk night and day and gits in

Gen. Rosecran's camp and dey thunk I's de spy from de South. Dey asks me all sorts of questions and says dey'll whip me if I didn't tell dem what I's spyin' 'bout. Fin'ly dey 'lieves me and puts me to work helpin' with de cannons. I feels 'portant den, but I didn't know what was in front of me, or I 'spects I'd run off 'gain.

"I helps sot dem cannons on dis Chickamauga Mountain, in hidin' places. I has to go with a man and wait on him and dat cannon. First thing I knows, bang, bang, boom, things has started, and guns am shootin' faster dan you can think, and I looks round for de way to run. But dem guns am shootin' down de hill in front of me and shootin' at me, and over me and on both sides of me. I tries to dig me a hole and git in it. All dis happen right now, and first thing I knows, de man am kickin' me and wantin' me to holp him keep dat cannon loaded. Man, I didn't want no cannon, but I has to help anyway. We fit till dark and de Rebels got more men dan us, so Gen. Rosecran sends de message to Gen. Woods to come help us out. When de messenger slips off, I sho' wish it am me slippin' off, but I didn't want to see no Gen. Woods. I jes' wants to git back to dat old plantation and pick more cotton. I'd been willin' to do mos' anything to git out that mess, but I done told Gen. Rosecran I wants to fight de Rebels and he sho' was lettin' me do it. He wasn't jes' lettin' me do it, he was makin' me do it. I done got in dere and he wouldn't let me out.

"White folks, dere was men layin' wantin' help, wantin' water, with blood runnin' out dem and de top or sides dere heads gone, great big holes in dem. I jes' promises de good Lawd if he jes' let me git out dat mess, I wouldn't run off no more, but I didn't know den he wasn't gwine let me out with jes' dat battle. [Pg 231] He gwine give me plenty more, but dat battle ain't over yet, for nex' mornin' de Rebels 'gins shootin' and killin' lots of our men, and Gen. Woods ain't come, so Gen. Rosecran orders us to 'treat, and didn't have to tell me what he said, neither. De Rebels comes after us, shootin', and we runs off and leaves dat cannon what I was with settin' on de hill, and I didn't want dat thing nohow.

"We kep' hotfootin' till we gits to Chattanooga and dere is where we stops. Here comes one dem Rebel generals with de big bunch of men and gits right on top of Look Out Mountain, right clost to Chattanooga, and wouldn't let us out. I don't know jes' how long, but a long time. Lots our hosses and mules starves to death and we eats some de hosses. We all like to starve to death ourselves. Chattanooga is in de bend de Tennessee River and on Look Out Mountain, on de east, am dem Rebels and could keep up with everything we done. After a long time a Gen. Thomas gits in some way. He finds de rough trail or wagon road round de mountain 'long de river and supplies and men comes by boat up de river to dis place and comes on into Chattanooga. More Union men kep' comin' and I guess maybe six or eight generals and dey gits ready to fight. It am long late in Fall or early winter.

"Dey starts climbin' dis steep mountain and when us gits three-fourths de way up it am foggy and you couldn't see no place. Everything wet and de rocks am slick and dey 'gins fightin'. I 'spect some shoots dere own men, 'cause you couldn't see nothin', jes' men runnin' and de guns roarin'. Fin'ly dem Rebels fled and we gits on Look Out Mountain and takes it.

"Dere a long range of hills leadin' 'way from Look Out Mountain, nearly to Missionary Ridge. Dis ridge 'longside de Chickamauga River, what am de Indian name, meanin' River of Death. Dey fights de Rebels on Orchard Knob hill and I wasn't in dat, but I's in de Missionary Ridge battle. We has to come out de timber [Pg 232] and run 'cross a strip or openin' up de hill. Dey sho' kilt lots our men when we runs 'cross dat openin'. We runs for all we's worth and uses guns or anything we could. De Rebels turns and runs off and our soldiers turns de cannons round what we's capture, and kilt some de Rebels with dere own guns.

"I never did git to where I wasn't scart when we goes into de battle. Dis de last one I's in and I's sho' glad, for I never seed de like of dead and wounded men. We picks dem up, de Rebels like de Unions, and doctors dem de bes' we could. When I seed all dat sufferin', I hopes I never lives to see 'nother war. Dey say de World War am worse but I's too old to go.

"I sho' wishes lots of times I never run off from de plantation. I begs de General not to send me on any more battles, and he says I's de coward and sympathizes with de South. But I tells him I jes' couldn't stand to see all dem men layin' dere dyin' and hollerin' and beggin' for help and a drink of water, and blood everywhere you looks. Killin' hawgs back on de plantation didn't bother me none, but dis am diff'rent.

"Fin'ly de General tells me I can go back to Chattanooga and guard de supplies in camp dere and take care de wounded soldiers and prisoners. A bunch of men is with me and we has all we can do. We gits de orders to send supplies to some general and it my job to help load de wagons or box cars or boats. A train of wagons leaves sometimes. We gits all dem supplies by boat, and Chattanooga am de 'stributing center. When winter comes, everybody rests awhile and waits for Spring to open. De Union general sends in some more cullud soldiers. Dere ain't been many cullud men but de las' year de war dere am lots. De North and de South am takin' anything dey can git to win de war. [Pg 233]

"When Spring breaks and all de snow am gone, and de trees 'gins puttin' out and everything 'gins to look purty and peaceable-like, makin' you think you ought to be plowin' and plantin' a crop, dat when de fightin' starts all over 'gain, killin' men and burnin' homes and stealin' stock and food. Den dey sends me out to help clear roads and build temp'rary bridges. We walks miles on muddy ground, 'cross rivers, wadin' water up to our chins. We builds rafts and pole bridges to git de mules and hosses and cannons 'cross, and up and down hills, and cuts roads through timber.

"But when dey wants to battle Gen. Thomas allus leaves me in camp to tend de supplies. He calls me a coward, and I sho' glad he thunk I was. I wasn't no coward, I jes' couldn't stand to see all dem people tore to pieces. I hears 'bout de battle in a thick forest and de trees big as my body jes' shot down. I seed dat in de Missionary Ridge battle, too.

"I shifts from one camp to 'nother and fin'ly gits back to Chattanooga. I bet durin' my time I handles 'nough ammunition to kill everybody in de whole United States. I seed mos' de mainest generals in de Union Army and some in de Rebel Army.

"After de war am over we's turned loose, nowhere to go and nobody to help us. I couldn't go South, for dey calls me de traitor and sho' kill me iffen dey knows I fit for de North. I does any little job I can git for 'bout a year and fin'ly gits work on de railroad, in Stevenson, in Alabama. I gits transfer to Chattanooga and works layin' new tracks and turn tables and sich.

"In 'bout two weeks I had saw a gal next door, but I's bashful. But after payday I dresses up and takes her to a dance. We sparks 'bout two months and den we's married at her uncles. Her name am Nancy. We buys a piece of land and I has a two-room house built on it. We has two chillen and I's livin' with de baby gal now. [Pg 234]

"I 'lieve de slaves I knowed as a whole was happier and better off after 'mancipation dan befo'. Of course, de first few years it was awful hard to git 'justed to de new life. All de slaves knowed how to do hard work, and dat de old slaves life, but dey didn't know nothin' 'bout how to 'pend on demselves for

de livin'. My first year was hard, but dere was plenty wild game in dem days. De south was broke and I didn't hear of no slaves gittin' anything but to crop on de halves. Dey too glad to be free and didn't want nothin'.

"Things 'gin to git bad for me in Chattanooga as de white men finds out I run off from de South and jined de North. Some de brakemen try to git my job. I fin'ly quits when one of dem opens a switch I jus' closed. I seed him and goes back and fixes de switch, but I quits de job. I goes up north but dey ain't int'rested, so I comes back and sells my home and buys me a team and wagon. I loads it with my wife and chillen and a few things and starts for Texas. We's on de road 'bout six weeks or two months. We fishes and hunts every day and de trip didn't cost much. I buys ninety acres in timber in Cass County and cuts logs for a house and builds a two-room house and log crib. My wife built a stomp lot for de team and cow and a rail fence.

"We got 'nough land cleared for de small crop, 'bout thirty acres, and builds de barn and sheds outselves. We lived there till de chillen am growed. My wife died of chills and fever and den my boy and I built a four-room house of planks from our timber. Den I gits lonesome, 'cause de chillen gone, and sells de place. I bought it for fifty cents de acre and sold it for $12.00 de acre. [Pg 235]

"I buys sixty acres in Henderson County for $15.00 a acre and marries de second time. I didn't care for her like Nancy. All she think 'bout am raisin' de devil and never wants to work or save anything. She like to have broke me down befo' I gits rid of her. I stayed and farmed sev'ral years.

"My son-in-law rents land in Chambers Creek bottom, and he usually gits he crop 'fore de flood gits it. We has some hawgs to kill ev'ry winter and we has our cornmeal and milk and eggs and chickens, so de 'pression ain't starved us yit. We all got might' nigh naked durin' de 'pression. I feeds de hawgs and chickens night and mornin'. I can't see dem, but I likes to listen to dem eatin' and cackle. People don't know how dey's blessed with good eyes, till dey loses dem. Everybody ought to be more thankful dan they is.

"I ain't never voted in my life. I leans to de 'publicans. I don't know much 'bout politics, though.

"Today I is broke, 'cause I spent all my money for med'cine and doctors, but I gits a small pension and I spends it mos' careful.