

William E. Smith
Corsicana Texas
Navarre county
District #8

10/16/37
(yes)

Thomas Cole was born in Jackson County, Alabama, Aug. 8, 1845, a slave of Dr. Robert Cole. His mother, Elizabeth Cole, was a nurse for the Cole family nursing the doctor through his long illness until his death. At which time the Cole family moved from the plantation to Huntsville, Alabama, taking his mother with them, leaving him on the plantation where he worked until the beginning of the Civil War at which time he ran away to the north. Before crossing the Mason Dixon line, he came in contact with two northern spies and was helped to a northern military camp where he was immediately put in training with the Union forces. He fought in the battle of Chickamauga under General Rosecrans, and in the battle of Chatanooga, Look Out Mountain, and Orchard Knob under General Thomas. He also fought in the battle of Missionary Ridge. He was sent back to Chattanooga to help guard provisions there instead of being ordered to Lost Forest where another bloody battle was fought. Following the war he worked for the railroad in Chattanooga for some time. He worked as a switchman. He came to Texas after being laid off by the railroad company. Here he farmed as long as health permitted, now he is blind and lives with his daughter in northern Corsicana.

"I might as well begin back as far as I can remember and tell you all bout mah self. I was bo'n in Jackson County Alabama,

August 8, 1845. Mah mother was Elizabeth Cole, her bein a slave of Dr. Robert Cole. Mah father was Alex Gorrard, he was a slave of John Gorrard, I was of course sposed ter take mah fathers name, but he was a sech a bad honery no count sech a human, bein til I jest taken mah ole marsters name. Mah first name bein Thomas Cole, dats me. Mah father was bo'n and raised in Alabama, Jackson County on de plantation of John Gorrant. Mah mother was bo'n in Virginia, Dr. Cole brought her and her parents from there ter Alabama wid him when he moved from dar. She was a family nurse. She nursed all de six chilluns of marster Cole.

Not long after mah mother came ter Alabama, she met and married mah father. Dey met at a church one Sunday, mah father was a good lookin man and de woman folks all laked him, but he jest wantt no good, so dey marries. I only had one brother and one sister dat I knows of, I bein de oldest one. Mah sisters name was Sarah and mah brother name was Ben. I was bout three or four years older den mah sister and Ben was still younger den dat. We lived in de house in one room wid marster Coles as mah mother was de nurse and housekeeper. We always had a good bed ter sleep in and good things ter eat. We would eats at de same table as marster Cole, and his family eats at, only after dey gits through eatin first.

I was raised up wid de Cole chilluns and played wid dem all de time. We was all de time climbin trees in de yard and as I gits older dey jest gradually puts more work and heavy work on

me, marster Cole started us out workin by totin in wood and kindlin and totin water and jest sech odd jobs, den later on as we got older we had ter feed de hogs, we jest fed dem enough ter keep dem close ter home, cause dey was all marked and den when de hogs increased he wanted ter keep dem comin up sos we could mark de young pigs. And feedin de cows, horses, and goats and chickens all dis kind of work was work fer boys too young fer heavy work, of course we had ter pick cotton every fall as soon as we got big enough ter pick and puts de cotton in baskets, dese baskets would hold bout seventy five ter one hundred pounds. De little chilluns would pick and puts in a basket wid some older person so de older person could move de basket longs.

Den when a slave gets grown, he is jest lak a mule, dey works for der grub and a few clothes and works jest as hard as a mule. Some of de slaves on de plantation jining ourn, didnt have as easier time as de mules, fer de mules was fed good and de slaves laks ter have starved ter death he jest gives dem nuff ter eat ter keep dem alive.

When I was a young boy, some other boys and I would go possum huntin and coon huntin in de day time and de men and us boys would go huntin sometimes at night and we would skin dem and stretch de hids amd de white folks would sell de hides amd give us de money. I allus gives mah money ter mah mother and she would save it fer me til I get nuff den she would go ter town wid de mistress at Huntsville Alabama, and buy me a pair of shoes,

hat and a pair of Sunday britches. Missus Cole allus helped mah mother do de buyin cause mah mother couldnt count money good. All dese we called Sunday clothes, and we did not wear dem unless we went ter church.

As I done tole you, mah mother was de family nurse fer Dr. Coles family and we eat at der table and we had plenty ter eat too. Cakes, pies and biscuits and all kinds of meat sech as pork, beef, fish, venison, and goats and chickens and wild turkeys. We had lots ter eat dat de other slaves didnt have as mah mother was a nurse and respectable different from de other negroes. All our food was cooked over a large open fire place and each meal was allus hot, but de other slaves had ter don der cookin fer de day, de night before makin dem eats a cold dinnah, if some of de man was single dey was furnished a girl ter do der cookin jest lak de man dat was married. There was allus plenty of possums and rabbits and us young boys would allus take de dogs and git plenty of possum ter cook wid sweet pertaters and we brought in plenty of rabbits too.

Us chilluns bout eight years ole went fishin lots after our chores was done and we allus brought back plenty of fish and fishin was good back in dem ole streams. We nearly kept dem in fish all de time and sometimes we would all go fishin on Satidy evenin and Satidy nights ceptin marster and his wife and mah mother. De drivah and de marster boys would go wid us and stay

all night and Sunday we would bring all the fish back, and de marsters boys would go and then we would have a wagon load of fish and Sunday we shore would have a big fish fry, all de plantation would have a good time eatin fish. We didnt haves ter git off de plantation ter ketch all dese fish either, der was a good rivah dat runs right through dis place.

In de wintah, de marster would allus kills from three hundred ter four hundred hogs. We would have two killings de first in November, and de last one in January. We would kills from one hundred and fifty ter two hundred each time. Bout two or three weeks fore killin time, we would all gits out and round up what we wanted ter kill each time and puts dem in a big rail pen and feds nuff corn ter dem ter sorter harden de flesh and den go ter killin. Some would be killin and stickin, some would be scalding and scraping and some would be dressin dem, some cuttin em up and de women folks would be fixin de meat fer lard and renderin de lard. And some of de women would be fixin chitlins, hog head sauce, sausage and everything, dey all had a job till hit was ovah and we shore did have plenty of chitlins ter eat fer awhile. Den when times comes ter smoke de meat, we would haul in plenty of hickory wood ter smoke de meat wid. We had a big log smoke house and we would hangs hit full of meat and den builds a smoke fire in de middle of hit and den de men folks would work in shifts ter keep dis wood fire goin fer several days, den dis meat was ready ter hang up in another building

made specially fer meat and we would calls hit de meat house. Ane de meat wouldnt spile either. Dis was done twice every wintah, once each hog killin. First we would eats all de chitlins den de marster would begins issuing out back bones ter each family til dey was gone and den along comes de spare ribs. Den he would usually issue each family a middlin or a shoulder a piece and by dat time hit was time ter kill de second time, and den dis was all ter goovah again, but de overseah would issue meat each week ter each family as long as hit lasted. Each family got de same kind of meat each week. Iffen one got a ham dey all got a ham, iffen one got a middlin dey all got a middlin. All de ears and feet was pickled we eats dem too. Lard was issued out too, hit depended on de size of de family how much lard you got. Bigger families got more meat and lard. If dis meat runs out fore killin time, we would kill a beef or goats or some men would be sent out ter git some wild turkeys or deer and dey allus brings em back. We allus had plenty of meat ter eat. And marster Cole tried ter fix it so each person on de plantation got his share of de meat and lard. Once a week all de slaves had biscuits. Der was a orchard of bout five or six acres of peaches and apples on de plantation and we had all de fruit we wanted and in de fall we had all de pumpkin pies we wanted, we planted pumpkins and he would let us have bout one or two acres fer water melons if we would work dem on Satidy evenins. We couldnt take outen de crop ter work anything lak dat fer ourselves. We allus had plenty of

vegetables ter eat too, and iffen any of dem didnt hit was der own fault.

Of all we had ter eat on dis plantation I laks de fruit de best. We was not allowed ter pull any of hit offen de trees, but iffen one fell off de trees we could eat hit. Sos we young- ins bout eight years ole and on down would stay in de orchard after de fruit started gitin ripe ter gits what fell, and if der wasnt much fallin we would shake a tree a little if we was shore twarnt no body watchin us. When der wasnt more den one er two fell offen de tree hit was jest lak pitchin a quarter out for a bunch of kids ter git now days, but who ever gits de fruit had ter split it wid who ever shakes de tree, cause if dey saw him shakin de tree he shore would git a whippin.

Everybody had all de vegetables he wanted cause Marster Coles gives each family one acre of ground ter be planted in garden and corn for roasting ears, dis groun was ter be worked on Satidy evenins and on Sundays, if dey gits behind wid de work. Each family workd der garden purty good fer if dey lets hit grop up dey has ter do wid out unless some one else would git sorry for dem and gives dem some of ders, but nobody else would hardly gives dem any. Nobody wants ter feed a lazy person but if dey gits sick de rest would pitch in and work hit out fer dem, and dey didnt any of dem play sich either. When dey said dey was sick dey was shore nuff sick cause dey all hates dat bitter medicine dat Marster Coles gives dem.

When any of de slaves gits sick marster Coles would shore gits after dem and he would go and stay wid dem until a change was made, if he left dem he wouldnt be gone more'n thirty minutes. Dat was one thing bout marster Coles, he shore seed after his slaves when dey was sick and when he starts doctorin one of dem dey usually gits well too. He never lost but two and dey was ole people and ready ter die but he hated ter loose dem though jest as bad as he would a young stout man. He had one big stout healthy lookin slave bout six feet, four inches tall and weighed roun two hundred and ten pounds dat marster Coles gives three thousand dollars fer.

Marster Cole seed dis negro man and wanted him so he started bidden on him, marster Cole and a man from Mississippi and one from Louisiana was all biddin on dis nigger, and marster Cole says he wanted ter own him so he bid him in at \$3000. Dis slave shore was a powerful man and was easy ter control too, he shore was glad dat marster Cole bought him. Marster Cole thoughts lots of dis slave, but he hates ter lose dem ole ones jest as bad. Dey was a man and his wife when slaves gits ole dey gits cheap jest lak a ole mule sometimes you couldnt sell dem, dey wasnt fit fer nuthin. But when dis ole couple died he had coffins made and carried em out and buried em after one of de slave parsons preached de funeral, dey was buried on de plantation and rocks was put up fer tombstones.

Marster Cole never sole a slave iffen dey acted half way right, but iffen dey gits unruly he always carries dem off ter sells dem, we never saw one of dem sold. How he always gits rid of dem I never knows how but he never brings one back. He bought six slaves dat I knows of and he gives from four hundred ter three thousand a piece fer them.

De clothes dat we wore was made on de plantation, we all wore light cotton clothes in de summer and wool clothes in de wintah. And iffen a man didnt have no wife, marster Coles had de other women make some clothes fer him.

De cotton was raised on de plantation and marster Coles allus had a few sheep and dey was sheared and de wool made into clothes and a good pair of shoes was issued ter each person every fall and we hads ter take care of dem too. When we would catch possums and pole cats we would render up de grease or taller and grease our shoes in de wintah and spring.

Each family of slaves was allowed ter raise chickens and white folks would sell de eggs and chickens fer dem and de men would hunt in de wintah and de white folks would sell de hids fer dem and bring de money back ter dem. We would allus take dis money and buy what we calls Sunday clothes wid it, sech as hats, trousers, shoes and maybe a shirt and de women folks would buy dresses. We never wore dese clothes onless we went ter church on Satidy night er Sunday.

De first time I married I married Nancy Eliza Reed in Chattanooga, Tennessee, right after de war. We lived ter gether fer thirty two years and she died wid malaria. We was married at her uncle and aunts. She was an orphan child and dey raised her. I was workin fer de railroad den and I was makin good money and I bought me a good suit, hat, shoes and everything ter gits married in, we had a good time at de weddin and afters too. When mah first boy was bo'n, I had ter set em up ter a big cigar ter all de railroad boys. We only has two chillins, a boy and a girl. De boy is dead but dis is mah daughter I lives wid now. When mah wife dies, I married again, but dis woman was one of dese hell cat kind and we didnt live ter gether long, sos I aint tried it no more. I didnt has no chilluns by mah last wife. All dis happened after freedom, but if I had married before Marster Cole died I would have had ter be married by de parson cause dat was one of marster Coles rules, he didnt low none of dis jest livin ter gether. When one of de slaves wants ter gits married he takes dem ter a parson and dey gits married. I has thought bout dis lots since freedom and I believes marster Coles was so smart a man he could looks ahead and sees freedom, de reason he treated his slaves de way he did.

Marster Cole was a smart man and he was a good man wid it. He was bout five feet ten inches tall, blue eyed and brown hair and weighed bout one hundred and sixty pounds. Dis man has respect fer other peoples feelins, he treated his slaves lak dey

was human beins instead of dumb brutes. He lowed his slaves more privileges den any other slave holder round dat part of de country and he tried ter learn em how ter make money and how ter counts money, he tries ter learn em all what a person could sell. He was one of de best men I ever knows in mah whole life and his wife was jest laks him. Missus Cole was a little smaller den marster Cole, and she shore was nice ter all de woman slaves, she gives all dem a new dress every spring jest as shore as de spring rolls around. An she allus helps all de slave women wid their buyin and sold all der chickens and eggs and gives dem every cent of de money dat was comin ter dem.

Marster and missus Cole had six chilluns, three of dem was boys and three of dem was girls. De boys names was John, de oldest, den Isaac, and de youngest was Robert. De girls was Katie, de oldest, den Jennie, and de youngest was Isa Lee. De oldest chile was a boy, den a girl and den de other two boys. I was bout de age of de oldest girl. I played wid de boys all de time, dey was mah young marsters, when we was playin I has ter do mos anything dey wants me to. One day we was playin roun de barn and we gits on de rail fence and climbs on top of de barn and dey teles me ter jump offen de barn and dey would follows me sos I jumps off and it laks ter kill me, der was sand down der to jump in but de barn was high and I was jest a little kid. I was layin der hollerin and de two oldest boys was jes standin up der lookin at me and de youngest marster Robert was cryin and hollerin fer

his mamma ter come and gits me dat I was kilt. Missus Cole and mah mother come runnin out der and picks me up and carries me ter de house and doctors me up wid medicine and Missus Cole doctors de oldest two boys wid a switch. I shore did hates ter sees her whip dem lak she did, but der wasnt any of us boys jumped offen de barn any more.

Mah marster had a nice house, it was a big four room log house, wid two rooms up stairs and it had a big hall through de center both down stairs and up stairs. De logs was all peeled and de chinkin was a different color from de logs and was covered wid beads. De kitchen was a one room log house behind de big house wid a big chimney in it ter cooks on. Dis was whar all de meals was cooked and carried in ter de house ter be done ter gits a meal. Mah marster house shore did have lots of pretty furniture in it at dat time. I guess bout de best you could buy at dat time.

But when I gits ter be a big boy, marster Coles dies and his family moved ter Huntsville Alabama. Dat was about twenty miles from de plantation, and dey said dat his house was made outten lumber and it was bigger and purtier den de one on de farm and dat dey buys lots more purty furniture, dey tole me dat it was good nuff fer de president ter live in. I never did sees it, dey left me on de plantation cause I was young, big and stout and takes one of de ole slaves in ter do all de out side work, and dey takes mah mother in wid dem ter do de cookin and it was de last time I ever seed her.

De overseer lived in a little two room house up til marster Cole died den all de overseers lived in his house after missus Cole moved ter town. Marster Cole hardly ever keeps an overseer over two years only he keeps one fer three years. Dose overseers would take his structions from marster Cole when he was hired and den marster Cole would turns him loose and when de overseer gits a little outten line, marster Coles would tells him what ter do, marster Coles would tells him a few times and finally he would fire him and hires a new one. Marster Cole fires one overseer cause he gits mad at an ole slave man and whips him wid a long green switch bout half as big around as a broom handle. I was a great big boy when dis happens, marster Coles shore was mad. De overseer whips him cause he could not keep up wid de rest of de slaves one spring when dey was weedin cotton.

De plantation of Marster Coles was de second largest plantation in dat part of de country. Governor Clarys plantation was de biggest one I knows of, he had bout two hundred work hands and marster Coles only had eight dat was big enough ter works all de time and der was a gang of chilluns dat was too little ter work. Marster Coles hads bout one thousand acres or more in his plantation and I dont know how much governor had in his. De land was hilly and sandy soil and de leveler parts was put in fiels and de fiels runs down offen a low hill side and down inter de bottom and it shore would raise cotton, corn or anything else a person wants ter plant on it. All you hads ter do was plant it and work

it jest once in a while and it would makes de stuff. De cotton shore did makes good got Texas beat bad for a cotton crop, but I guess its bout wore out by dis time. It shore was a good fruit country too could raise de biggest juicest peaches and apples. De fruit was what I laks best, I eats all dey would lets me eat.

Marster Coles had lots in pasture fer de cattle, and sheeps and goats. He had de slaves ter cut rails and build a fence round de fiels and fence off a pasture fer de stock, and turns de hogs out after markin em sos each man would knows his hogs. Sometimes crooked people would kills somebody else hog, der is crooked people every what you goes.

De grass in de pasture was plentiful fer de cattle and der was always plenty fer de hogs ter eats de year round and when de nuts and de acorns begins ter fall in de fall of de year and in de wintah you could go out anytime and kills a big fat hog and his meat shore was good eatin too, but marster Coles allus taks his hogs and fattens em and feeds a little corn ter dem, he said it cleans de meat sos dat it is fittin to eat.

After de crops was caught up good in de summah all de slaves would start cuttin wood and gittin it up ter de houses fer de wintah. Dis wood would be dead by wintah and in de wintah we would gits up some green wood ter go wid dis wood we would mix dead wood and green wood ter gether. All marster Coles and de overseers wood was straight wood with outten any knots and cut up ter fit der fire place, and all de knots was put off on de slaves

course de slaves got lots of good wood too. But all dem chimneys was big nuff ter take all de knots a man was big enuff ter put on. Some of de chimneys was made of sticks and dirt mos all de chimney in de slaves houses was but marster Cole and de overseer had chimneys made of rocks and was big enuff ter put a stick of cord wood in nearly.

We has ter git up early every day in de year, rain or shine, hot or cold. De slaves was woke up every mornin at four thirty by a slave blowin a horn it was his job ter gits up and blow a bugle and den he would go ter work in de fiels wid de rest of de slaves. Dar was no danger of you not wakin up when de bugle blowed cause he blows it long and loud. He allus gits up of a mornin and gits his bugle down and comes out and climbs up on a platform wintah and summah and blows his bugle. Dis platform was bout eight or ten feet tall. All de slaves gits up at four thirty, breakfast is eat and de men folks goes on ter fiels and as soon as de women finished up de house work and takes care of de babies, dey comes ter work. All de slaves carried der dinnah ter de fiel wid dem and iffen you'se puts it whar de ants or a varmint can git it dat is your hard luck. We all works til noon den we eats our dinnah in de shade and res bout an hour or hour and half iffen it is very hot and iffen it is cold we res bout an hour, den we goes back ter work and stays up wid de lead man all evenin jest lak we did in de mornin, and de tween sun down and

night we takes out, goes ter de quarters and eats supper and by dat time we is already ter goes ter bed and sleep. You is always tired when you makes a day lak dat on de plantation. You cant git ter go ter a party or dance lak de young folks do now a days and play all night. De young folks now speels all de next day, but we couldnt.

When de slaves leaves de quarters every mornin goin ter work, it was jest lak a bunch of youngsters now a days goin ter a ball game. Dey was all hollerin and tage in each other and runnin but dey didnt come in dat way, when we comes in it was jest lak drivin and ole give out mule.

Dar never was but one slave whipped on marster Coles plantation ceptin one ole slave and de overseer whips him cause he could not keep up wid de drivah. De drivah was a big slave he could do foah times as much work as de ole slave, but marster Cole fired de overseer. He says de overseer did not have no foah sight. I don't knows what dat is but I heard him tell de overseer dat. Some ob de other plantation owners shore was bad on de poor slaves.

Dar was one slave owner next ter us dat didnt have but bout fifteen workin hands and he tries ter work nuff land ter need twenty five workin hands and he was beatin on some of his slaves all de time.

I never did sees dem tie any of dem up ter whip dem but some of his slaves tole us dat sometimes he would have dem tied hand and foot and bends dem ovah and runs a pole tween de bend in de arms at de elbot and under de legs at de knees, atter stripin em off plum naked and whip dem wid a cat-o-nine tails till he bust de hide in lots of places cross der backs and blood would run offen dem on de ground, den he would put salt in dose raw places specially iffen dey makes out lak dey wants ter fight or sasses him.

A cat-o-nine tails is raw hide leather platted or woven round a stock or piece of wood for a handle, dis piece is short bout eight ter ten inches long, dis leather is braided on past de stock for quite a piece, and about eight or twelve inches from de end of de whip all dese strips are tied in a knot, and dey all sprangle out from dis makin a tassle.

Dis is called de cracker and it is what splits de hide. Dose cat-o-nine tails can be made as long as you want dem. Some people calls dem bull whips and dat is right for dem, dey wasnt made ter whip people wid.

Dis mans fiel jined ourn in one place and I has seed him ride up and down de rows in de fiel behind his slaves wid dis bull whip across his saddle or in his hand, and iffen one of de slaves gits on a bad row, he'd ride long behind him and holler at him ter ketch up, and iffen he didnt pretty soon he would hit him wid dis bull whip a couple of times. When dis man sole a slave

dey was allus glad ter git away, but when he bought one, de first things he done was brought de slave home and gives it a whippin, he calls him self puttin de fear of God in him. Sometimes de spekulaters would come around but dey never did stop Coles for he never did paternize any of dem.

De spekulaters was white men dat sometimes and sometimes comes around buyin, sellin or trading slaves jest lak dey do cattle now. Dey would buy, sell or trade a baby dat was ole enuff ter wean and up ter de ole slaves. Of course, babies and ole folks did not bring much. Babies was too young ter work and ole folks couldnt do much besides dey was liable to die any time. Dey was mostly considered worthless property after dey gits feeble.

Dem spekulaters would put de chilluns in a wagon usually pulled by oxens and de older folks was chained or tied ter gether sos dey could not run off and dey would go from one plantation ter another all ovah de country. Dis was very common specially in de fall of de year or spring.

Some of de slaves was pretty smart fer de chance dey had ter gits any education, iffen some of de white folks laks a slave, or dey had some chilluns dat laks a slave dey would larn you how ter read and write and dat slave would larn another one ter read and write and iffen he could some of dem shore was thick headed, you jest couldnt larn dem nuthin.

I has an awful time larnin myself. Marster Coles learned me ter read an write, but I is slow wid it yet but jest gives me time and I will gits it done. Marster Coles boys tole me more times dan I got fingers and toes dat I was too thick headed to larn anything but I jest kept on tryin and finally got on ter it, jest gettin a little at a time.

De way mos of us larns ter read is de Bible. One of de slaves would larn ter read and he would reads de Bible ter de rest of dem or as many as wants ter lissen ter him, and finally another one would wants ter larn ter read and he would larn him a little. Marster Cole was awful good about dis. But some of de slave owners would not allow any of de slaves ter own a Bible or have one roun de plantation and iffen dey ketched em wid a Bible he would takes it away from him. Iffen dey ketched dem wid a Bible he would takes it away from dem and either keeps it or burns it up.

Mos every Satidy night and Sunday after dinner Uncle Dan would read de Bible ter de rest of us and tell de meanin of it. Uncle Dan was awful ole, he didnt know how ole he was and marser didnt know how ole he was either, but he was grey headed and his whiskers was jest as white as his hair. But Uncle Dan could read good and he could write good too, and he knew de Bible about as good as anybody as I ever saw. He could sats down wid his Bible and reads a verse in dar any what and tells you jest what it means.

We allus goes ter church mos every Sunday. Sometimes we would walk bout five miles ter church, but when dey had church in de church close ter us we would go there, but when de weather was bad dey didnt have no church, and in de wintah dey wouldnt allow de slaves ter comes as de log house was small and couldnt many gits in it and we all had ter stay out side and lissen ter de preachah.

Marster Coles allus gives all his slaves a pass ter go ter church and every body knew it and dey wouldnt bother us. De white folks would let de slaves jine same church as dey was in and dey got lots of jiners among de slaves and I has seed as many as fifty slaves and I say half dat many white people baptized at one time. De would find a pond or hole in de rivah shallow enuff fer baptizing and where de rest could stan roun and look on. All de slaves would stan out side and hears de parson preach till he calls for jiners and den dey would goes in side ter jine and when one goes in another would follow jest lak a flock of goats and when dey would go ter prayin yer sins away dey would all go ter shoutin and dey would has a good time. Dis young generation is too dignified ter has de good ole time religion, dey all wants ter hide der meanness behind der religion.

One time der was a parson Wilson, dat comes in ter de country and hads a meetin in de little church calls Adair Church, it was a little log church bout a mile from de plantation. Parson

Wilson shore was a good preachah of de gospel and he preaches de Bible jest lak it is and he gits more jiners dan any one else dat ever comes in dat part of de country.

Whar de baptizings comes off it was almos lak goin ter a circus. People comes from ever whar, dat was de biggest crowd I ever seed. De baptizings was at a big tank and people was all aroun it, dey was all singin songs and de preachah preached and prayed and everybody takes dinnah and has a big time. Dat baptizing was de last one marster Cole went to as he took sick right after dat and he was sick for a long time. Sumpin was wrong wid his stomah, I believe dey said gall bladder or sumpin laks dat.

Any way marster Coles was sick fer a long, long time. Mah mother nursed him night and day as long as he was sick. Dey had doctors from all ovah de country ter comes and dey all gives dem medicine and doctored him, but de Lord had called him I guess and dose doctors couldnt do him any good fer de next summah he dies.

Dey hads a big funeral serman fer him at de plantation and all de slaves was at de house. We all lined up and marched by de coffin and looks in at him, he jest looks lak he was asleep. I guess his soul was in de great heaven talkin wid de angels for he looks lak he had a peaceful smile on his face jest lak he did when he was alive and everything pleasin him.

All de slaves cried jest lak it was one of der own family dyin. We all knew our good times was gone or maybe we would all

be sold. We didnt know what was goin ter happen ter us, but we all knew dat we wasnt goin ter have as peaceable time and have as much freedom as we had when marser Coles was alive, cause all de overseers would be good de first year den dey would gits a little meaner all along and wid marser Coles dead we knew dat we would have a mean overseer and dat he could out talk missus Coles. Well, dey puts de coffin in a hack and takes it ter de grave yard at Huntsville, Alabama, and buried it der. Mah mother and marser Coles folks was de only ones dat follows de hack.

Things went along as usual fer awhile and den one day missus Cole makes a trip to Huntsville, she was gone fer several days befo she comes back ter de plantation, and in a day er so de slaves begans ter talk of missus Cole buyin a big fine house in Huntsville and was goin ter move into town and turns her house at de plantation and de plantation over ter de overseah who was a white man and he had been wantin a little mo authority all de time and now he is gettin what he has allus been wantin.

Well, it rocked on fer about a week er ten days and talk was all dat happened, and I was afraid ter ask any questions, so one mornin missus Coles comes up ter me afore we goes ter work and says, "Well, well Thomas, what a big fine strong boy you is, you ought ter be big enuff ter do mos any kine of work now, you aint a baby no more. Thomas, I'se goin ter move offen de plantation and lets Mr. Anderson runs it fer me, he is goin ter moves in dis

house and I'se goin to move ter Huntsville. I bought a nice place up dar, so I'se goin ter take your ma wid me as she has allus been our nurse, but I'se goin ter leave you out here on de plantation. I'm sure Mr. Anderson will take good care of you, and besides you will be grown in a few more years." Den she turns roun and goes in de kitchen and leaves me standin dar.

I thoughts yessum, Mr. Anderson will takes good care of me, he'll give me dat cat-o-nine tails de first chance he gits, but I makes up mah mind right dar he wasn't goin ter gits no chance, cause I'se goin ter stay wid de rest of de slaves, and runs off de first chance I gits. I didnt know much about how ter gits outten dar, but I'se goin ter try it de first chance I gits I was goin north whar dar wasnt no slave owners.

Purty soon mah mother comes out and tells me ter be a good and do all dat Mr. Anderson tells me ter do and ter stay up wid de rest of de slaves and dat she would comes ter see me de first chance she gits and fer me ter do de same thing. Bout dat time de boss hollers fer all of us ter goes ter work so I tole mah mother good bye, dat was de last time I ever seed her, she never did gits ter come back ter see me and I never could goes in ter see her, and I never seed mah brother and sister any more, dey never did brings dem back ter de plantation. I dont knows whether dey was sold er not after dey gits bigger, and I dont know whether mah mother marries any more er not.

I got mah dinner and goes on ter de fiel and de first thing Mr. Anderson says ter me, "Now Thomas, you got ter do as much work as de rest of dese niggers." I says, "Yassah", and flies in ter it and I kept up all de time, but from dat day on I didnt has no use fer dat overseah. He wants ter whips me and I knows it but I never did gives him a chance.

Missus Coles kept some of de slaves at de house ter help packs and loads things and when we comes in from work dat evenin dey was all gone. Dis movin was done wid ox wagons and was load- ed heavy. I stayed on de plantation and worked fer two, three, four maybe five years and works every day cept Sundays and holi- days till I got de chance dat I wanted ter run off. I done every thing de overseah toles me ter do and zactly laks he toles me ter do it.

Mr. Anderson got him a better job in a year or so and missus Coles hires another man his name was Mr. Sandson. He was purty good ter us, he was more lak marser Coles fer bout two years, den he shore gits hard on us.

De overseah gives me a log house and furnished me a girl ter do mah cookin and make mah clothes and other things dat had ter be done. He gives us a garden and we raised our own garden and roasting ears. I worked on day after day wantin a good chance ter run off and finally dar was talk bout de north and south sep- eratin and iffen dey did it would cause a war, dat de north wants de south ter turn de slaves loose and de south wouldnt do it. I

dont know how it all happened but I thinks de north declares de slaves free and de south declares their selves free from de north and den things begins happening. Missus Coles begans comin ter de plantation quite a lot after de war started. John de oldes boy comes wid her quite a bit at first den finally John quits all of a sudden like. Isaac begins comin wid her. I heard dat John went ter war. I dont know fer shore, but John was bout eighteen er nineteen years ole bout dat time and was jest lak his papa. Sho was a nice lookin man. John was serious bout ever thing, but Isaac he was a happy go lucky kind of a feller and knows ever thing til de time comes and den he backs up. I ast Isaac iffen John jined de war, he said no, John jest gone off and dats all I could gits out of him.

We begin goin ter de fiel earlier and stayin a little later each day den we did de year befo, corn was hauled off, cotton was hauled off, hogs and cattle was rounded up and hauled off, and things begins lookin bad. Instead eatin corn bread made outen corn meal, we eats corn bread made outten kaffir corn and maize jest stuff lak dat.

We raised lots of okra dat year. Dey said dat okra was goin ter be parched and ground or beat up ter make coffee out off fer a person to drink, white folks was goin ter drink dat. Now dat didnt look good ter us either. Dat wintah instead killin from three hundred to four hundred hogs laks we had allus done befo, we only done one killin and kilt one hundred and seventy five and

dey was not all big ones either. When de meat supply begins ter runs low in de wintah time er early spring, de overseah Mr. Sandson would sends some of de slaves ter kill a deer, wild hogs wid out any marks er brand on em er jest any kind of game dey could gits. He had sent out some of dem several times, but never had sent me out in any of de bunches. I hoped dat he would send me out but he didnt til he had sent out some of dem de second time, den one day he calls me up wid some of dem dat had gone befo and tole us not ter go off de plantation too far, but ter be shore and bring home some meat. All dat bunch of slaves was purty good ter do what dey was tole ter do amd master Sandson wasnt scared dey would run off either, but he didnt knows me too well. Dis was de chance I had been wantin, so when we all gits ter de hunting groun, de leader says now lets us all scatters out. I tole him me and another man would go north and makes a circle roun ter de rivah and I would cross ovah and come down on de east side and mah partner would comes down on de west side and we would meet back what we started bout sun down. So we started and when we got roun ter de rivah, I crossed de rivah to de east side but I didnt go very far east of de rivah til I turns back north steadda goin south. I was goin ter a free country, de north whar dar wasnt no slaves. I traveled all dat day and night up de rivah in de day and followed de north star dat night. Several times dat night I thought I could hear de blood houn trailin me and I would gits in a big hurry. I was already so tired dat I couldnt

hardly to cause I had traveled as fast as I could all day, but when I would thinks sho hears dem blood houns, I would gits in a trot.

I was hopin and prayin all de time dat I could meets up wid dat Harriet Tubman woman. She a colored woman dey say dat she comes down dar next ter us and gits a man and his wife and takes dem out and dey didnt gits ketched either. I heard after de war dat she was takin all dem slaves ter Canada and dat she had a regular town up dar jest slaves, negroes in it a good sized little town too. She allus travels de undergroun rail road dey calls it, travels at night and hides out in de day at different places and den travels all night again til she gits what dey was all safe. She sho sneaked lots of dem out of de south but she knowed what she was doin and who would help her. I never did see dis woman but I thinks she was a brave woman any way.

I traveled dis way fer several nights and hidin in de day time in de thickets. I would eats all de nuts I could as there was lots of dem in de bottoms. I killed a few swamp rabbits and ketched a few fish I built one fire, puts lots of chunks and lots together and goes off bout half mile and hides in a thicket dis thicket lead right up to mah fire, but I goes back bout half mile in it and waits fer de fire ter burns down der coals, and I goes back and bakes me some fish and a rabbit. I was shakin all de time, fraid I would gits caught, but I was nearly starved to

death and I did not much care iffen I did gits ketched. Maybe I would gits sumpin ter eat. But I didnt and I eats mah rabbit and three er four big fish and I puts de rest of de fish in mah ole cap and starts out again feelin purty good. I traveled on dat night follerin de north star and hides out de next day and eats de rest of mah fish and some more nuts and travels all de night again and hides in a big yeaupon thicket de next day and along dat evenin I hears de guns begin shootin. I sho was skeared dis time sho nuff. I'se skeared ter come out and skeared ter stay in dar and while I was standin dar thinkin and shakin I heard two man say, "Stick yo hands up boy, what you goin?" I puts mah hands up as high as I could reach and says, "ah, ah, ah, dunno what I'se goin, you'se aint goin ter take me back ter de plantation is you. Dey said, "No, you want ter fight fer de north? I toles dem I did cause I could tell by de way dey talked dat dey was northern men and dey turns me with them, and dey are spies fer de north.

These spies led me aroun dis place where dey was shootin and we walked day and night and de next day we rode in ter General Rosecran's camp and dey took me ter General Rosecrans. Dey thought I was a spy fer de south and dey ask we all sorts of questions and said dey was goin ter whip me dat dey was goin ter burn mah feet. Dey was goin ter kill me if I didnt tell dem who mah general was and what he sent me out for. But I tole dem de

truth and tole it ovah and ovah ter dem and dey finally believed I was telling de truth, and took me out and puts me ter work. I had ter help wid de cannons, but I got plenty ter eat. Now I felt important I got off and got me a real mans job and de rest of de slaves back on de plantation workin night and day, but jest right den I didnt know what was in front of me, I specks if I had I would have run off again.

I helps set dese cannons on dis Chickamauga Mountain er hill, we was jest settin em roun in kinda hidin places. I didnt even know dey was gittin ready ter fight a battle, I thought we was kinda hidin em ter keeps de rebels from findin em, but I hads to go to one of dem cannons and stays wid a man, and waits on him. I dont know jest what it was he had me doin er if I ever got it finished, anyway de first thing I knows, bang, bang, boom, den things started, and guns was shootin faster den de fastest man you ever saw beatin on one of dese little drums wid two sticks. I'se gettin skared, I looked roun ter see which way ter run, but guns was shootin down de hill in front of me and dey was shootin at me and de men had different colored clothes and I knew dis was war and dat dey was de rebels. I looks back and guns was shootin ovah me and guns on both sides was poppin I tries ter digs me a hole and gits in it, all dis happens right now, but de first things I knows dis man was kickin me and cussin me and wantin me ter help him ter keep de cannon loaded. Man I didnt wants no

cannon, but I hads ter help him any way. We fought dat way til dark den we quits, de rebels got more men den we did so General Rosecran sends a message ter General Woods ter comes and helps us out. De messenger slips out de back way wid de message, I sho did wish it was me slippin off, but I didnt wants no message and I didnt wants ter see no General Woods either. I jest wants ter git back ter de ole plantation and picks mo cotton. I would have been willin ter jest do anything jest ter git out of dis mess, but I'se stuck, I done tole General Rosecran I wants ter fight de rebels and he sho was lettin me do it, he wasnt jest lettin me do it, he was makin me do it, I done got in dar and he wouldnt lets me out.

White folks, dar was man layin here and dar wantin help, wantin water, wid blood runnin outten dem and men layin roun dead wid de top er sides of de head gone, great big holes in dem. I jest promised de good Lawd if he would jest lemme git out of dat mess, I wouldnt run off no mo, but I didnt know den dat he wasnt goin ter lets me out wid jest dat battle. He was goin ter give me plenty more, but dat battle wasnt ovah yet fer de next mornin de rebels begins shootin way at us again dey sho was killin lots of our men too, and General Woods had not come yet, sos General Rosecran ordered us ter retreat and did not have ter tell me what he said either. De rebels comes after us shootin and we runs off and leaves dat cannon what I was wid settin on de hill, I didnt wants dat thing no how.

We kept hot footin it til we gits ter Chattanooga and dar is what we stops. Den we hears dat General Woods gits dat message all mixed up some how, and de best I can remembers is he splits his men up and one bunch comes roun one way and de rest comes roun another way and de rebels got in between his men and jest licks de devil out of him.

We was still in Chattanooga and here comes one of em rebels Generals wid a big bunch of men and gits right on top of Look Out Mountain right close ter Chattanooga where he could watch us and wouldnt let us out of Chattanooga. I dont know jest how long we was dar, but I spose bout three er four weeks er maybe a month. Anyhow, lots of our mules and horses starved ter death and we eats some of de horses, we all laks ter starve ter death ourselves. Chattanooga is located in de bend of de Tennessee Rivah, on de east side of dis is what de rebels had us.

Lookout Mountain, is on east and maybe some south of Chattanooga but not so far but what de rebels could keep up wid everything we done and could keep us from gettin out of dar. But after a long time dar was a General Thomas dat gits in dar some way and dey says General Grants comin too, but General Thomas finds a rough trail er wagon road roun de mountain along de rivah dat leads a long ways down de rivah and supplies and men comes by boat up de rivah to dis place and comes on into Chaatnooga. Dar was Union troops comin in quite a bit and I hears some of dem

sayin de rebel General had sent lots of his men off somers else ter fight some other Government General and dey says dat dis would be a good time ter attack de rebels, but de General was not ready yet I guess. But some men kept comin and I hears de men sayin General So-In-So is here and another General and I guess maybe dat was six er eight generals dar and dey begins ter git ready ter fight. I dont knows when it was, but long in late fall er early wintah fer de leaves had begin ter fall offen de trees and all de men was got ready ter fight and dey started to climbing dis stoop mountain when we gots little past I guess two thirds er three fourths de way up de Lookout Mountain, it was foggy and you could not see no place. It was jest lak some of dese heavy foggy days dat we has here in de late fall er early spring, and everything was wet and de rocks was slick and dey begins ter fightin, you couldnt see very far behind you and you couldnt see very far in front of you. I specks some of dem shoots der own men, you couldn't see nuthin, jest a man once in a while runnin and hears de guns roarin, but finally de rebels fled and we took possession of Lookout mountain. Dar was a long range of hills, and mountain leadin away from Lookout Mountain and Chattnooga, nearly to Missionary Ridge. Dis ridge was along side Chickamauga Rivah, Chickamauga, dey say is an Indian name, meanin Rivah of death, and it was deep and swift as it run out of de mountains. And in between Lookout mountain and Missionary Ridge was a big hill dey calls Orchard Knob, dar was a battle fought here and de

rebels was whipped. I wasnt in dis battle, but de battle of Missionary Ridge I was in dis one. We hads ter come out of de timbah and runs across a strip er opening whar dar wasnt no timbah and up de hill when we was fightin de rebels. Dey shore did kill lots of our men when we hads ter run across dis openin. But de men jest went wild and when we started cross dis openin we runs fer all we was worth and when de Union soldiers got cross dis openin we sho dis use our guns er anything we could. De rebels turns and runs off and some of de Union soldiers turn de cannons roun dat we had captured and kilt some of de rebels wid der own guns.

I never did gits ter where I wasnt scared when we hads ter go ter battle, but dis was de last battle I was in and I sho was glad it was for I never saw de lak of dead and wounded soldiers in all mah life. Men from both sides was layin on de groun dead and wounded. We gathered up de wounded first and de ones dat was wounded til dey died and tried ter fix where dey would be easy til dey died, and de ones dat would git well, we doctored de best we could and de rebels was doctored as same as de Union soldiers.

When I seed all dis sufferin I hopes den dat I never lives ter see another war lak dat one. Dey said dat de World War was worse dan dat one, I sho am glad dat I was too ole ter go ter dat one. I sho did wish lots of times dat I never had run off from de plantation. I begs de General not ter sends me ter any mo battles, ter lets me do anything ceptin go ter battle. He

says I was a coward and a sympathizer fer de south, but I toles him if I had of been I wouldnt have run off from de south, dat I jest couldnt stands ter see all dem men layin dar dyin and hol-lerin and beggin fer some one ter helps dem er give dem a drink of water and see blood every where you look, sho did makes you feel peculiar. You jest feels kinda creepylike and sick at your stomach. Killin hogs back on de plantation didnt bother me but dis was different.

Finally de General tole me dat I could go backs ter Chatta-nooga wid some of de rest of men and guard de supplies in camp dar and help take care of de wounded soldiers and de prisoners.

When I first goes into de war dar wasnt many colored men in de service but long de last year of de war dar was lots of dem. De north and de south both was takin anything dey could gits ter win de war.

I hears dat after de battle of Missionary Ridge was fought, dat General Woods er General Thomas tooks a regiment of men and wents back ter Georgia some place ter fights a battle and dat de men went ter battle singin, "Now hell done broke loose in Georgia".

I went back ter Chattanooga wid a company of men ter guard de supplies and de captured rebels and takes care of de wounded soldiers and we hads all we could de fer a good while. Every once in a while we would gits a order in dar ter send supplies ter some other General and it was mah job ter helps load de wag-ons er box cars er boats sos it could be took ter dem. Dar would

be a train of wagons leave sometimes.

We got all of our supplies in Chattanooga mostly by boat and sent dem out different ways ter other parts of de country. Chaatnooga was a important distributing center fer de Union forces, dat is why dey keeps so many men and supplies dar all de time.

When dese men would come and go wid supplies and take supplies away we jest talks bout battles and war all de time. Dey tells us bout who won a battle and where it was fought at. But dat wintah after de battle at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge dey didnt do any fightin dey said all of dem jest lay roun de quarters and rest up and waits fer de spring ter open up.

Dat wintah de Union General sends in bout six mo colored soldiers in de camp at Chaatnooga ter helps me and foah more wid de work dat was extry dat wintah. Dar wasnt as many supplies ter be shipped out dat wintah as dat fall befo and de next spring but us cullud soldiers had enuff ter keeps us busy.

When spring breaks and all de snows gone and de trees begins puttin out and everything begins ter looks purty and peaceable like makin you things you oughts ter be plowin and gettin ready ter plants a crop, well everybody is feelin good, dats was when de fightin starts all ovah again killin men, burnin homes and stealin stock and feed, food er any thing dey could gits ter help win de war.

When de battles begins ter start and armies begins ter move about, men was shifted from one place ter another, messengers

was sent from one camp ter another, and us soldiers dat had hoped dat de war would be ovah was sent ter battle.

We walked fer many miles ovah muddy groun across rivahs wadin water up ter our chins and holdin our guns and ammunitions up above our heads and buildin rafts er temporary dirt er pole bridges across streams ter gits de mules, horses and cannons and wagons wid provisions across and up and down hills and sometimes cuttin roads through timbah.

Me and five mo of de culured men was moved away from Chatta-nooga dat spring wid lots of white men. Us culured soldiers was all used ter clear roads and help build dese temporary bridges cause jest us six couldnt do all dat work but dey took lots mo of dem from somewhere else and when dey went to battle, I was always left in camp ter helps take care of de supplies.

General Thomas calls me a coward, I sho was glad he thought I was. I wasnt no coward; I jest couldnt stand ter see all dem people tore ter pieces and men cryin fer help. Dar was always so many of dem you didnt know whar to start first.

I was tole about a battle long bout de last of de war dat happened befo hand dat was fought in a thick forest and dat trees big as mah body was jest shot down, all dem trees was jest tore ter pieces. I saw trees shot ter pieces in de battle of Missionary Ridge, but not as big as mah body and I thought dat was de awfulest battle I ever seed er heard of but dis battle of de forest was worse dan dat one.

I was jest shifted from one camp ter another, from one battle ground ter another, til jest befo de close of de war, and I was finally sent back ter Chattanooga. I bet durin all mah time in de war I handles nuff ammunition ter kills every body in de whole United States. I saw most of de mainest Generals in de Union army and some of dem in de rebel army, but I never seed General Lee and I always did want to everybody said he was de smarter men dat was in de north er south armies and dat iffen he had had de same amount of men and money and supplies dat de north had he would whip em fer he was de smarters. I always did hate dat I runs off and leaves de south fer after de war dey calls us southern traitors cause we runs off and comes ter de north and risk our lives same as dey did. If marsers Cole had lives I never would have run off.

After de war was ovah and we was all turned loose we jest scatters out, no whar ter go and nuthin ter do, nobody ter goes to fer help. I couldnt go back south whar I had run off from ter looks fer work, fer up dar dey calls us traitors and back farther south dey would nearly kills us iffen dey knew we had runs off ter de north ter help dem fight.

Fer about a year after de war I jest works any whar I could gits work, and finally I gits work on de railroad. I got work on de railroad in Stevenson, Alabama. I worked here fer awhile and one day de train master comes through, while he was talkin

ter mah boss I hears him say dat dey was goin ter sends a lot of men to Chattanooga, Tennessee ter works on de railroad dar and dat dey was goin ter take dese men outen de regular gangs and let each foreman breaks in a new man and dey wouldnt has ter break in ovah one new man. So I speaks up and ask him ter lets me be de man dat he sends from dis gang dat I use ter live in Chattanooga and I sho would laks ter git back dar. De boss speaks up and tells de train master dat I was a good workin man and dat I could be depended on and he sho hates ter loose me but iffen it would helps me any he sho would likes ter see me gits a promotion, so de train master takes mah name and says he would see if he couldnt range fer me to be sent ter Chattanooga. When he said dat after jest tellin de boss he was goin ter sends some men ter Chattanooga dat I never would gits ter go but I feels lak I might gits ter go to, so I jest keeps on workin and in bout two er three weeks de boss calls me ovah to him one mornin when I goes down ter work and he says, "Thomas I got a notice from de train master fer you ter report to a man in Chattanooga."

I thinks de railroad gives me bout two days ter report to a Mr. Thomas in Chattanooga. I got a pass on de train ter Chattanooga and a letter ter gives ter Mr. Thomas, so I goes home and changes clothes and gits all mah things ter gether and goes down ter de depot at Stephenson Alabama and ketches de first train out ter Chattanooga and den de first thing I does when I gits der, was to find me a boardin place and as it happened I found a place

next door ter de girl I finally marries and den I goes right straight and finds Mr. Thomas and gives him dis letter and he tells me ter report at de tool house on de next mornin den I begins ter look de town ovah and it sho did looks different from what it did when I was dar befo. De next mornin I reported ter de tool house and dey puts me and several mo men ter work in de railroad yards layin new tracks, switches spurs and turn tables. Dey was makin Chattanooga a big division point on dis railroad and buildin a big roun house dar too.

I worked on dis work fer bout two weeks and walkin bout town at night wid some of de other boys befo I tried ter go wid a girl. I had saw a girl next door and had thought bout tryin ter break in and go wid her, but I was jest a little bashful, and hated to get turned down by any woman. After I gits a pay day I dresses up and ask did she want to goes to a dance wid me so she tole me she would go iffen her girl frien would go I toles her I could gits one of de boys fer her frien ter goes wid and she said her frien had a feller.

So we all went ter de dance and danced nearly all de night, dis dance was a cullered mans in dat part of town and it was one of dem ole fashioned kind, and we all had a good time and I buys dem anything dey wants as I had jest got paid and had more money den any one at de dance. After dat dance I went out wid her quite a bit and went ovah ter her uncles mos every night and stays a little while. She lived wid her uncle and aunt, cause

she was a orphan chile. Dis uncle was her fathers brother and he liked me purty good.

After we sparked fer about two months her uncle tole Nancy, (dat was de girls name) dat she sho ought ter marry me dat I was a railroad man and de railroad paid all der men good money and gives dem all good jobs and dat I could make her a good livin and she tole me after we marries dat she had been thinkin bout dat herself cause I allus had money. We married after we had courted each other fer quite a while and de next night her uncle give a dance fer us and we had a big candy pullin. We was married at her uncles by a parson jest lak marser Coles allus made his slaves do. Der wasnt but a few of her friens and a few of mah friens present besides her uncles folks. But der was a good crowd at de weddin dance de next night and everybody had a good time. Some of de boys at de dance dat night says dat dey is goin ter make me ride a rail but me and mah wife talks dem out of it after we toles dem we was goin ter have a candy pullin after we danced a little.

We lived in de house wid her uncle fer bout a year er more and me workin fer de railroad all de time. Den we bought a little piece of land in de edge of town in de cullud part of town and I hads a little two room house built on it and we bought a cow and some chickens and a brood sow and had a big garden broke up and got ready ter live at home. I was makin purty good money den and

after bout two years we had some more built on de house makin us a four room house and done some other improvements roun de place. Bout de time we got our home repaired I got a job as a switchman in de railroad yards at Chattnooga, I worked at did seven years.

I believe every one takin all de slaves dat I knows of as a whole was really happier and better off after de emancipation den dey was befo of course de first few years it was awful hard ter gits adjusted ter de new life dat was in front of dem. All de slaves knew how ter do hard work, fer dey was taught dat from de time dey was big enuff ter work til dey died.

Dat was de ole slaves life, but der was very few dat was taught er knows anything bout how ter find a job er how ter depend on dem selves fer a livin. But a few years of scrapin scratchin fer der own food and it wasnt so hard. I allus had a good job wid de railroad wid de exception of de first year after de war and dat was a hard year fer me. If I had had a family I dont knows what I would have done. But in dem days der was lots of wild game den der is durin de present panic.

One thing dat made it so hard, de north was broke and de south was broke after de war. All de plantation owners had spent all der money and gives all de stock and feed ter helps win de war and had lost and dey didnt has nuthin ter pays any one ter work fer dem and dey was mad at de north and has a grudge against de slaves too dat is mos of dem did any and dey would not gives many of dem work and couldnt work as many as dey did befo de war.

Some of de slaves thought dat der masters ought ter give dem supin but mos of dem was too glad ter be free and wanted ter gits away and didnt wants nuthin. I didnt hears of any of de slaves gittin anything ceptin a crop on de halves after de war. I allus has wondered what Missus Coles done wid her plantation, and would have likes ter have gone back down der and looks aroun, but I'se scared to after I had run off and jined de north.

After de war de Ku Klux Klan got purty bad roun in parts of de south. De KKK was kind of a organization in dem days jest as it was a few years ago only it was handled or acted a little different den it did a few years ago in dem days dey puts a mask ovah dem, dis mask was a big white cloth dat covered dem up and dey cuts holes in it whar der eyes is so dey kin see through and rides roun ovah de country horse back and whips and scares lots of de darkies. Iffen a man gits behind wid his crop and wants ter give a bushel of potatoes or a bushel of corn fer a days work, dont make no difference iffen you got plenty of taters er corn iffen de Ku Klux Klan comes roun at night and knocks on your do and tells you ter go and work fer Mr. Brown ter morrer. Iffen dey tells you ter go and work fer Mr. Brown fer a bushel of taters you bettah go and works fer de taters er you gits whipped by de KKK tomerrer night. De KKK done lots of things dat wasnt no sence in at all. Dey even comes roun and pulls a man outten bed by his wife and chilluns and carries him off and whips him till de blood runs down his legs and de KKK done lots good things too.

Now iffen a man was so honery and lazy til he jest wouldnt work and was jest layin roun and lettin his wife and po little chilluns nearly starve ter death de KKK would comes roun and knocks at his door some night and tells him ter git him sumpin ter do and feeds dat woman and chilluns and iffen he didnt dey would comes back and sees him and dey sho would too but if you did let them come back the second time, tis too bad.

I knows a cullud man what lived about a quarter of mile from me in Chattanooga dat was sho lazy. After de slaves was freed he thought he wasnt supposed ter work fer a livin a tall and steal, dat nigger would steal from you and you watchin him. He would steals any thing he could gits his hands on and carries it home. He would even go ter dem white peoples fiels at night and dig der sweet taters out in de fiel and steal corn outen de patch. He steals meat outen de smoke house and he was livin bettern anybody. Couldnt nobody ketch him but everybody knows he was stealin fer he didnt work enuff ter has as much as he has. So de KKK comes along one night and pulls him right outten de bed besides his wife and carries him off in his under clothes and it was purty chilly dat night too, but dey dont care bout dat. Dey takes dis nigger out and makes him own up ter all he steals and makes him promise ter gits a job and go ter work and never steals any more, den dey whips dis nigger till he couldnt hardly stand up and turns him loose. He staggers roun and crawls back home and as soon as his wife could hears him hollerin she runs ter him and helps him

git home. He sho was whipped good and as soon as he could get a job he went ter work.

Dis bunch of KKK was jest a bunch of farmers and business men, mostly all plantation owners dressed up in a white robe and der horses covered up wid a white colthe too and eyes cut fer dem and de horses. I'se seed dem and dey did look scary after night especially iffen it was good and dark cause dis white shows up fer a long ways, and when all de cullud people sees dem comin dey would go and hide and locks der door. Dey never did bother dem me and I never did bother dem.

Long ago about two years after me and Nancy was married our baby was born and when I toles de boys at de railroad yards bout it I hads ter set it up ter dem all, and dese railroad boys sho dont care bout your pocket book, but I didnt care though I was makin good money den. Things went along purty smooth fer us after de boy was born as I was still workin as a switchman in de railroad yards and bout four years later our baby girl was born, de one I am livin wid now. Me and Nancy was happy all de time as we had a little better livin den de mos of de cullud folks roun us of cause we had our little quarrels as all married people do, but dey didnt even amount ter nuthin as we would gits in a good humor after a while.

Our chilluns growed fast and cause we thought lots of dem jest lak every mother and father. Our chilluns didnt never know

whats a grandma and grandpa was, der nearest dey has ter a grand-
ma and grandpa was Nancy's aunt and uncle, and dey thought as
much of our chilluns as dey did der own grand chilluns.

After her uncles oldest boy got grown, him and another boy
got ramblin in der heads and dey comes ter Texas we had all heard
lots bout Texas and de good land dat was cheap down here so dey
left fer Texas and dey got a job in East Texas in east of Tyler
we never did know jest zactly what dey was doin, but he did not
stay long. We allus thought him er do other boy got in trouble
of some kind, fer dey both said dat dey had a good job and quit
and goes back up roun Linden in Cass County Texas, dat is north
and some east of Tyler and gits another job and my uncles boy
marries up dar and lives der til he dies, he owned a little farm
up dar.

Things begins ter gitten a little bad in Chattanooga as de
white men foun out dat I had runs off from de south and jined
de north. Some of de brakemen tried to get my job.

I knew all de signs signals, and train rules and regulations
and I sho did watch mah step fer I know dat dey was trying to gits
me fired. I had talked wid mah wife bout de way mos of de man
was doin and she had tries ter gits me ter quit mah job and goes
farther north and tries ter gits another job er quit and sells
our home and comes ter Texas and buy a farm cause we both knew
dat iffen I stayed on dat some day I would loose it dat der was
to many against me.

After workin dis way fer a few years I finally quits when one of de brakemans opened a switch I had jest closed, I had opened it and engine and a few cars had pulled through and I closed it and had gone roun in between two cars ter uncouple dem and fer some purpose I kneeled down I dont membah what it was fer but jest some little sumpthin and I sees him walk away from de switch block so I supicioned sumpthin wrong sos I goes back ter de switch block and de switch was open so I closed it again and went on switchin til mah shift was up. Dis happened one evenin late bout dark and when mah time was up I goes in and tells dem I'se quitting and tole dem what had happened.

So I left mah wife and chilluns and goes up north in Illinois and makes several division points but dey wasnt interested, sos I comes back and sells mah home ter one of de boys workin fer de railroad.

I bought me a team and wagon, loaded mah wife and chilluns and a few other things in ter it and mah wife made a strap outten cloth and puts all de money in it which was about \$1000.00 and started out fer Texas. She strapped dis money roun her waist under her clothes we only kept out \$30 which I puts in mah pocket dis was our spendin money. We was on de road bout six weeks er two months, we had ter ford several streams and cross several on ferries. We crossed one ferry where dar was a white man ahead of us dat had a pretty team of horses, dis ferry was across a small rivah but it was deep and could only one team and wagon

git on de ferry at a time. Dis man had a hart time gitten his team on de ferry, but we all helped him and when we finally got dem on dey kept cuttin up dey would rare up, kick and try fer run backwards and we finally got dem quited down, and de ferry man wanted some of us ter cross wid dem ter help dis man holds dem so bout six of us tied our own up and got on de ferry and went across and when de ferry man got ter movin dese horses got ter cuttin up again and when we got bout middle ways dey laks ter backed de wagon wid dat woman and chilluns off in de rivah. We all thought shore it was gone, but a white man opened his knife up right quick and jobed one of de horses in de hips wid it ter make him quit runnin backwards and dis horse jest stopped right quick and squatted down low and jest stand dar and shake. He wouldnt budge a peg, but de other horse was still cuttin up it if hadnt been fer dis horse jest quitten dey sho would have got away from us fore we got across. De man what stuck his knife in dis horse hind leg thought he had ruined dat horse, but before we got ter de other bank de ferry man tole dis man ter gits in his wagon and gits a good hold on his lines fer dey air sho comin out er dar when we gits ter de bank and he got ready and jest as soon as de ferry hit de bank dey jest goes a skinnin up dat bank and when he got dem stopped some of de men helped him doctor de horse while some of us went back and got de rest of de wagons and stock across. Mos of dese people was comin ter Texas.

While we was on de way ter Texas we fished and hunted every day and we caught some good fish in some of de rivahs. It didnt cost as much ter travel five hundred miles in dem days as it cost now and it took us a whole lot longer ter make de trip.

We traveled on til we got ter Cass County Texas and we went ter mah wifes cousins. It took us a good while ter find out where he lives but we finally found a white man dat knew where he lived and tole us how ter gits out dar. We stayed bout a week wid him befo we found a place. I bought ninety acres of land it was all in timber, I went in dar and went ter cuttin logs fer a house and got mah wifes cousin ter help me build a two room house and a log crib and I rived out boards ter cover it wid and we moved in jest as soon as we could gits in and me and mah wife built a small stomp lot for our team and cow and built a rail fence aroun de house. We went ter cleaning land and splittin rails fer de land and we was goin ter cultivate.

Back in dem days everybody built a rail fence roun de cultivatin land and turned der stock out side some of dem would build a rail fence roun bout ten er fifteen acres fer a pasture fer a team and one er two cows all de hogs was marked and turned out.

We got enuff land cleared dat year fer us ter have a small crop de next year and fenced laks I wanted it. We cleared up bout thirty acres and had plenty of barn and shed room built fer all de feed we could raise. We lived here til mah chilluns was

grown. Mah wife died here wid malaria and chills, she had one chill after another. Her health was good when we first moved here but long bout five years befo she died her health broke and we spent lots of money fer medicine and doctors but dey didnt do her no good.

After she died mah boy and me cuts saw lots dat was close ter us and took dem der a saw mill and had lumber sawed out of dem and built a new four roomed house we done mos of de work ourselves. Mah daughter done all de house work and de cookin after mah wife died till she married and me and de boy fenced de whole place and done all de farmin.

After de chilluns married dey moved off and left me on de farm by mah self. I batched and farmed de little farm dat Nancy and me bought several years befo, but I wasnt happy all I done was work and think of years dat had gone by when Nancy and me worked together and how we had saved what we had and den me left by mah self, so I gets so lonesome dat I sold de place and comes ter Henderson County Texas and bought a small farm.

When I bought de farm in Cass County, I paid fifty cents an acre fer it and sold it fer twelve dollars an acre. I bought sixty acres in Henderson County fer fifteen dollars an acre. I lived in Henderson County bout one year when I married de second time. I got so lonesome till I thought if I could find a good woman I would gits married and maybe I would be better satisfied.

Sos I met dis woman and got ter courtin her and we married but I didnt care fer her lak I did Nancy, dar is jest some little sump-tin dat makes you care more fer one den you do another. I jest cant tell you how you feel but any body knows dat has been in mah place. Dis woman was so different from Nancy, I guess is why I didnt care much fer her. All she thought bout was jest raise de devil, go some whar and spend money. She never did wants ter work er save anythin, she was so lazy till she didnt wants ter git up and cook mah meals and de house was dirty and messed up all de time and stead of washin every she didnt was but once a month, and I couldnt stand dat. I been use ter de house bein clean and clothes clean and when I was workin hard mah meals was on time and dey was cooked right. Dis woman was wanting sumpin all de time she say we got plenty money ter keep us de rest of our days. We got plenty of money, dat woman didnt have a red cent she meant I had de money and she didnt cares how she spends it. Mah money kept goin down and we didnt raise as good crops as I did when I by mah self and doin mah own cookin and washin. She laks ter have broke me afore I got rid of her and I could sees dat so we separated. I took dis woman back home whars I got her and left her dar.

I stayed here and farmed dis place fer several years after we separated. I cleared up some more land and puts it in cultivation dar was a little in cultivation when I buys it but dar wasnt enuff. I could has bought plenty of timber land a whole

lot cheaper than dis place cost but I didnt wants ter clear up another place. Some men would buy land in timber and clear out some cultivating land build houses, barns and do some fencing and sells it. Some would farm a new place de first year and den buy some more timber land and clear it up and build improvements a-gain and sell it jest as fast as dey could sells it, and some of dem made good money at dis business.

Since I'se come ter Texas I has seed people both cullud and white move in covered wagons wid horses mules oxens and some work-in a ox and a milk cow. De cow would pulls her part of de load all day and dey would milk her dat night and stakes her out.

I membahs one time when a cullud scoundrel was burned in Henderson County fer attacking a white woman dis man got jest what he orter had, he knowed bettah den dat. Didnt none of us cullud people go bout dis while it was goin on all of us stayed at home and didnt stir roun much fer several days fer de white people sho was stirred up bout dis and dey might jump on any cullud people dey didnt know and hurt dem while dey was mad. Dar was hard feelins bout dis fer a long time and de cullud people wents ter town and gets what dey had ter have and tended ter der business and comes right on back home.

Mah son-in-law rents land in Chambers Creek bottom but it is not levied where he farms and some years his crops git washed a-way. But usually he gets his crop made and gathered before a flood gits it. He makes good crops, but those years the price is

no good, so he aint much better off ceptin feed dat he saves. De year dat de levee broke and it comes sech a big flood you couldnt see much of his crop even after de water went down fer it was all covered up in mud.

We allus has some hogs ter kill ever wintah and we kills enuff ter have meat and lard ter run us all de year and we has our corn meal, milk, and butter and eggs and chickens so de depression aint starved us yet. We all got might near naked during de depression and mah son-in-law got on de relief dat fall after all our crops got washed away, but when de case worker comes out here and sees de cows hogs, mules and chickens and a little feed in de barn left ovah from last year, he thought we was nearly rich and cut him off after givin us a few clothes and he couldnt git back on de relief. I cant helps do none of de farmin but I can feeds de hogs and de chickens dey gits de feed ready and puts it be de barn door and I feeds dem night and mornin. I cant see dem but I laks ter stand and lissen to dem eatin de feed and hear de milk hitten de bucket when dey milks. All I can do is jest lissen ter de chickens cackle and all de other things roun de farm and thing back when I was young and done all dis by mah self.

People dont know how well dey is blessed dat has got good eyes til dey lose dem. Every body ought ter be more thankful den dey is.

We allus goes ter church every Sunday and Sunday night and I listens ter every word dat de preachah says. I belongs ter de

church every since mah first wife died and I reads mah Bible all de time til I lost mah eye sight and now I has mah daughter ter read it ter me and I knows it bout as well an any body mah color.

Dese young cullud boys and girls dont know ter appreciate nuthin dey jest goes ter church ter have summers ter go maybe dey goes ter church on Satidy night and leaves befo services is ovah and goes ter a dance and de older one married ones aint much bettah, dey fights and kills each other all de time dey aint none of dem got any sence dey has got ter have some white man ter tells dem what ter do. Dey all spends der money fer foolishments and runs ter de relief fer groceries and clothes.

I aint never voted in mah life but I has wanted to a few times but I jest never did. I has heard some people say dat our good president aint never helped dem any and dey been on relief too, dey would cuss him and den run ter de relief office fer help dat he had fixed fer all de poor people. Dey president has helped everybody from de banker ter de pauper and he has helped all de farmers ter gits ahead and lots of dem went runnin in and buyin tractors and cusses de government cause he dont pay fer dem. People is sho crazy ter sells de mules and buys a tractor.

I leans ter de Repubilcans but I thinks dat president Roosevelt is de best president dat we ever had. He tries ter help rich man, poor man and ever color and race. If we could gits presidents lak him all de time, de United States and all de

people would soon be out of debt and own der own homes and has good jobs er good farms and git good prices fer every thing. Anybody can gits de country in a mess, but it takes a smart man a long time ter cleans things up.

Today I is broke I spent all mah money several years ago fer medicine and doctors but I is in fairly good health now and I gits a small pension from de government and I spends it jest as care-fully as I did when I was young and made mah own money.

I hope de people will elect good presidents, dat will be good ter all de poor people dat is unfortunate as long as we have a president, because poor ole people need it and dey want live long ter draw a pension any way.