



Adeline Cunningham

ADELINE CUNNINGHAM, 1210 Florida St., born 1852, was a slave in Lavaca County, 4-1/2 miles n.e. of Hallettsville. She was a slave of Washington Greenlee Foley and his grandson, John Woods. The Foley plantation consisted of several square leagues, each league containing 4,428.4 acres. Adeline is tall, spare and primly erect, with fiery brown eyes, which snap when she recalls the slave days. The house is somewhat pretentious and well furnished. The day was hot and the granddaughter prepared ice water for her grandmother and the interviewer. House and porch were very clean.

"I was bo'n on ole man Foley's plantation in Lavaca County. He's got more'n 100 slaves. He always buy slaves and he never sell. How many acres of lan' he got? Lawd, dat man ain't got acres, he got leagues. Dey raises cotton and co'n, and cattle and hawgs. Ole man Foley's plantation run over Lavaca and Colorado county, he got 1600 acres in one block and some of it on de Navidad River. Ole man Foley live in a big log house wid two double rooms and a hall, and he build a weavin' house agin his own house and dey's anudder house wid de spinnin' wheels. And ole man Foley run his own cotton gin and his own grindin' mill where dey grinds de co'n and dey got a big potato patch.

"Dey was rough people and dey treat ev'ry body rough. We lives in de quarter; de houses all jine close togedder but you kin walk 'tween 'em. All de cabins has one room and mostly two fam'lies bunks togedder in de one room wid dirt floors. De slaves builds de cabins, de slaves got no money, dey got no land.

"No suh, we never goes to church. Times we sneaks in de woods and prays de Lawd to make us free and times one of de slaves got happy and made a noise dat dey heered at de big house and den de overseer come and whip us [Pg 267] 'cause we prayed de Lawd to set us free.

"You know what a stockman is? He is a man dat buys and sells cattle. Ev'ry year de stockman comes to ole man Foley's and he lines us up in de yard and de stockman got a lotta slaves tied togedder and ole man Foley he buys some slaves but he won't sell none. Yassuh, de stockman buys and sells de slaves jes' de same as cattle.

"Dey feeds us well sometimes, if dey warn't mad at us. Dey has a big trough jes' like de trough for de pigs and dey has a big gourd and dey totes de gourd full of milk and dey breaks de bread in de milk. Den my mammy takes a gourd and fills it and gives it to us chillun. How's we eat it? We had oyster shells for spoons and de slaves comes in from de fields and dey hands is all dirty, and dey is hungry. Dey dips de dirty hands right in de trough and we can't eat none of it. De women wuks in de fields until dey has chillun and when de chillun's ole enough to wuk in de fields den de mother goes to ole man Foley's house. Dere she's a house servant and wuks at spinnin' and weavin' de cotton. Dey makes all de clothes for ole man Foley and his fam'ly and for de slaves.

"No suh, we ain't got no holidays. Sundays we grinds co'n and de men split rails and hoes wid de grubbin' hoe. Ole man Foley has a blacksmif shop and a slave does de blacksmiffin. De slaves builds cabins wid split logs and dey makes de roof tight wid co'n shucks and grass. One time a month, times one time in two months, dey takes us to de white folks church.

"Dey's four or five preachers and de slaves. Iffen deys a marriage de preacher has a book. He's gotter keep it hid, 'cause dey's afraid iffen de slaves learns to read dey learns how to run away. One of de slaves runs away and dey ketches him and puts his eyes out. Dey catches anudder slave dat run[Pg 268] away and dey hanged him up by de arm. Yassuh, I see dat wid my own eyes; dey holds de slave up by one arm, dey puts a iron on his knee and a iron on his feet and drag 'im down but his feet cain't reach de groun'.

"Ole man Foley ain't bad, but de overseers is mean. No suh, we never gits no money and we never gits no lan'. Ole man Foley, he wants to give us sumpin for gardens but Mr. John Woods, his gran'son, is agin it.

"Was I glad when dat was over? Wouldn' you be? It's long after we's free dat I gits married. Yassuh, and I live in San Antonio 'bout 20 years." [Pg 269]
