



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 help 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 mortar. 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]