



Clara Brim

**CLARA BRIM, slave of William Lyons of Branch, Louisiana, now lives in Beaumont, Texas. The town of Branch was known in slave days as Plaquemine Bouley. Clara estimates her age to be 100 or 102, and from various facts known to her and her family, this would seem to be correct.**

"Old massa's name was William Lyons. I didn't have no old missus, 'cause he was a bachelor. He had a big plantation. I don't know how big but dey somethin' like twenty fam'lies of slaves and some dem fam'lies had plenty in dem. My ma was Becky Brim and pa, he name Louis Brim. She come from Old Virginny. Dey work in de field. I had two sister name Cass and Donnie and a brudder name Washington. He went off to de war. When it break out dey come and take him off to work in de army. He lost in dat war. He didn't come back. Nobody ever know what happen to him.

"Some de houses log house and some plank, but dey all good. Dey well built and had brick chimneys. Dey houses what de wind didn't blow in. Us had beds, too, not dem built in de wall. Us sho' treat good in slavery times, yes, suh. Old massa give us plenty clothes to keep us good and warm. He sho' did.

"Old massa, he wasn't marry and eat de same things de slaves eat. He didn't work dem in de heat of de day. 'Bout eleven o'clock, when dat sun git hot, he call dem out de field. He give dem till it git kind of cool befo' he make dem go back in de field. He didn't have no overseer. He seed 'bout de plantation hisself. He raise cotton and corn and sweet 'taters and peas and cane, didn't fool with rice. He didn't go in for oats, neither. [Pg 148]

"When Sunday come Old Massa ask who want to go to church. Dem what wants could ride hos s-back or walk. Us go to de white folks church. Dey sot in front and us sot in back. Us had prayer meetin', too, reg'lar every week. One old cullud man a sort of preacher. He de leader in 'ligion.

"When de slaves go to work he give dem de task. Dat so much work, so many rows cotton to chop or corn to hoe. When dey git through dey can do what dey want. He task dem on Monday. Some dem git through Thursday night. Den dey can hire out to somebody and git pay for it.

"Old Massa even git de preacher for marryin' de slaves. And when a slave die, he git de preacher and have Bible readin' and prayin'. Mostest de massas didn't do dat-a-way.

"I as big in war time as I is now. I used to do anything in de field what de men done. I plow and pull fodder and pick cotton. But de hardes' work I ever done am since I free. Old Massa, he didn't work us hard, noway.

"He allus give us de pass, so dem patterrollers not cotch us. Dey 'bout six men on hoss-back, ridin' de roads to cotch niggers what out without de pass. Iffen dey cotch him it am de whippin'. But de niggers on us place was good and civ'lized folks. Dey didn't have no fuss. Old Massa allus let dem have de garden and dey can raise things to eat and sell. Sometime dey have some pig and chickens.

"I been marry his' one time and he been dead 'bout forty-one years now. I stay with Old Massa long time after freedom. In 1913 I come live with my youngest girl here in Beaumont. You see, I can't 'member so much. I has lived so long my 'memberance ain't so good now. [Pg 149]