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Edgar and Minerva Bendy

EDGAR BENDY, 90 odd years, was the slave of Henry Bendy, of Woodville, Texas, has to make an effort to remember and is forced to seek aid from his wife, Minerva, at certain points in his story. Edgar has lived in Woodville all his life.

"I's a good size' boy when de war gwine on and I seed de soldiers come right here in Woodville. A big bunch of dem come through and dey have cannons with dem. My marster he didn't go to war, 'cause he too old, I guess.

"I's born right here and done live hereabouts every since. Old man Henry Bendy, he my marster and he run de store here in Woodville and have de farm, too. I didn't do nothin' 'cept nuss babies. I jes' jump dem up and down and de old marster hire me out to nuss other white folks chillen, big and little.

"My daddy name' Jack Crews and my mammy was Winnie. Both of dem worked on de farm and I never seed dem much. I didn't have no house of my own, 'cause de marster, he give me de room in he house. He have lots of slaves and 'bout 100 acres in cult'vation. He gave dem plenty to eat and good homespun clothes to wear. He was mighty good.

"Marster have de plank house and all de things in it was home-made. De cook was a old cullud woman and I eat at de kitchen table and have de same what de white folks eats. Us has lots of meat, deer meat and possum and coon and sich, and us sets traps for birds. [Pg 68]

"Dey ain't nothin' better dat go in de wood dan de big, fat possum. Dey git fat on black haws and acorns and chinquapin and sich. Chinquapin is good for people to eat and to roast. I used to be plumb give up to be de best hunter in Tyler and in de whole country. I kilt more deer dan any other man in de county

and I been guide for all de big men what comes here to hunt. My wife, Minerva, she used to go huntin' with me.

"I kep' on huntin' and huntin' till de Jack-a-my-lanterns git after me. Dat a light you sees all 'round you. Dey follow all 'long and dey stop you still. Den one time it git all over me. Come like de wind, blow, blow, and come jes' like fire all on my arm and my clothes and things. When dat git after me I quit huntin' at nighttime and ain't been huntin' since.

"One time I fishin' on de creek and I ain't got no gun, and I look up and dere a big, wild cat. He never pay me no mind, no more dan nothin', but dat ain't made no diff'rence to me. I jes' flew in dat creek!

"I used to belong to de lodge but when I git so old I couldn't pay my jews, I git unfinancial and I ain't a member no more. [Pg 69]