

JACK CAUTHERN, 85, was born near Austin, Texas. Dick Townes owned Jack and his parents. After they were freed, the family stayed on the plantation, but Jack went to San Angelo, because "times was too dull in Travis County."

"My master was Dick Townes and my folks come with him from Alabama. He owned a big plantation fifteen miles from Austin and worked lots of slaves. We had the best master in the whole county, and everybody called us "Townes' free niggers," he was so good to us, and we worked hard for him, raisin' cotton and corn and wheat and oats.

"Most the slaves lived in two-room log cabins with dirt floors, over in the quarters, but I lived in master's yard. That's where I was born. There was a tall fence 'tween the yard and the quarters and the other nigger boys was so jealous of me they wouldn't let me cross that fence into the quarters. They told me I thinked I was white, jes' for livin' in master's yard.

"Me and young master had the good times. He was nigh my age and we'd steal chickens from Old Miss and go down in the orchard and barbecue 'em. One time she cotched us and sho' wore us out! She'd send us to pick peas, but few peas we picked!

"Old Miss was good to her cullud folks. When she'd hear a baby cryin' in the night she'd put on boots and take her lantern and go see about it. If we needed a doctor she'd send for old Dr. Rector and when I had the measles he give me some pills big as the end of my finger. [Pg 213]

"We went to church all the time. Young Miss come over Sunday mornin' and fotched all us chillen to the house and read the Bible to us. She was kind of a old maid and that was her pleasure. We had baptisin's, too. One old cullud man was a preacher. Lawd, Lawd, we had shoutin' at them camp meetin's!

"I guess we was glad to be free. Old master done die and Old Miss was managin' the plantation. She had the whole bunch in the yard and read the freedom paper. The old slaves knowed what it meant, but us young ones didn't. She told everybody they could stay and work on shares and most of 'em did, but some went back to they old homes in Alabama.

"I stayed a while and married, and came to San Angelo. The reason I come, times was dull in Travis County and I done hear so much talk 'bout this town I said I was comin' and see for myself. That was in 1900 and it was jes' a forest here then. I worked eighteen years in McCloskey's saloon, and he gave me ten dollars every Christmas 'sides my pay and a suit every year. I wish he was livin' now. My wife and I was together fifty-two years and then she died. After a long time I married again, and my wife is out pickin' cotton now.

"It seem mighty hard to me now by side of old times, but I don't know if it was any better in slavery days. It seems mighty hard though, since I'm old and can't work. [Pg 214]
