



**James Brown**

**JAMES BROWN, 84, blind for the last 12 years and now living alone in a shack at 408 W. Belknap, Fort Worth, Texas, was born a slave of Mr. Berney in Bell Co., Texas, in 1853. While still an infant, he and his mother were sold to Mr. John Blair, who farmed four miles south of Waco, Texas. JAMES has no known living relatives and a pension of \$14.00 a month is his sole support.**

"My fust Marster was named Marster Berney. I'se don' 'member hims fust name nor nothin' 'bout him. I'se don' know nothin' 'bout my pappy, but Marster Blair told me hims name was John Brown.

"Marster Blair have hims farm four miles south of Waco. We'uns lived in de cabins and have de fiddle and de banjoes. We'uns sing and have music on Sundays. Marster never whups we'uns and him was allus good to us. Him gives us plenty to eat, and meat, too. Hims keeps 'bout 20 hawgs dere all de time. De women makes de clothes and we'uns have all we need.

"De fust work I does is drivin' de Marster to town. Marster have fine hosses. Marster have hims office in Waco and we drive dere every day. I'se stays all day ready to drive him home. Mos' every day hims give me five cents or maybe de dime. Hims was a big law man and went to de legislature down in Austin. His picture am in Austin, 'cause I'se down dere years ago and seen his picture in a case wid Gov'ner Ross' picture.

"Anudder thing dat Marster does powe'ful good am trade [Pg 161] de niggers. He buys and sells 'em all de time. You see, dere was traders dat traveled from place to place dem days and dey takes sometimes as much as 100 niggers for to trade. Dere was sheds outside of town, whar dey keeps de niggers when dey comes to town.

"De Marster and de trader talks dis away: 'How you trade?' 'I'se gives you even trade.' 'No, I'se wants \$25.00 for de diff'runce.' 'I'se gives you \$5.00.' Dat's de way dey talks on and on. Maybe dey makes de trade and maybe dey don'.

"Dey have auction sometime and Marster allus tend 'em. At de auction I'se seen dem sell a family. Maybe one man buy de mammy, anudder buy de pappy and anudder buy all de chillens or maybe jus' one, like dat. I'se see dem cry like dey at de funeral when dey am parted. Dey has to drag 'em away.

"When de auction begin, he says: 'Dis nigger is so and so ole, he never 'bused, he soun' as a dollar. Jus' look at de muscle and de big shoulders. He's worth a thousan' of any man's money. How much am I offered?' Den de biddin' starts. It goes like dis: '\$200 I'se hear, does I'se hear \$250, does I hear \$300.' Den de nigger takes him clothes — dey have one extry suit — and goes wid de man dat buys him.

"De day befo' Marster gives we'uns freedom, he says to we'uns, 'I'se wants all you niggers to come to de front of de house Sunday mornin!' We'uns was dere and he was standin' on de gallery, holdin' a paper in hims han' and readin'. Dere was tears in hims eyes and some drap on de paper. I'se have tears in my eyes, too; mos' of 'em have. When hims done readin', hims says: 'You darkies is as free as I'se is. [Pg 162] You cango or you can stay. Those dat stay till de crops laid by, I'se will give \$5.00 a month.'

"Den he takes de little niggers and says, 'De little fellows who I'se have sold dere mammies will stay wid me till dey am 21 years ole. You little fellows, I'se know you's age and I'se give yous de statement.'

"Mos' of de niggers stays wid him, but dey lef' fust one and den tudder. I'se stays on wid him for many years and works as coachman. When I lef' de Marster, 'twas to work for a farmer for one year, den I'se comes to Fort Worth. I'se works in lumberya'd for long time.

"For de las' 12 years I'se been blin'. I'se had hard time after dat till de las' year but I'se gits de pension each month, dat am a heap of help. Dis nigger am thankful for what de Lawd have blessed me wid. [Pg 163]

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