

JERRY BOYKINS, spry and jolly at the age of 92, lived with his aged wife in their own cabin at 1015 Plum St., Abilene, Texas. He was born a slave to John Thomas Boykin, Troupe Co., Georgia, 80 miles from Lagrange, Ga. His master was a very wealthy plantation owner, working 1,000 slaves.

"I been well taken care of durin' my life. When I was young I lived right in de big house with my marster. I was houseboy. My mother's name was Betsy Ann Boykin and she was cook for Old Missus. My grandpa was blacksmith. I slept on a pallet in de kitchen and in winter time on cold nights I 'members how cold I would get. I'd wake up and slip in by marsters bed and den I'd say, 'Marster John, I's about to freeze.' He'd say, 'You ought to freeze, you little black devil. What you standin' dere for?' I'd say, 'Please, marster John, jes' let me crawl in by your feet.' He'd say, 'Well, I will dis one time,' and dat's de way I'd do every cold night.

"I was full of mischief and I'd tu'n de mules out of de lot, jus' to see de stableboy git a lickin'. One time I wanted a fiddle a white man named Cocanut Harper kep' tryin' to sell me for \$7.50. I didn' never have any money, 'cept a little the missie give me, so I kep' teasin' her to buy de fiddle for me. She was allus on my side, so she tol' me to take some co'n from de crib and trade in for de fiddle. In de night I slips out and hitch up de mules and fetched de co'n to old Harper's house and traded for dat fiddle. Den I hides out and play it, so's marster wouldn' fin' out, but he did and he whip all de daylight[Pg 122] outta me. When de missie try to whip me, I jes' wrop up in her big skirts and she never could hurt me much.

"I allus ate my meals in de house at de white folks table, after dey done et. Iffen I couldn' sit in de marster's chair, I'd swell up like a toad.

"De marster done all de whippin', 'cause dey had been two overseers killed on de plantation for whippin' slaves till de blood run out dey body.

"Was I bovered with haints and spooks? I been meetin' up with 'em all my life. When I was younger I was such an old scratch I'd meet 'em right in de road, some without heads. I'd take to my heels and then I'd stop and look 'round and they'd be gone.

"I wore home-weaved shirts till I was grown, then I had some pants and dey was homemade, too. The women gathered womack leaves to dye de goods black.

"I well rec'lects when my marster went to war. He called all us in de kitchen and telled us he had to go over dere and whip those sons-of-bitches and would be back 'fore breakfast. He didn' return for two years. I says, 'Marster, we sho' would have waited breakfast on you a long time.' He said, 'Yes; deys de hardes' sons-of-bitches to whip I ever had dealins' with.'

"When war was over, he called us together and tol' us we were free. He said, 'Now, I'm goin' to give you a big day and after that you can stay and work for pay or you can go.' So he rolled out two barrels of whiskey and killed hogs and spread a big day. [Pg 123]

"I wants to tell you 'bout how we killed hogs in my day. We digged a deep pit in de groun' and heated big rocks red hot and filled up de pit with water and dropped dem hot rocks in and got de water hot; den we stuck de hogs and rolled 'em in dat pit.

"Soon after I's free a man come for me from Louisville to hire me as foreman in his cott on mule barn. So I went there and I worked in Kentucky for 18 year. Fifty-one years ago I married my ol' woman, Rachel Taylor, at Corsicana, Texas, and I think she's jes' as fine as the day I married her. We has six chillen and all works hard for a livin' and we got one lil' grandbaby 10 years ol'. She lives here at our house and we're educatin' her.

"I knows I's goin' to live to be over 100 years ol', 'cause my marster done tol' me so." [Pg 124]