

**JOHN BATES, 84, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, a slave of Mock Bateman. When still very young, John moved with his mother, a slave of Harry Hogan, to Limestone Co., Texas. John now lives in Corsicana, supported by his children and an old age pension.**

"My pappy was Ike Bateman, 'cause his massa's name am Mock Bateman, and mammy's name was Francis. They come from Tennessee and I had four brothers and six sisters. We jes' left de last part of de name off and call it Bates and dat's how I got my name. Mammy 'longed to Massa Harry Hogan and while I's small us move to Texas, to Limestone County, and I don't 'member much 'bout pappy, 'cause I ain't never seed him since.

"Massa Hogan was a purty good sort of fellow, but us went hongry de fust winter in Texas. He lived in de big log house with de hallway clean through and a gallery clean 'cross de front. De chimney was big 'nough to burn logs in and it sho' throwed out de heat. It was a good, big place and young massa come out early and holler for us to git up and be in de field.

"Missy Hogan was de good woman and try her dead level best to teach me to read and write, but my head jes' too thick, I jes' couldn't larn. My Uncle Ben he could read de Bible and he allus tell us some day us be free and Massa Harry laugh, haw, haw, haw, and he say, 'Hell, no, yous never be free, yous ain't got sense 'nough to make de livin' if yous was free.' Den he takes de Bible 'way from Uncle Ben and say it put de bad ideas in he head, but Uncle gits 'nother Bible and hides it and massa never finds it out. [Pg 53]

"We'uns goes to de big baptisin' one time and it's at de big sawmill tank and 50 is baptise' and I's in dat bunch myself. But dey didn't have no funerals for de slaves, but jes' bury dem like a cow or a hoss, jes' dig de hole and roll 'em in it and cover 'em up.

"War come and durin' dem times jes' like today nearly everybody knows what gwine on, news travels purty fast, and iffen de slaves couldn't git it with de pass dey slips out after dark and go in another plantation by de back way. Course, iffen dem patterrollers cotch dem it jus' too bad and dey gits whip.

"When de news comes in dat us free, Massa Harry never call us up like everybody else did the slaves, us has to go up and ask him 'bout it. He come out on de front gallery and says we is free and turns 'round and goes in de house without 'nother word. We all sho' feels sorry for him the way he acts and hates to leave him, but we wants to go. We knowed he wasn't able to give us nothin' so begins to scatter and 'bout ten or fifteen days Massa Harry dies. I think he jes' grieve himself to death, all he trouble comin' on him to once.

"Us worked on diff'rent farms till I marries and my fust wife am Emma Williams and a cullud preacher marries us at her house. Us picked cotton after dat and den I rents a place on de halvers for five year and after sev'ral years I buys eighty acres of land. Fin'ly us done paid dat out and done some repairs and den us sep'rate after livin' twenty-three year together. So I gives dat place to her and de six chillen and I walks out ready to start all over 'gain. [Pg 54]

"Then I meets Sarah Jones and us marries, but she gives me de divorcement. All dis time I works on a farm for de day wages, den I rents 'nother farm on de halvers on de black land and stays dere sev'ral year. Fin'ly I gits de job workin' at de cotton oil mill in Corsicana and stays at dat job till dey says I's too old. I done buy dis li'l home here and now has a place to live. Sarah done come back to me and us has seven chillen. One of de boys works at de cotton oil mill and two works at de compress right here in Corsicana and one works at de beer place in Dallas.

"Us raises a li'l on dese two lots and de chillen brings some from de farm, I mean my fust wife's chillen, and with de pension check us manage to live a li'l longer. Us boys pays de taxes and de insurance for us. [Pg 55]

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