



**Josie Brown**

**JOSIE BROWN was born about 1859, in Victoria, Texas. She belonged to George Heard. Her mother was born free, a member of the Choctaw Nation, but she was stolen and sold as a slave. Josie now lives in Woodville, Texas.**

"I's bo'n on Christmas day, in Victoria. Got here jus' in time for de eggnog! Dat 'bout 1859, 'cause I's six year ole de Christmas 'fore freedom. My mudder was a free bo'n Injun woman. Jus' like any ole, demmed Choctaw down in de woods. She was stole and sol' by a spec'lator's gang. Us move to Tyler when I one mont' ole.

"We lib on a big farm and my mudder suckle her thirteen chillun and ole mistus seven. Bob, my brudder, he go to Mansfiel' and we never hear of him no more. He wen' with young marster, Wesley Heard. I 'member de mornin' dey lef', dey had to wait for him, 'cause he'd been out seein' his gal.

"De marstar hab a big log house close to de road. De quarters was 'cordin' to de family what live dere. De stage line through Woodville pass close by. I 'member sittin' on de rail fence to see de stage go by. Dat was a fine sight! De stage was big, rough carriage and dey was four or five hosses on de line. De bugle blow when dey go by, with de dus' behin' dem. Dey was comin' from Jasper, in Louisian', and everywhere.

"When us little dey hab to keep us in de house 'cause de bald eagle pick up chillen jus' like de hawk pick up chicken. Dey was lots of catamoun' and bears and deer in de woods. Us never [Pg 164] 'llowed play 'lone in de woods.

"I didn' do nothin' 'cep' eat and sleep and foller ole mistus 'round. She giv me good clothes 'cause my mudder was de weaver. De clothes jus' cut out straight down and dyed with all kinds of bark. I hab to keep de head comb and grease with lard. De lil' white chillun play with me but not de udder nigger chilluns much. Us pull de long, leaf grass and plait it and us make rag doll and playhouse and grapevine swing. Dere's plenty grapes, scudlong, sour blue grape and sweet, white grape. Dey make jelly and wine outta dem. Dey squeeze de grapes and put de juice in a jimmijohn(demijohn) to fo'men'.

"My mudder name was Keyia. Dat Injun. Daddy's name was Reuben. I 'member when I's lil' us goes visit my uncle, Major Scott. He lib in Polk County and he wore earring in he ears and beads and everyt'ing. He's a Injun. He dead now, many year.

"My daddy work in de fiel'. He sow de rice and raise t'baccy. Dey have fiel's of it. Dey put it in de crack of de fence to press, den dey dry it on de barn roof. Dat was smokin' t'baccy! For de chewin' t'baccy, dey soak it in sugar and honey. Us never see snuff den.

"On Sunday us didn' work. We has chu'ch meetin'. But dey has to have it in de ya'd, so de white folks could see de kin' of religion 'spounded.

"I seed some bad sight in slavery, but ain' never been 'bused myself. I seed chillun too lil' to walk from dey mammies sol' right off de block in Woodville. Dey was sol' jus' like calfs. I seed niggers in han' locks.

"After freedom dey wuk a whole year and den Major Sangers, he finally come and make de white folks tu'n us loose. I stay on for years, 'till ole mistus die. She larn me to knit and spin and sich like. [Pg 165]

"In de early day, us hab to be keerful. Dey say witches ride dey hosses on de da'k nights. Us allus put hosshoes over de door to keep de witch out. Iffen us go out at night, us go roun' de house three time so de witch not come in while us gone.

"I's fifteen year ole when I marry. Giles Paul was from de Wes'. He was de fus' husban'. Us hab a real weddin' with a bride veil. My weddin' dress hang 'way back on de flo', and shine like silver. Dey hab big dance and eat supper.

"My second husban' name' Robert Brown and I's mudder of ten chillun. 'Sides dat, I raises six or seven day I pick up on de street 'cause dey orfums and hab nobody to care for dem. Some dem chillun drif 'bout now and I wouldn' know 'em if I seed 'em! [Pg 166]

---