



**Julie Francis Daniels**

**JULIA FRANCIS DANIELS, born in 1848, in Georgia, a slave of the Denman family, who moved to Texas before the Civil War. Julia's memory fails her when she tries to recall names and dates. She still tries to take part in church activities and has recently started to learn reading and writing. She lives with a daughter at 2523 Spring St. Dallas, Texas.**

"They's lots I disremembers and they's lots I remembers, like the year the war's over and the fightin' all done with, 'cause that the year I larned to plow and that the time I got married. That's the very year they larned me to plow. I larnt all right, 'cause I wasn't one slow to larn anything. Afore to that time, they ain't never had no hoe in the field for me a-tall. I jes' toted water for the ones in the field.

"I had plenty brothers and sisters, 'bout ten of 'em, but I disremembers some they names. There was Tom and George and Marthy and Mandy, and they's all name' Denman, 'cause my mammy and daddy was Lottie and Boyd Denman and they come from Georgia to Cherokee County and then to Houston County, near by to Crockett, with Old Man Denman. He was the one owned all us till he 'vided some with Miss Lizzie when she marries Mr. Cramer.

"My daddy worked in the fields with Uncle Lot and my brothers, and my Uncle Joe, he's driver. But Briscoe am overseer and he a white man. He can't never whup the growed mens like he wants, 'cause they don't let him unless he ask Old Man Denman. I seed him whup 'em, though. He make 'em take off the shirt and whup with the strap. [Pg 274]

"Now, my mammy was cook in the Denman house and for our family and Uncle Joe's family. She didn't have much time for anythin' but cookin' all the time. But she's the bestes' cook. Us had fine greens and hawgs and beef. Us et collard greens and pork till us got skittish of it and then they quit the pork and kilt a beef. When they done that, they's jus' pourin' water on our wheels, 'cause us liked best of anythin' the beef, and I do to this day, only I can't never git it.

"Old Man Denman had a boy what kilt squirrels and throwed 'em in the kitchen. The white folks et them. You ain't never seen no white folks then would eat rabbit. I had a brother who hunted. Mostly on

Sundays. He'd leave for the swamps 'fore daybreak and we'd know when we'd hear him callin', 'O-o-o-o-da-da-ske-e-e-t,' he had somethin'. That jus' a make-up of he own, but we knowed they's rabbits for the pot.

"All the mens don't hunt on Sunday, 'cause Uncle Joe helt meetin' in front he house. Us look out the door and seed Uncle Joe settin' the benches straight and settin' he table out under the trees and sweepin' clean the leaves and us know they's gwine be meetin'. They's the loveliest days that ever they was. Night times, too, they'd make it 'tween 'em whether it'd be at our house or Uncle Joe's. We'd ask niggers from other farms and I used to say, 'I likes meetin' jus' as good as I likes a party.'

"When crops is laid by us have the most parties and dence and sing and have play games. The reels is what I used to like but I done quit that foolishness many a year ago. I used to cut a step or two. I remembers one reel call the 'Devil's Dream.' It's a fast song [Pg 275]

"'Oh, de Devil drempt a dream,  
He drempt it on a Friday—  
He drempt he cotch a sinner.'

"Old Man Denman am the great one for 'viding he property and when Miss Lizzie marries with Mr. Creame Cramer, which am her dead sister's husband, Old Man Denman give me and two my sisters to Miss Lizzie and he gives two more my sisters to he son. Us goes with Miss Lizzie to the Cramer place and lives in the back yard in a little room by the back door.

"Everything fine and nice there till one day Miss Lizzie say to me, 'Julia, go down to the well and fetch me some water,' and I goes and I seed in the road a heap of men all in gray and ridin' hosses, comin' our way. I runs back to the house and calls Miss Lizzie. She say, 'What you scairt for?' I tells her 'bout them men and she say they ain't gwine hurt me none, they jus' wants some water. I goes back to the well and heard 'em talk 'bout a fight. I goes back to the house and some of the mens comes to the gate and says to Mr. Cramer, 'How're you, Creame?' He say, 'I's all right in my health but I ain't so good in my mind.' They says, 'What the matter, Creame?' He say, 'I want to be in the fight so bad.'

"When they goes I asks Miss Lizzie what they fightin' 'bout and she say it am 'bout money. That all I knows. Right after that Mr. Cramer goes and we don't never see him no more. Word come back from the fightin' he makes some the big, high mens mad and they puts chains 'round he ankles and make him dig a stump in the hot sun. He ain't used to that and it give him fever to the brain and he dies. [Pg 276]

"When Mr. Cramer goes 'way, Miss Lizzie takes us all and goes back to Old Man Denman's. The sojers used to pass and all the whoopin' and hollerin' and carryin' on, you ain't never heered the likes! They hollers, 'Who-o-o-o, Old Man Denman, how's your chickens?' And they chunks and throws at 'em till they cripples 'em up and puts 'em in they bags, for cookin'. Old Man Denman cusses at 'em somethin' powerful.

"My sister Mandy and me am down in the woods a good, fur piece from the house and us keeps heerin' a noise. My brother comes down and finds me and say, 'Come git your dinner.' When I gits there dinner am top the gate post and he say they's sojers in the woods and they has been persecutin' a old woma n on a mule. She was a nigger woman. I gits so scairt I can't eat my dinner. I ain't got no heart for victuals. My brother say, 'Wait for pa, he comin' with the mule and he'll hide you out.' I gits on the mule front of

pa and us pass through the sojers and they grabs at us and says, 'Gimme the gal, gimme the gal.' Pa say I faints plumb 'way.

"Us heered guns shootin' round and 'bout all the time. Seems like they fit every time they git a chance. Old Man Denman's boy gits kilt and two my sisters he property and they don't know what to do, 'cause they has to be somebody's property and they ain't no one to 'heritance 'em. They has to go to the auction but Old Man Denman say not to fret. At the auction the man say, 'Goin' high, goin' low, goin' mighty slow, a little while to go. Bid 'em in, bid 'em in. The sun am high, the sun am hot, us got to git home tonight.' An old friend of Old Man Denman's hollers out he buys for William Blackstone. Us all come home and my sisters too and Old Man Denman laugh big and say, 'My name allus been William Blackstone Denman.' [Pg 277]

"I's a woman growed when the war was to a end. I had my first baby when I's fourteen. One day my sister call me and say, 'They's fit out, and they's been surrenderin' and ain't gwine fight no more.' That dusk Old Man Denman call all us niggers together and stand on he steps and make he speech, 'Mens and womans, you is free as I am. You is free to go where you wants but I is beggin' yous to stay by me till us git the crops laid by.' Then he say, 'Study it over 'fore you gives me you answer. I is always try as my duty to be fair to you.'

"The mens talks it over a-twixt theyselves and includes to stay. They says us might as well stay there as go somewhere else, and us got no money and no place to go.

"Then Miss Lizzie marries with Mr. Joe McMahan and I goes with her to he house near by and he say he larn me to plow. Miss Lizzie say, 'Now, Julia, you knows how to plow and don't make no fool of yourself and act like you ain't never seed no plow afore.' Us make a corn crop and goes on 'bout same as afore.

"I gits married that very year and has a little fixin' for the weddin', bakes some cakes and I have a dress with buttons and a preacher marries me. I ain't used to wearin' nothin' but loring (a simple one piece garment made from sacking). Unnerwear? I ain't never wore no unnerwear then.

"My husband rents a little piece of land and us raise a corn crop and that's the way us do. Us raises our own victuals. I has 17 chillen through the year and they done scatter to the four winds. Some of them is dead. I ain't what I used to be for workin'. I jus' set 'round. I done plenty work in my primer days. [Pg 278]