

LOUIS CAIN, 88, was born in North Carolina, a slave of Samuel Cain. After Louis was freed, he came to Texas, and has farmed near Madisonville over sixty years.

"I knows I's birthed in 1849, 'cause I had a bill of sale. It say that. My master traded me to Massa Joe Cutt for a hundred acres of land. That's in 1861, and I 'members it well. My daddy was Sam Cain, name after old Massa Cain, and mammy was Josie Jones, 'cause she owned by 'nother master. Mammy was birthed in North Carolina, but daddy allus say he come from Africy. He say they didn't work hard over there, 'cause all they et come out the jungle, and they had all the wives they wanted. That was the 'ligion over there.

"Our quarters was made of logs, in a long shed six rooms long, like cowsheds or chicken houses, and one door to each room. The bed was a hole dug in a corner and poles around and shucks and straw. We'd sleep warm all night long, but it wouldn't do in this country in summertime.

"Massa give us plenty to eat. Our cornbread was what you calls water pone bread and cooked in the ashes. We didn't have no stove. Massa was a great hunter and allus had venison and game. They was plenty fish, too.

"Massa Cain was purty good to his slaves and mean to them if they didn't behave. Missy was a good woman. They lived in a two-story rock house with plenty trees all 'round.

"We worked long as we could see, from four o'clock in the mornin', and them milked twenty cows and fed the work stock. They was fifty acres and not 'nough niggers to work it easy. [Pg 186]

"If some niggers was mean they'd git it. Massa tied they hands to they feet and tied them to a tree and hit 'bout twenty-five or fifty licks with a rawhide belt. Hide and blood flew then. Next mornin' he'd turn them loose and they'd have to work all day without nothin' to eat. He had a cabin called jail for the nigger women, and chain them in with cornbread and one glass of water.

"One nigger run to the woods to be a jungle nigger, but massa cotched him with the dogs and took a hot iron and brands him. Then he put a bell on him, in a wooden frame what slip over the shoulders and under the arms. He made that nigger wear the bell a year and took it off on Christmas for a present to him. It sho' did make a good nigger out of him.

"In the summer time they had camp meetin' and baptized in the creek, white folks first while the old nigger mammies shouts, and then the niggers.

"On Saturday mornin' us men grated corn for bread the next week and the women washed massa's clothes and our'n. On Saturday night we'd have a dance all night long, and Sunday the men went to see they wives or sweethearts and us young'uns went swimmin' in the creek. Every night but Saturday we had to go to bed at nine o'clock. Massa hit the big steel piece and we knowed it was time to put out the torches and pile in.

"On Christmas I'd stand by the gate, to open it for the company, and they'd throw nuts and candy to me. That night all the slaves what could brung they banjoes and fiddles and played for the white folks to dance all night. Them great old days are done gone. Most the men be full that good, old eggnog. [Pg 187]

"After war come they ain't no more dances and fun, and not much to eat or nothin'. Massa git kilt in a big battle and missy took four slaves and brung him home and buried him under a big shade tree in the yard. That the saddes' time I ever seen, nobody there to do anythin' but missy and neighbor women and some real young niggers like me. She was cryin' and all us slaves takin' on. It's a wonder we ever did git massa buried. We carried him on our backs to the grave.

"After that we had to carry missy to the mountains and hide her, 'cause everything, house and sheds and all, was burnt, and all her stock kilt by sojers and outlaws. When she come out of hidin' she didn't have a thing, not even a bed.

"But she was a brave woman, and said, 'Louis, we'll fix some kind of quarters for you.' She went to work to rebuild the place. She said, 'You niggers is free, but I need you and I'll pay you \$2.00 a month.' She did, too. She cut some logs and builded her one room and then we all build us a room and that was the best we could do. I 'lieve the Lawd blessed that woman. After freedom, that's how I lived the first year, and she paid me every cent she promised. I stayed with her three years.

"Then I hearded of a railroad job in Texas, and married Josie Sewel in a big weddin' and we had a great time. I gits a job on that railroad for fifty cents a day and it never lasted more'n a year, so I goes to farmin'.

"We had fourteen chillun, four dead now, and the rest farmin' all over Texas. I has more'n a hundred grandchillun. Josie, she done die twenty years ago. [Pg 188]

"I don't know as I 'spected massa's land to be 'vided and give us, but they was plenty of land for everybody, and missy allus treated us right. Wages was terrible small for a long time after I married and sometimes they wouldn't pay us, and we had to beg or steal. I's went a whole two days without nothin' to eat. If it hadn't been for them there Klu Klux, sometimes the niggers would have went on the warpath for starvin'. But the Klu Kluxers wouldn't let 'em roam none, if they tried they stretch them out over a log and hit them with rawhide, but never say a word. That was got the niggers — they was so silent, not a sound out of them, and the nigger he can't stand that.

"I gits a pension and works when I can and gits by. Some the young niggers is purty sorry, they's had so much and don't 'preciate none of it. I's glad for what I can git, 'cause I 'members them old times after the war when it was worse'n now.