

MINERVA BENDY, 83, was born a slave to Lazarus Goolsby, Henry Co. Alabama, who brought her to Texas when she was five. They settled near Woodville, where Minerva still lives.

"My earlies' 'membrance was de big, white sandy road what lead 'way from de house. It was clean and white and us chillen love to walk in de soft, hot sand. Dat in Henry County, Alabama, where I's born and my old marster was Lazarus Goolsby and he have de big plantation with lots of nigger folks. I 'member jus' as good as yesterday wigglin' my toes in dat sandy road and runnin' 'way to de grits mill where dey grind de meal. Dat have de big water wheel dat sing and squeak as it go 'round.

"Aunt Mary, she make all us little chillen sleep in de heat of de day under de big, spreadin' oak tree in de yard. My mama have 17 chillen. Her name Dollie and my daddy name Herd.

"I's jus' a little chile in dem days and I stay in de house with de white folks. Dey raise me a pet in de family. Missus Goolsby, she have two gals and dey give me to de oldest. When she die dey put me in de bed with her but iffen I knowed she dyin' dey wouldn't been able to cotch me. She rub my head and tell her papa and mama, 'I's gwine 'way but I wants you promise you ain't never whip my little nigger.' Dey never did.

"I's jus' 'bout five year old when us make de trip to Texas. Us come right near Woodville and make de plantation. It a big place and dey raise corn and cotton and cane. We makes our own sugar and has [Pg 70] many as six kettle on de furnace at one time. Dey raise dey tobacco, too. I's sick and a old man he say he make me tobacco medicine and dey dry de leafs and make dem sweet like sugar and feed me like candy.

"I 'member old marster say war broke out and Capt. Collier's men was a-drillin' right dere south of Woodville. All de wives and chillen watch dem drill. Dey was lots of dem, but I couldn't count. De whole shebang from de town go watch dem.

"Four of the Goolsby boys goes to dat war and dey call John and Ziby and Zabud and Addison. Zabud, he git wounded, no he git kilt, and Addison he git wounded. I worry den, 'cause I ain't see no reason for dem to have to die.

"After us free dey turn us loose in de woods and dat de bad time, 'cause most us didn't know where to turn. I wasn't raise to do nothin' and I didn't know how. Dey didn't even give us a hoe cake or a slice of bacon.

"I's a June bride 59 year ago when I git married. De old white Baptist preacher name Blacksheer put me and dat nigger over dere, Edgar Bendy, togedder and us been togedder ever since. Us never have chick or chile. I's such a good nuss I guess de Lawd didn't want me to have none of my own, so's I could nuss all de others and I 'spect I's nussed most de white chillen and cullud, too, here in Woodville. [Pg 71]