

SALLY BANKS CHAMBERS, wife of Ben Chambers of Liberty, does not know her age. She was born a slave of Jim Moore, in Oakland, Louisiana. Sally has been married three times and has had seven children, about 54 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Heavy gold earrings hang from her ears and she dresses, even in midsummer, in a long-sleeved calico shirt, heavy socks and shoes, and a sweeping skirt many yards wide.

"Befo' I marry de first time my name am Sally Banks, and I's borned in de old states, over in Louisiana, round Oakland. I ain't 'member nothin' 'bout dat place, 'cause I's so small when dey brung me to Texas.

"Old massa name Jim Moore. He a fair old gen'man, with a big bald place on he head, and he am good to de slaves. Not even as stric' as old missus, what was de big, stout woman. She am terrible stric', but she whip de li'l white chillen too, so dey be good.

"My daddy name John Moore and mama name Car'line, and dey borned in Louisiana. My grandpa was Lewis Moore and grandma name Polly, but dey wasn't reg'lar Africy people. My grandma, she have right smart good blood in her.

"When old massa come to Texas he brung us over first by wagon, a mule wagon with a cover over de top, and he rent de house clost to Liberty. But de nex' year he find a place on de river bottom near Grand Cane and it jes' suit him for de slaves he have, so he brung all de rest over from Louisiana.

"My mama have four chillen when us come to Texas, but she have eleven more after freedom. When war broke out she have six, but she multiply after dat. She de milker and washwoman and spinner, and make de good, strong clothes. [Pg 215]

"Dey have li'l separate houses make outten logs for us slaves. De white folks house was one dese big, old double-pen house, with de hall down de middle. Dey have right nice things in it.

"De white folks 'lowance out de food every Saturday night and dat spose last de week. All de cullud folks cook for deyself 'cept'n de single mens, and dey eats up in de big kitchen. Us have syrup and cornbread and lots of sweet 'taters and homecure' meat what dey salt down and hang in de smokehouse.

"De old missus, she ain't 'low no dancin' or huzzawin' round dat place, 'cause she Christian. Dey 'low us Saturday and Sunday off, and de women do dey own washin den'. De menfolks tend to de gardens round dey own house. Dey raise some cotton and sell it to massa and git li'l money dat way. Us don't never have no presents, but dey give eatments mostly.

"De young massas both go to war. Dey John Calhoun Moore and William. De oldes' goes crazy, kind of shellshock like. As far as I knowed, he ain't never git no more better. Young William and de old man comes back without no scratch, but dey ain't serve long. All dey three 'lists by deyselves, 'cause dey didn't have no truck with dem conscrip'ers. One my uncles, Levy Moore, he go to war to wait on de massas, and he struck with de fever at Sabine Pass and die right dere.

"After freedom riz up, old massa come home. Den he call all de growed folks and tell dem dey's free. A heap left, dey jes' broke ranks and left. My daddy and mama both stay. Dey de fav'rites. Old missus make present to my mama of a heap of things she need. But de white folks was jus' rentin' and when

dey have no slaves no more dey give it up and move to Tarkington Prairie. Us lost track of dem and ain't never seed dem no more.

"My daddy come back to Liberty den and work in de woodyard. Mama, she [Pg 216] larn me to work and cook and sich and hire me out to nuss a white baby. I ain't knowed how much dey pay, 'cause mama she collec' de money.

"I's 19 year old when I marry de first time. You know I got two dead men, dat Dick Owens and Nero Williams, both of Liberty. I has two gals, Alice and Airy, for Dick, and five chillen for Nero. Dey all dead but Adlowyer and Mamie, and dey lives right here. I been marry some thirty odd year to Ben Chambers but us ain't never have no chillen.

"Goodness, I dunno how many grandchillen I has. I jedge 'bout 54 in all and 13 great ones.

"I loves to work and I ain't gwineter beg, though I's got too old to do much. I can't take it but a li'l at a time, but I gits by somehow. [Pg 217]