

SARAH BENJAMIN, 82, was born a slave of the Gilbert family, in Clavin Parish, Louisiana. In 1867 she married Cal Benjamin and they settled in Corsicana, Texas, where Sarah now lives.

"I is Sarah Benjamin and is 82 year old, 'cause my mammy told me I's born in 1855 in Clavin Parish in Louisiana. Her name was Fannie and my pappy's name Jack Callahan. There was jus' three of us chillen and I's de oldest.

"Marse Gilbert was tol'able good to we'uns, and give us plenty to eat. He had a smokehouse big as a church and it was full, and in de big kitchen we all et, chillen and all. De grown folks et first and den de chillen. Did we have plenty of possums and fish by de barrels full! All dis was cooked in de racks over de fireplace and it were good.

"Our clothes was all homespun and de shoes made by de shoemaker. Old marse wanted all us to go to church and if dey didn't have shoes dey have something like de moccasin.

"I don't know how many slaves there was, but it was a lot, maybe 60 or 70. Dey worked hard every day 'cept Sunday. Iffen they was bad they might git whuppin's, but not too hard, not to de blood. Iffen dey was still bad, dey puts chains on dem and puts dem in de stocks, 'cause there wasn't no jail there.

"Once when I's little, marse stripped me stark modern naked and puts me on de block, but he wouldn't sell me, 'cause he was bid only \$350.00 and he say no, 'cause I was good and fat. [Pg 72]

"Dey didn't larn us nothin' and iffen you did larn to write, you better keep it to yourse'f, 'cause some slaves got de thumb or finger cut off for larnin' to write. When de slaves come in from de fields dey didn't larn nothin', they jus' go to bed, 'lessen de moonshine nights come and dey could work in de tobacco patch. De marster give each one de little tobacco patch and iffen he raised more'n he could use he could sell it.

"On Christmas we all has de week vacation and maybe de dance. We allus have de gran' dinner on dat day, and no whuppin's. But dey couldn't leave de plantation without de pass, even on Christmas.

"De women had to run de gin in de daytime and de man at night. Dey fed de old gin from baskets and my mammy fed from dose baskets all day with de high fever and died dat night. She wouldn't tell de marster she sick, fer fear she have to take de quinine.

"De day we was freed, de slaves jus' scattered, 'cepting me. Missy Gilbert says I wasn't no slave no more but I had to stay and he'p her for my board 'till I's grown. I stayed 'till I was 'bout 16, den I runs away and marries Cal Benjamin, and we comes to Texas. Cal and me has six chillen, but he died 'fore dey was grown. [Pg 73]