



Will Daily's House



Will Daily

WILL DAILY, was born in 1858 in Missouri, near the city of St. Louis. He was a slave of the John Daily family and served as chore boy around the house, carried the breakfast to the field and always drove up the horses on the plantation. The latter duty developed a fondness for horses which led to a career as a race horse rider and trainer. He remained with his white folks several years after freedom and in Missouri many years longer in this work. He came to San Angelo, Texas in 1922 and took up hotel work which he followed until his health broke, only a few years ago. He now lives in his small home, in the colored district of the city and depends on his old age pension for a livelihood.

"Huh! What you say, did you say somethin' 'bout de ole age pension?", questioned Will when approached on the slavery question, but he answered readily, "Sho! sho' I [Pg 270] was a slave an' I aint

ashamed to admit dat I was. Some of dese here fellers thinks dey sounds ole when dey says dey was slaves and dey denies it but I's proud enough of de good treatment I's got, to allus tell about it. My marster had a driver but he say his niggers was human, wid human feelin's, so he makes dat driver reports to him fer what little thrashin's we gits. Course we had to do de right thing but jes' some how did, mos' of de time 'cause he was good to us. Soon as I was big enough, about four or five years ole, ole miss, she starts trainin' me fer a house boy. I's a doin' all sorts of chores by de time I was six years old. Den ole marster he starts sendin' me out on de plantation to drive up de hosses. I sho' likes dat job 'cause aint nothin' I loves any better den hosses. Den when I was bigger he starts me to carryin' de breakfast to de field whar de grown niggers had been out workin' since way 'fore day. Dey all done dat. Dey say de days wasn't long enough to put in enough time so dey works part of de night.

"We had good grub 'cause we raised all de co'n and de hogs and de cows and chickens and plenty of everything. Mos' times we have biscuits and bacon and syrup for breakfast and butter too if we wants it but mos' niggers dey likes dat fat bacon de bes'.

"Our log cabins was good and comfortable. Dey was all along in a row and built out of de same kind of logs what our marsters house was. [Pg 271]

"We had good beds and dey was clean.

"I nev'r had no money when I was a slave 'cause I was jes' a small boy when de slaves was set free.

"We had lots of fish and rabbits, more den we had 'possum but we sho' likes dat 'possum when we could git it.

"My marster had about three hundred slaves and a big plantation.

"I seen some slaves sold off dat big auction block and de little chillun sho' would be a cryin' when dey takes dere mothers away from dem.

"We didn' have no jail 'cause my marster didn' believe dat way, but I's seen other slaves in dem chains and things.

"We didn' know nothin' 'bout no learnin' nor no church neither and when de slaves die dey was jes' buried without no singin' or nothin'.

"When de war started, my father, he goes and once I remember he comes home on a furlough and we was all so glad, den when he goes back he gits killed and we nev'r see him no mo'.

"We had de doctor and good care when we was sick. I's don't remember much 'bout what kinds of medicine we took but I's know it was mostly home-made.

"We all wears dat asafoetida on a string 'round our necks and sometimes we carry a rabbit's foot in our pockets fer good luck. [Pg 272]

"When de war was ended and de slaves was free old Uncle Pete, our oldest slave, comes a-walkin' up from de woods whar he always go to keeps from bein' bothered, to read his Bible, and he had dat Bible under his arm an' he say, 'I's know somethin', me an' de Lawd knows somethin'', and den he tells us. He say, 'You all is free people now, you can go when you please and come when you pleases and you can stay here or go some other place'. Well I had to stay 'cause my mother stayed and I's jes' keeps on ridin'

dem race hosses 'til long after my marster was dead, den I's gits me some hosses of my own and train other men's hosses too.

"I's worked at dat racin' business 'til I's come to Texas and when I went to work in hotels dat killed me up. I's done ev'r thing from makin' soap fer de scrubbin', to cookin' de bes' meals fer de bes' hotels. I aint been no good since, though, and I had to quit several years ago.

"De first time I was married was to Phillis Reed in Missouri and we jes' jumps over de broom, and after Phillis die and I comes to Texas I's gits married again to Susie, here in San Angelo; we jes' jumps ov'r de broom too. I's nev'r had no chillun of my own so I's jes' a settin' here a-livin' off de ole age pension." [Pg