



**Zek Brown**

**ZEK BROWN, 80, was born a slave of Green Brown, owner of six slave families, in Warren County, Tennessee. Zek came to Texas in 1868, with Sam Bragg. Zek now lives at 407 W. Bluff St., in Fort Worth, Texas.**

"My name am Zek Brown and Massa Green Brown owned me. He have a plantation in Tennessee and own all my folks, what was my pappy and mammy and two sisters. I never seed any of dem since I ran 'way from there, when I's ten years old.

"I sometimes wishes I's back on de plantation. I's took good care of dere and massa am awful good. Each fam'ly have dere own cabin and it warn't so much for niceness but we lives comfor'ble and has plenty to eat and wear. My mammy work de loom, makin' cloth, and us chillen wears linsey cloth shirts till dey gives us pants. Massa buy he fam'ly nice clothes but dey wears linsey clothes everyday. Same with shoes, dey am made on de plantation and de first store shoes I has am after surrender. My mammy buys me a pair with brass tips on de toe, and am I dress up den!

"De food am bester dan what I's had since dem days. Dey raises it all but de salt and sich. You wouldn't 'lieve how us et den. It am ham and bacon, 'cause dey raises all de hawgs. It am cornmeal and some white flour and fruit and honey and 'lasses and brown sugar. De 'lasses am black as I is and dat am some black. I wishes I was dere and mammy call me, and I can smell dat ham fryin' right now.

"Not once does I know of de massa whippin' and him don't talk rough even. Jus' so de work am done we does as we pleases, long as us reas'ble. Us have parties and dancin' and singin'. De music am de banjo and de fiddle.[Pg 167]

"I don't 'member when de war start but I 'member when it stop and massa call all us together and tell us we's no more slaves. Him talk lots 'bout what it mean and how it am diff'rent and we'uns have to make our own way and can't 'pend on him like. He say if us stay dere'll be wages or we can share crop and everybody stay. My folks stays one year and den moves to 'nother he farms. Pappy keep de farm and mammy teach school. Her missie done larnt her to read and sich from time she a young'un, so she have eddication so good dey puts her to teachin'.

"De way I leaves home am dis. One day mammy teachin' school and me and my sister am home, and I 'cides she need de haircut. She want it, too. So I gits de shears and goes to work and after I works a while de job don't look so good, so I cuts some more and den it look worse and I tries to fix it and first thing I knows dere ain't no hair left to cut. When mammy come home she pays me for de work with de rawhide whip and dat hurts my feelin's so bad I 'cides to git even by runnin' 'way a few days. It am 'bout sundown and I starts to go and comes to Massa Sam Bragg's place. I's tired den and not so strong 'bout de idea and 'cides to rest. I walks into he yard and dere am a covered wagon standin' and loaded with lots of stuff and de front end open. I finds de soft place in de back and goes to sleep, and when I wakes up it am jus' gittin' daylight and dat wagon am a-movin'.

"I don't say nothin'. I's skeert and waits for dat wagon to stop, so's I can crawl out. I jus' sits and sits and when it stop I crawls out and Massa Bragg say, 'Good gosh, look what am crawlin' out de wagon! He look at me a while and den he say, 'You's too far from home for me to take you back [Pg 168] and you'll git lost if you tries to walk home. I guesses I'll have to take you with me.' I thinks him am goin' some place and comin' back, but it am to Texas him come and stop at Birdville. Dat am how dis nigger come to Texas.

"I's often wish my mammy done whip me so hard I couldn't walk off de place, 'cause from den on I has mighty hard times. I stays with Massa Bragg four years and then I hunts for a job where I can git some wages. I gits it with Massa Joe Henderson, workin' on he farm and I's been round these parts ever since and farmed most my life.

"I gits into a picklement once years ago. I's 'rested on de street. I's not done a thing, jus' walkin' 'long de street with 'nother fellow and dey claim he stole somethin'. I didn't know nothin' 'bout since. Did dey turn me a-loose? Dey turn me loose after six months on de chain gang. I works on de road three months with a ball and chain on de legs. After dat trouble, I sho' picks my comp'ny.

"I marries onct, 'bout forty years ago, and after four years she drops dead with de heart mis'ry. Us have no chillen so I's alone in de world. It am all right long as I could work, but five years ago dis right arm gits to shakin' so bad I can' work no more. For a year now dey pays me \$9.00 pension. It am hard to live on dat for a whole month, but I's glad to git it. [Pg 169]

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