

**Former Slave Interview, Special
Aug 16, 1937**

**Butler County, District #2
Middletown**

**MRS. NANCY EAST
809 Seventeenth Ave.,
Middletown, Ohio**

"Mammy" East, 809 Seventeenth Ave., Middletown, Ohio, rules a four-room bungalow in the negro district set aside by the American Rolling Mill Corporation. She lives there with her sons, workers in the mill, and keeps them an immaculate home in the manner which she was taught on a Southern plantation. Her house is furnished with modern electrical appliances and furniture, but she herself is an anachronism, a personage with no faith in modern methods of living, one who belongs in that vague period designated as "befo' de wah."

"I 'membahs all 'bout de slave time. I was powerful small but my mother and daddy done tole me all 'bout it. Mother and daddy bofe come from Vaginny; mother's mama did too. She was a weaver and made all our clothes and de white folks clothes. Dat's all she ever did; just weave and spin. Gran'mama and her chilluns was sold to the Lett fambly, two brothers from Monroe County, Alabama. Sole jist like cows, honey, right off the block, jist like cows. But they was good to they slaves.

"My mother's last name was Lett, after the white folks, and my daddy's name was Harris Mosley, after his master. After mother and daddy married, the Mosleys done bought her from the Letts so they could be together. They was brother-in-laws. Den I was named after Miss Nancy. Dey was Miss Nancy and Miss Hattie and two boys in the Mosleys. Land, honey, they had a big (waving her hands in the air) plantation; a whole section; and de biggest home you done ever see. We darkies had cabins. Jist as clean and nice. Them Mosleys, they had a grist mill and a gin. They like my daddy and he worked in de mill for them. Dey sure was good to us. My mother worked on de place for Miss Nancy."

Mammy East, in a neat, voile dress and little pig-tails all over her head, is a tall, light-skinned Negro, who admits that she would much rather care for children than attend to the other duties of the little house she owns; but the white spreads on the beds and the spotless kitchen is no indication of this fact. She has a passion for the good old times when the Negroes had security with no responsibility. Her tall, statuesque appearance is in direct contrast to the present-day conception of old southern "mammmies."

"De wah, honey? Why, when dem Yankees come through our county mother and Miss Nancy and de rest hid de hosses in de swamps and hid other things in the house, but dey got all the cattle and hogs. Killed 'em, but only took the hams. Killed all de chickens and things, too. But dey didn't hurt the house.

"After de wah, everybody jist went on working same as ever. Then one day a white mans come ridin through the county and tole us we was free. Free! Honey, did yo' hear that? Why we always had been free. He didn't know what he was talking 'bout. He kept telling us we was free and dat we oughtn't to work for no white folks 'less'n we got paid for it. Well Miss Nancy took care of us then. We got our cabin and a piece of ground for a garden and a share of de crops. Daddy worked in de mill. Miss Nancy saw to it that we always had nice clothes too.

"Ku Klux, honey? Why, we nevah did hear tell of no sich thing where we was. Nevah heered nothin' 'bout dat atall until we come up here, and dey had em here. Law, honey, folks don't know when dey's well off. My daddy worked in de mill and save his money, and twelve yeahs aftah de wah he bought two hundred and twenty acres of land, 'bout ten miles away. Den latah on daddy bought de mill from de Mosleys too. Yas'm, my daddy was well off.

"My, you had to be somebody to votes. I sure do 'membahs all 'bout dat. You had to be edicated and have money to votes. But I don' 'membahs no trouble 'bout de votin'. Not where we come from, no how.

"I was married down dere. Mah husband's fust name was Monroe after the county we lived in. My chilluns was named aftah some of the Mosleys. I got a Ed and Hattie. Aftah my daddy died we each got forty acahs. I sold mine and come up here to live with my boys.

"But honey dis ain't no way to raise chilluns. Not lak dey raised now. All dis dishonesty and stealin' and laziness. No mam! Look here at my gran'sons. Eatin' offen dey daddy. No place for 'em. Got edication, and caint git no jobs outside cuttin' grass and de like. Down on de plantation ev'body worked. No laziness er 'oneriness, er nothin! I tells yo' honey, I sure do wish these chilluns had de chances we had. Not

much learnin', but we had up-bringin'! Look at dem chilluns across de street. Jist had a big fight ovah dere, and dey mothah's too lazy to do any thing 'bout it. No'm, nevah did see none o' dat when we was young. Gittin' in de folkeses hen houses and stealing, and de carryins on at night. No mam! I sure do wish de old times was here.

"I went back two-three yeahs ago, to de old home place, and dere it was, jist same as when I was livin' with Miss Nancy. Co'se, theys all dead and gone now, but some of the gran'chilluns was around. Yas'm, I membahs heap bout dem times."