

EX-SLAVE STORIES  
(Texas)

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JO 1937

BETTY BORMER, 80, was born a slave to Col. M.T. Johnson, who farmed at Johnson Station in Tarrant County. He owned Betty's parents, five sisters and four brothers, in addition to about 75 other slaves. After the family was freed, they moved with the other slaves to a piece of land Col. Johnson allowed them the use of until his death. Betty lives in a negro settlement at Stop Six, a suburb of Fort Worth.

"I'se bo'n April 4th, in 1857, at Johnson Station. It was named after my marster. He had a big farm, I'se don' know how many acres. He had seven chillen; three boys, Ben, tom and Mart, and four girls, Elizabeth, Sally, Roddy and Veanna.

"Marster Johnson was good to us cullud folks and he feeds us good. He kep' lots of hawks, dat makes de meat. In de smokehouse am hung up meat enough for to feed de army, it looks like. We'uns have all de clothes we need and dey was made on de place. My mammy am de sewing woman and my pappy am de shoemaker. My work, for to muss de small chillen of de marster.

"On Sat'day we's let off work and lots de time some of us come to Fort Worth wid de marster and he gives us a nickel or a dime for to buy candy.

"Dey whips de niggers sometimes, but 'twarn't hard. You know, de nigger gits de devilment in de head, like folks do, sometimes, and de marster have to larn 'em better. He done dat hisself and he have no overseer. No nigger tried run away, 'cause each family have a cabin

wid bunks for to sleep on and we'uns all live in de quarters. Sich nigger as wants to larn read and write, de marster's girls and boys larns 'em. De girls larned my auntie how to play de piano.

"Dere am lots of music on dat place; fiddle, banjo and de piano. Singin,' we had lots of dat, songs like Ole Black Joe and 'ligious songs and sich. Often de marster have we'uns come in his house and clears de dinin' room for de dance. Dat am big time, on special occasion. Dey not calls it 'dance' dem days, dey calls it de 'ball.'

"Sho', we'uns goes to church and de preacher's name, it was Jack Ditto.

"Durin' de war, I notices de vittles am 'bout de same. De soldiers come dere and dey driv' off over de hill some of de cattle for to kill for to eat. Once dey took some hosses and I hears marster say dem was de Quantrell mens. Dey comes several times and de marster don' like it, but he cain't help it.

"When freedom come marster tells all us to come to front of de house. He am standin' on de porch. Him 'splains 'bout freedom and says, 'You is now free and can go whar you pleases.' Den he tells us he have larned us not to steal and to be good and we'uns should 'member dat and if we'uns gets in trouble to come to him and he will help us. He sho' do dat, too, 'cause de niggers goes to him lots of times and he always helps.

"Marster says dat he needs help on de place and sich dat stays, he'd pay 'em for de work. Lots of dem stayed, but some left. To dem

dat leaves, marster gives a mule, or cow and sich for de start. To my folks, marster gives some land. He doesn't give us de deed, but de right to stay till he dies.

"Sho', I seen de Klux after de war but I has no 'sperience wid 'em. My uncle, he gits whipped by 'em, what for I don' know 'zactly, but I think it was 'bout a hoss. Marster sho' rave 'bout dat, 'cause my uncle weren't to blame.

"When de Klux come de no 'count nigger sho make de scatterment. Some climb up de chimney or jump out de winder and hide in de dugout and sich.

"De marster dies 'bout seven years after freedom and everybody sorry den. I never seen such a fun'ral and lots of big men from Austin comes. He was de blessed man!

"I married de second year after de T.P. railroad come to Fort Worth, to Sam Jones and he work on de Burk Burnett stock ranch. I'se divorseted from him after five years and den after 12 more years I marries Rubbin Felps. My las' husban' s name Joe Borner, but I'se never married to the father of my only chile. His name am George Pace.

"I allus gits long fair, 'cause after freedom I keeps on workin' doin' de mussin'. Now I'se gittin' 'leven dollars from de state for pension, and gits it every month so now I'se sho' of somethin' to eat and dat makes me happy.

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