

BETTY SIMMONS, 100 or more, was born a slave to Leftwidge Carter, in Macedonia, Alabama. She was stolen when a child, sold to slave traders and later to a man in Texas. She now lives in Beaumont, Texas.

"I think I's 'bout a hannerd and one or two year old. My papa was a free man, 'cause his old massa sot him free 'fere I's born, and give him a hoss and saddle and a little house to live in.

"My old massa when I's a chile, he name Mr. Leftwidge Carter and when he daughter marry Mr. Wash Langford, massa give me to her. She was call Clementine. Massa Langford has a little store and a man call Mebley go in business with him. Dis man brung down he two brothers and dey fair clean Massa Langford out. He was ruint.

"But while all dis gein' en I didn't know it and I was happy. Dey was good to me and I don't work teo hard, jus' gits in de mischief. One time I she' get drunk and dis de way of it. Massa have de puncheon of whiskey and he sell de whiskey, tee. Now, in dem days, dey have frills 'reund de beds, dey wasn't naked beds like newadays. Dey puts dis puncheon under de beds and de frills hides it, but I's nussin' a little boy in dat room and I crawls under dat bed and drinks out of de puncheon. Den I poke de head out and say 'Boo' at de little boy, and he laugh and laugh. Den I ducks back and drinks a little more and I say 'Boo' at him 'gain, and he laugh and laugh. Dey was lots of whiskey in dat puncheon and I keeps drinkin' and sayin' 'Boo'. My head, it gits funny and I come out with de puncheon and starts to de kitchen, where my aunt Adeline was de cook. I jes' a-stempin' and sayin' de big words.

Dey never lets me 'round where dat puncheon is no mere.

"When Massa Langford was ruint and dey goin' take de store 'way from him, dey was trouble, plenty ef dat. One day massa send me down de he brudder's place. I was dere two days and den de missy tell me to go to de fence. Dere was tve white men in a buggy and one ef 'em say, 'I thought she bigger dan dat.' Den he asks me, 'Betty, kin you coek?' I tells him I been coek helper tve, three month, and he way, 'You git dressed and come en down three mile to de other side de post office.' Se I gits my little bundle and when I gits dere he say, 'Gal, you want to go 'bout 26 mile and help coek at de beardin' heuse?' He tries to make me believe I wen't be gone a long time, but when I gits in de buggy dey tells me Massa Langford done les' everything and he have to hide out he niggers fer to keep he credickers from gittin' den. . Some ef de niggers he hides in de woods, but he stele me from my sweet missy and sell me se dem credickers can't git me.

"When we gits to de crossroads dere de massa and a nigger man. Dat another slave he gwine to sell, and he hate to sell us se bad he can't look us in de eye. Dey puts us niggers inside de buggy, se iffen de credickers comes along dey can't see us.

"Finally dese slave spec'lators puts de nigger man and me en de train and takes us to Memphis, and when we gits dere dey takes us to de nigger traders' yard. We gits dere at breakfast time and waits fer de beat dey calls de 'Ohie' to git dere. De beat jus' ahead ef dis Ohie, Old Capt. Fabra's boat, was 'stroyed and dat delay eur beat tve hours. When it come,

dey was 258 niggers out of dem nigger yards in Memphis what gits on dat boat. Dey puts de niggers upstairs and goes down de river far as Vicksburg, dat was de place, and den us gits offen de boat and gits on de train 'gain and dat time we goes to New Orleans.

"I's satisfy den I los' my people and ain't never goin' to see dem no more in dis world, and I never did. Dey has three big trader yard in New Orleans and I hear de traders say dat town 25 mile square. I ain't like it so well, 'cause I ain't like it 'bout dat big river. We hears some of 'em say dere's gwineter throw a long war and us all think what dey buy us for if we's gwine to be sot free. Some was still buyin' niggers every fall and us think it too funny dey kep' on fillin' up when dey gwineter be emptyin' out soon.

"Dey have big sandbars and planks fix 'round de nigger yards and dey have watchmans to keep dem from runnin 'way in de swamp. Some of de niggers dey have jus' picked up on de road, dey steals dem. Dey calls dem 'wagon boy' and wagon gal.' Dey has one bit mulatto boy dey stole 'long de road dat way and he massa find out 'bout him and come and git him and take him 'way. And a woman what was a seamster, a man what knowed her seed her in de pen and he done told her massa and he come right down and git her. She sho' was proud to git out. She was stole from 'long de road, too. You sees, if dey could steal de niggers and sell 'em for de good money, dem traders could make plenty money dat way.

"At las' Col. Fortescue, he buy me and kep' me. He a fighter in de Mexican War and he come to New Orleans to buy he slaves. He takes me up de Red River to Shreveport and den by de buggy to Liberty, in Texas.

"De Colonel, he a good massa to us. He (lows us to work de patch of ground for ourselves, and maybe have a pig or a couple chickens for ourselves, and he allus make out to give us plenty to eat.

"De massa, when a place fill up, he allus pick and move to a place where dere ain't so much people. Dat how come de Colonel fus' left Alabama and come to Texas, and to de place dey calls Beef Head den, but calls Gran' Cane now.

"When us come to Gran' Cane a nigger boy git stuck on one us house girls and he run away from he massa and foller us. It were a woodly country and de boy outrun he chasers. I heered de dogs after him and he torn and bleedin' with de bresh and he run upstairs in de gin house. De dogs sot down by de door and de dog-man, what hired to chase him, he drug him down and throw him in de Horse Hole and tells de two dogs to swim in and git him. De boy so scairt he yell and holler but de dogs nip and pinch him good with de claws and teeth. When dey lets de boy out de water hole he all bit up and when he massa larn how mean de dog-man been to de boy he 'fuses to pay de fee.

"I gits married in slavery time, to George Fortescue. De massa he marry us sort of like de justice of de peace. But my husban', he git kilt in Liberty, when he cuttin' down a tree and it fall on him. I ain't never marry no more.

"I sho' was glad when freedom come, 'cause dey jus' ready to put my little three year old boy in de field. Dey took 'em young. I has another baby call Mittie, and she too young to work. I don't know how many chillen I's have, and sometimes I sits and tries to count 'em. Dey's seven

livin' but I had 'bout fourteen.

"Dey was pretty hard on de niggers. Iffen us have de baby us only 'lowed to stay in de house for one month and card and spin, and den us has to get out in de field. Dey allus blew de horn for us mummies to come up and nuss de babies.

"I seed plenty soldiers 'fore freedom. Dey's de Democrats, 'cause I never seed no Yankees. Us niggers used to wash and iron for dem. At night us seed dose soldiers peepin' 'round de house and us run 'way in de bresh.

"When freedom come us was layin' by de crop and de massa he give us a gen'rous part of dat crop and us move to Clarks place. We gits on all right after freedom, but it hard at first 'cause us didn't know how to do for ourselves. But we has to larn.
