

LEWIS JONES, 86, was born a slave to Fred Tate, who owned a large plantation on the Colorado River in Fayette Co., Texas. Lewis' father was born a slave to H. Jones and was sold to Fred Tate, who used him as a breeder to build up his slave stock. Lewis took his father's name after Emancipation, and worked for twenty-three years in a cotton gin at La Grange. He came to Fort Worth in 1896 and worked for Armour & Co. until 1931. Lewis lives at 3304 Loving Ave., Fort Worth, Texas.

"My birth am in de year 1851 on de plantation of Massa Fred Tate, what am on de Colorado River. Yes, suh, dat am in de state of Texas. My mammy am owned by Massa Tate and so am my pappy and all my brudders and sisters. How many brudders and sisters? Lawd A-mighty! I'll tell you 'cause you asks and dis nigger gives de facts as 'tis. Let's see, I can't 'lect de number. My pappy have 12 chillen by my mammy and 12 by anudder nigger name Mary. You keep de count. Den dere am Liza, him have 10 by her, and dere am Mandy, him have 8 by her, and dere am Betty, him have six by her. Now, let me 'lect some more. I can'T bring de names to mind, but dere am two or three other what have jus' one or two chillen by my pappy. Dat am right. Close to 50 chillen, 'cause my mammy dese told me. It's disaway, my pappy am de breedin' nigger.

"You sees, when I meets a nigger on dat plantation. I's most sho' it am a brudder or sister, so I don't try keep track ef 'em.

"Massa Tate didn't give rations to each family like lots of massas, but him have de coekhouse and de coeks, and all de rations cooked by dem and all us niggers set down te de long tables. Dere am plenty, plenty. I sho' wishes I could have some good rations like dat

now. Man, some of dat ham would go fine. Dat was 'Ham, what am.'

"We'uns raise all de food right dere en de place. Haws? We'uns have three, four hundred and massa raise de corn and feed dem and cure de meat. We'uns have de cornmeal and de wheat fleur and all de milk and butter we wants, 'cause massa have 'bout 30 cows. And dere am de good old 'lasses, tee.

"Massa feed powerful good and he am not onreas'ble. He don't whup much and am sho' reas'ble 'bout de pass, and he 'low de parties and have de church en de place. Old Tom am de preacherman and de musician and him play de fiddle and banjo. Sometime dey have jig centest, dat when dey puts de glass of water en de head and see who can jig de hardes' without spillin' de water. Den dere am joyment in de singin'. Preacher Tom set all us niggers in de circle and sing old songs. I jus' can't sing for you, 'cause I's lost my teeth and my voice am raspin', but I'll word some, sich as

"'In de new Jerusalem,
In de year of Jubilee.'

"I dene forgit de words. Den did you ever hear dis one:

"'Oh, do, what Sam dene, de dat again,
He went te de hambone, bit off de end.'

"When Old Tom am preacherman, him talks from he heartfelt. Den sometime a white preacherman come and he am de Baptist and baptize we'uns.

"Massa have de fine coach and de seat for de driver am up high in front and I's de coachman and he dresses me nice and de hesses am fine, white team. Dere I's sat up high, all dress good, holdin' a tight line 'cause de team am full of spirit and fast. We'uns goes lickity split and it am a purty sight. Man, 'twarnt anyone bigger dan dis nigger.

"Inas de bad luck jus' one time with dat team and it am disaway: massa have jus' change de power fer de gin from hess to steam and dey am giinnin' cotten and I's with dat team 'side de house and de hesses am a-prancin' and waitin' fer missy to come out. Massa am in de coach. Den, de feel niggers blows de whistle of dat steam engine and de hesses never heered sich befe' and dey starts to run. Dey have de bit in de teeth and I's lucky dat road am purty straight. I thinks of massa bein' inside de coach and wants to save him. I says to myself, 'Dem hesses skeert and I den't want to skeer 'em no mere.' I jus' held de lines steady and keep sayin', 'Steady, beys, whea beys.' Fin'ly dey begins to slow down and den steps and massa gits out and de hesses am puffin' hard and all foam. He turns to me and say, 'Boy, you's made a wonnerful drive, like a vet'ran.' Now, does dat make me feel fine! It sho' de.

"When surrender come I's been drivin' 'bout a year and it's 'bout 11 o'clock in de mornin', 'cause massa have me ring de bell and all de niggers runs quick to de house and massa say dey am free niggers. It am time fer layin' de creps by and he say if dey do dat he pay 'em. Some stays and some goes off, but mammy and pappy and me stays. Dey never left dat plantation, and I stays 'bout 8 years. I guess it dat coachman job what helt me.

"When I quits I goes to work fer Ed Mattsen in La Grange and I works in dat cotten gin 18 years. Fin'ly I comes here to Fert Werth. Dat am 1896. I works fer Arneurs 20 years but dey let me off six years ago, 'cause I's too old. Since den I works at any little old job, fer to make my livin'.

"She', I's been married and it to Jane Owen in La Grange,
and we'uns have three chillen and dey all dead. She died in 1931.

"It an hard for dis nigger to git by and sometime I don't know
for she' dat I's gwine git anudder meal, but it allus come some way. Yes,
suh, dey allus come some way. Some of de time dey is far apart, but dey
comes. De Lawd see te dat, I guess.
