

LOUIS FOWLER, 84, was born a slave to Robert Beaver, in Macon Co., Georgia. Fowler did not take his father's name, but that of his stepfather, J. Fowler. After he was freed, Louis farmed for several years, then worked in packing plants in Fort Worth, Tex. He lives at 2706 Holland St., Fort Worth.

"Dis cullud person am 84 years old and I's born on de plantation of Massa Robert Beaver, in old Georgia. He owned my mammy and 'bout 50 slaves. Now, 'bout my pappy, I lets you judge. Look at my hair. De color am red, ain't it? My beard am red and my eyes is brown and my skin am light yellow. Now, who does you think my pappy was? You don't know, of course, but I knows, 'cause on dat plantation am a man dat am over six feet tall and his hair as red as a brick.

"My mammy am married to a man named Fowler and he am owned by Massa Jack Fowler, on de place next to ours. Our place am middlin' big and fixed first class. He has first-class quarter for us cullud folks. De cabins am two and some three rooms and dey am built of logs and chinked with a piece of wood and daubed with dirt to fill de cracks. De way we'uns fix dat dirt am take de clay or gumbo which am sticky when it am wet. Dat dirt am soaked with water till it stick together and den hay or straw am mixed with it. When sich mud am daubed in de cracks it stay and dem cabins am sho' windproof and warm.

"De treatment am good and Massa Beaver have de choice name 'mong he neighbors for bein' good to he niggers. No work on Sunday, no work on

Saturday evenin's. Dem times was for de cullud folks to do for demselves. Massa Beaver have it fixed disaway, he 'low each family a piece of groun' and dey can raise what dey likes.

"De rations am measure out and de massa allus 'low plenty of meat and we has wheat flour. Mos' de niggers don't have wheat flour, but massa raises de wheat and we gits it. We kin have 'lasses and brown sugar but one thing we'uns has to watch am de waste, 'cause massa won't stand for dat.

"De meat am cured with de hick'ry wood smoke and if you could git jus' one taste dat ham and bacon you'd never eat none of this nowadays meat. It sho' have a dif'rent taste.

"We makes de cloth and de wool and I could card and spin and weave 'fore I's big 'nough to work in de field. My mammy larned me to help her. We makes dye from de bark of walnut and de cherry and red oak trees, and some from berries but what dey is I forgit. Iffen we'uns wants clay red, we buries de cloth in red clay for a week and it takes on de cålor. Den we soaks de cloth in cold salt water and it stays colored.

"Massa builded a log church house for we'uns cullud folks for to go to God. Dat nigger named Allen Beaver am de preacherman and de leader in all de parties, 'cause him can play de fiddle. No, Allen am not edum-cated, but can he preach a pow'ful sermon. O, Lawd! He am inspire from de Lawd and he preached from his heartfelt.

"Dere am only one time dat a nigger gits whupped on dat plantation and dat am not given by massa but by dem patterrollers. Massa don't gin'rally 'low dem patterrollers whup on his place, and all de niggers from round dere allus run from de patterrollers onto massa's land and den dey

safe. But in dis 'ticular case, massa make de 'ception.

"'Twas nigger Jack what dey chases home and he gits under de cabin and 'fused to come out. Massa say, 'In dis case I gwine make 'ception, 'cause dat Jack he am too unreas'able. He allus chasin' after some nigger wench and not satisfied with de pass I give. Give him 25 lashes but don't draw de blood or leave de marks.'

"Well, sar, it am de great sight to see Jack git dat whuppin'. Him am skeert, but dey ain't hurtin' him bad. Massa make him come out and dey tie him to a post and he starts to bawl and beller befo' a lick am struck. Say! Him beg like a good fellow. It am, 'Oh, massa, massa, Oh, massa, have mercy, don't let 'em whup me. Massa, I won't go off any more.' De patter-rollers gives him a lick and Jack lets out a yell dat sounds like a mule bray and twice as loud.

"Dere used to be a patterroller song what sent like dis:

"Up de hill and down de holler
White man cotch nigger by de collar
Dat nigger run and dat nigger flew,
Dat nigger tore he shirt in two.'

"Well, while dey's whuppin' dat nigger, Jack, he couldn't run and he couldn't tear he shirt in two, but he holler till he tear he mouth in two. Jack say he never go off without de pass 'gain and he kept he word, too.

"De big doin's am on Christmas Day and de massa have present for each cullud person. Dey am little things and I laughs when I thinks of them, but de cullud folks sho' 'joy dem and it show massa's heart am right. For de chillen it am candy and for de women, a pin or sich, and for de men, a knife or sich. On dat day, preacherman Allen sho' have de full heart, and he preach and preach.

"But de war starts and it not so happy on massa's place and 'fore long he two sons goes to dat war. De massa show worryment 'cause dey fightin' here and dere and den come de day when dey fight right nex' to de massa's place. It am in de field next to we'uns and de two boys, young Charley and he brother, Bob, am in de fight. It am for sev'ral days de army am a-marchin' to de field and gittin' ready for de battle. Durin' dat time, de two boys comes home for a spell every day. Early one mornin' de shoot-in' starts and it am not much at first but it ain't long till it am a steady thunder and it keep up all day.

"De missy am walkin' in de yard and den go in de house and out 'gain. She am a-twistin' her hands and cryin'. She keeps sayin', 'Dey sho' gits kilt, my poor babies.' De massa talk to her to quiet her. Dat help me, too, 'cause I sho' skeert. Nodoby do much work dat dey, but stand round with quiverments and when dey talk, dey voice quiver. Why, even de buildin's quivered. Every once in de while, dere am an extry roar. Dat de cannon and every time I heered it, I jumps. I's sent to git de eggs and have 'bout five dozen in de basket, holdin' it in front of me with my two hands. All a sudden, one of dem extry shoots comes and down dis nigger kid go and my head hits into de basket. Dere I is, eggs oozin' all round me and I so skeert and fussed up I jus' lays and kicks. I wants to scream but I can't for de eggs in my mouth. To dis day I thinks of dat battle every time I eats eggs.

"De nex' day after de battle am over, mos' us cullud folks goes to de field. Some of 'em buries de dead, and I hears 'em tell how in de low places de blood stand like water and de bodies all shoot to pieces.

"Massa's sons not kilt and am de missy glad! She have allus colored folks come to de house and makeus kneel down and she thank de Lawd for savin' her sons. Dey even go to other places add fights, but dey comes home after de war am over.

"Surrender come and massa tells us we can stay or go and if we stay he pay us wages or we works on shares. Some go and some stay. Mammy and me goes to de Fowler place with my stepfather and we share crops for three year.

"I stays with dem till I's 18 and den I gits married. Dat in 1871 and my wife died in 1928 and we'uns have four chillen. All dat time I's farmed till 'bout 30 year ago when I works in de packin' plant here in Fort Worth. I works dere 20 years and den dey say I's too old and since den I works at de odd jobs till 'bout five years ago.

"Since I's quit work at de packin' plant it am hard for dis cullud person. I soon uses up my savin's and den I's gone hongry plenty times. My chillen am old and dey havin' de hard time, too. My friends helps me a little and I gits de pension, but it am only \$8.00 a month and, course, dat ain't 'nough.

"After all dese years I's worked and 'haved, I never thinks I comes to where I couldn't git 'nough to eat. I's am wishful for de Lawd to call me to jedgment.
