

MILLIE WILLIAMS, 86, lives at 1612 E. Fourth St., Fort Worth, Texas. She was born a slave to Joe Benford, in Tennessee, was sold to Bill Dunn, who brought her to Texas and traded her to Tommy Ellis for some land. She has lived in Fort Worth since the 1870's.

"I don't know when I was born, 'cause I was taken from my folks when I was a baby, but massa told me I was born in de spring of de year, in 1851. I know I been in dis world a long time, but I has have good white folks. I was born on Massa Benford's place in Tennessee and my mama's name was Martha Birdon. She say my pappy's name Milton Wade, but I never seed him. And I didn't know my mama a long time, 'cause she's sold away from Massa Benford's place, and I was sold with her, den he took me back, and I never seed my mama no mo'.

"After I was sold back to Massa Benford, he puts me in de nigger yard. Dat whar de massa kep' slaves what he traded. It was jus' a bunch of shacks throwed together and dirty was no name for it, it was worse than a pig pen. De man what watch over us in dat nigger yard was de meanest man what ever lived. He'd take a club and beat de daylight out of us, 'cause de club wouldn't leave scars like de bullwhip, and didn't bring de price down when we is sold.

"One day Massa Benford takes us to town and puts us on dat auction block and a man name Bill Dunn bought me. I was 'bout seven years old. Talkin' 'bout somethin' awful, you should have been dere. De slave owners was shoutin' and sellin' chillen to one man and de mama and pappy to 'nether. De slaves cries and takes on somethin' awful. If a woman had lots of chillen she was sold for me', 'cause it a sign she a good breeder.

"Right after I was sold to Massa Dunn, dere was a big up-risin' in Tennessee and it was 'bout de Union, but I don't know what it was all about, but dey wanted Massa Dunn to take some kind of a oath, and he wouldn't do it and he had to leave Tennessee. He said dey would take de slaves 'way from him, so he brought me and Sallie Armstrong to Texas. Dere he trades us to Tommy Ellis for some land and dat Massa Ellis, he de best white man what ever lived. He was so good to us we was better off dan when we's free.

"Massa Ellis' plantation was one of de bigges', and he owned land as far as we could see. Dere was 'bout 50 slaves and we lived in a row of log cabins long side de big house. In winter we sleeps inside but in summer we sleeps in de yard, and de same 'bout eatin'. Sometimes massa fed good and den 'gain he didn't, but dat 'cause of de War. We has cornbread and milk and all de coffee you would drink. On Sundays we fills de pot half full of meat and shell peas on top de meat.

"I 'member de time we steals one of massa's big chickens and its in de pot in de fireplace when we seed missy comin'. I grabs dat chicken and pot and puts it under de bed and puts de bedclothes top dat pot. Missy, she come in and say, ' I sho' do smell somethin' good. ' I say, 'Whar, Missy Ellis? ' She don't find nothin' so she leaves. When she's gone I takes dat chicken and we eats it in a hurry.

"De everseer woke 'em up 'bout four in de mornin', but I works in de house. De field workers gits off Thursdays and Saturday evenin's and Sunday. De reason dey gits off Thursday is dat de massa has some kind of thought we shouldn't werk dat day. Maybe it was 'ligion, I

don't know.

"We has parties and sings

'Massa sleeps in de feather bed,  
Nigger sleeps on de floor;  
When we'uns gits to Heaven,  
Dey'll be no slaves no mo'.'

"Den we has de song 'bout dis:

'Rabbit in de briar patch,  
Squirrel in de tree,  
Wish I could go huntin',  
But I ain't free.

'Rooster's in de henhouse,  
Hen's in de patch,  
Love to go shootin',  
But I ain't free.'

"When de nigger leaves de plantation without no pass, and de padder rollers kitched him, dey gives him 39 licks with de bullwhip. When we's in de fields and sees de padder roller ride by, we starts murmerin' out leud, 'Patter de pat, patter de pat.' One after 'nother took it up and purty soon everybody murmerin'. We allus do dat to let everybody know de padder roller 'round. Den we sing songs 'bout 'em, too.

"When War start dere a army camp jus' below de plantation, and 'bout a thousand soldiers. We hears 'em shout, 'Halt, march, halt, march,' all day long. Dey sung

'Lincoln's not satisfied,  
He wants to fight 'gain,  
All he got to do,  
Is hustle up his men.'

"I stays with Massa Ellis after we's freed. Dere sho' was a mighty purty sight when de slaves knows dey's free. Dey hug one 'nother

and almos' tear dere clothes off. Some cryin' for de husban', and some cryin' for de chillen.

"When I was 'bout 20 I lef' massa's home and moves to Dallas, whar I marries my first man. His name was Bill Jackson. He lef' me and goes back to Dallas and I hear he die, so I marry Will Williams and he dies. Now I been here since de Lawd know when.

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