

JUL 24 1937

EDGAR BENDY, 90 odd years, was the slave of Henry Bendy, of Woodville, Texas, has to make an effort to remember and is forced to seek aid from his wife, Minerva, at certain points in his story. Edgar has lived in Woodville all his life.

"I's a good size' boy when de war gwine on and I seed de soldiers come right here in Woodville. A big bunch of dem come through and dey have cannons with dem. My marster he didn't go to war, 'cause he too old, I guess.

"I's born right here and done live hereabouts every since. Old man Henry Bendy, he my marster and he run de store here in Woodville and have de farm, too. I didn't do nothin' 'cept nuss babies. I jes' jump dem up and down and de old marster hire me out to nuss other white folks chillen, big and little.

"My daddy name' Jack Crews and my mammy was Winnie. Both of dem worked on de farm and I never seed dem much. I didn't have no house of my own, 'cause de marster, he give me de room in he house. He have lots of slaves and 'bout 100 acres in cult'vation. He gave dem plenty to eat and good homespun clothes to wear. He was mighty good.

"Marster have de plank house and all de things in it was home-make. De cook was a old cullud woman and I eat at de kitchen table and have de same what de white folks eats. Us has lots of meat, deer meat and possum and coon and sich, and us sets traps for birds.

"Dey ain't nothin' better dat go in de wood dan de big, fat possum. Dey git fat on black haws and acorns and chinquapin and sich. Chinquapin is good for people to eat and to roast. I used to be plumb give up to be de best hunter in Tyler and in de whole country. I kilt more deer dan any other man in de county and I been guide for all de big men what comes here to hunt. My wife, Minerva, she used to go huntin' with me.

"I kep' on huntin' and huntin' till de Jack-a-my-lanterns git after me. Dat a light you sees all 'round you. Dey follow all 'long and dey stop you still. Den one time it git all over me. Come like de wind, blow, blow, and come jes' like fire all on my arm and my clothes and things. When dat git after me I quit huntin' at nighttime and ain't been huntin' since.

"One time I fishin' on de creek and I ain't got no gun, and I look up and dere a big, wild cat. He never pay me no mind, no more dan nothin', but dat ain't make no diff'rence to me. I jes' flew in dat creek!

"I used to belong to de lodge but when I git so old I couldn't pay my jews, I git unfinancial and I ain't a member no more.

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MINERVA BENDY, 83, was born a slave to Lazarus Goolsby, Henry Co. Alabama, who brought her to Texas when she was five. They settled near Woodville, where Minerva still lives.

"My earlies' 'menbrance was de big, white sandy road what lead 'way from de house. It was clean and white and us chillen love to walk in de soft, hot sand. Dat in Henry County, Alabama, where I's born and my old marster was Lazarus Goolsby and he have de big plantation with lots of nigger folks. I 'member jus' as good as yesterday wiggin' my toes in dat sandy road and runnin' 'way to de grits mill where dey grind de meal. Dat have de big water wheel dat sing and squeak as it go 'round.

"Aunt Mary, she make all us little chillen sleep in de heat of de day under de big, spreadin' oak tree in de yard. My mama have 17 chillen. Her name Dollie and my daddy name Herd.

SI's jus' a little chile in dem days and I stay in de house with de white folks. Dey raise me a pet in de family. Missus Goolsby, she have two gals and dey give me to de oldest. When she die dey put me in de bed with her but iffen I knowed she dyin' dey wouldn't been able to catch me. She rub my head and tell her papa and mama, 'I's gwine 'way but I wants you promise you ain't never whip my little nigger.' Dey never did.

"I's jus' 'bout five year old when us make de trip to Texas. Us come right near Woodville and make de plantation. It a big place and dey raise corn and cotton and cane. We makes our own sugar and has

many as six kettle on de furnace at one time. Dey raise dey tobacco, too. I's sick and a old man he say he make me tobacco medicine and dey dry de leafs and make dem sweet like sugar and feed me like candy.

"I 'member old marster say war broke out and Capt. Collier's men was a-drillin' right dere south of Woodville. All de wives and chillen watch dem drill. Dey was lots of dem, but I couldn't count. De whole shebang from de town go watch dem.

"Four of de Goolsby boys goes to dat war and dey call John and Ziby and Zabud and Addison. Zabud, he git wounded, no he git kilt, and Addison he git wounded. I worry den, 'cause I ain't see no reason for dem to have to die.

"After us free dey turn us loose in de woods and dat de bad time, 'cause most us didn't know where to turn. I wasn't raise to do nothin' and I didn't know how. Dey didn't even give us a hoecake or a slice of bacon.

"I's a June bride 59 year ago when I git married. De old white Baptist preacher name Blacksheer put me and dat nigger over dere, Edgar Bendy, togedder and us been togedder ever since. Us never have chick or chile. I's such a good nuss I guess de Lawd didn't want me to have none of my own, so's I could nuss all de others and I 'spect I's nussed most de white chillen and cullud, too, here in Woodville.