

VAN MOORE, now living at 2119 St. Charles St., Houston, Tex., was born on a plantation owned by the Cunningham family, near Lynchburg, Virginia. While Van was still a baby, his owner moved to a plantation near Crosby, Tex. Van is about 80 years old.

"Like I say, I's born on de first day of September, near Lynchburg, in Virginy, but I's reared up here in Texas. My mammy's name was Mary Moore and my pappy's name was Tom Moore. Mammy 'longed to de Cunninghams but Pappy 'longed to de McKinneys, what was Missy Cunningham's sister and her husban'. That's how my mammy and pappy come together. In dem days a slave man see a slave gal what he wants and he asks his old massa, kin he see her. Iffen she owned by someone else, de massa ask de gal's massa iffen it all right to put 'em together, and iffen he say so, dey jus' did. Twa'nt no Bible weddin', like now.

"Mammy had 19 chillen, 10 boys and 9 gals, but all of 'em dead 'cept me. Dey was call' Matthew and Joe and Harris and Horace and Charley and Sam and Dave and Millie and Viney and Mary and Phyllis, and I forgit de others.

"While I jus' a baby Massa Cunningham and he family and he slaves, and Massa McKinney and he slaves comes to Texas. I never did 'member old Massa Cunningham, 'cause dey tells me he kilt by a rarin' beef, right after we gits to Texas. Dey say he didn't take up 'nough slack on dat rope when he tryin brand de beef and de critter rared over and broke massa's back.

"Dat I 'members Missy Mary Ellen Cunningham, he wife, from de time I's a little feller till she die. She sho' was de good woman and treated de slaves good.

"Mammy told me it dis-a-way how come de Cunninghams and de McKinneys to come to Texas. When war begin most folks back in Virginny what owns slaves moved further south, and lots to Louisiana and Texas, 'cause dey say de Yankees won't never git dat far and dey won't have to free de slaves iffen dey come way over here. 'Sides, dey so many slaves runnin' 'way to de north, back dere. Mammy say when dey starts for here in de wagons, de white folks tells de po' niggers, what was so ig'rant dey 'lieve all de white folks tell 'em, dat where dey is goin' de lakes full of syrup and covered with batter cakes, and dey won't have to work so hard. Dey tells 'em dis so dey don't run away.

"Well, mammy say dey comes to de lake what has round things on top de water. Course, dey jus' leaves, but de niggers thinks here is de lake with de syrup and one runs to de edge and takes de big swallow, and spits it out, and say 'Whuf! ' I reckon he thinks dat funny syrup.

"De plantation at Crosby was a great big place, and after old Massa Cunningham kilt by dat beef Missy Cunningham couldn't keep it up and we goes to Galveston. Dere she has de great big house with de beautiful things in it, de mirrors and de silk chairs and de rugs what soft 'nough to sleep on. Missy Cunningham mighty good to us niggers and on Sunday she'd fill up de big wood tray with flour and grease and hawg meat, so we could have de biscuit and white bread. Mammy say back in Virginny dey called biscuits 'knots' and white bread 'tangle-dough.'

"Iffen old Missy Cunningham ain't in heaven right now, den dere ain't none, 'cause she so good to us we all loved her. She never

took de whip to us, but I heered my mammy say she knowed a slave woman what owned by Massa Rickets, and she workin' in de field, and she heavy with de chile what not born yet, and she has to set down in de row to rest. She was havin' de misery and couldn't work good, and de boss man had a nigger dig a pit where her stomach fit in, and lay her down and tie her so she can't squirm 'round none, and flog her till she lose her mind. Yes, suh, dat de truf, my mammy say she knowed dat woman a long time after dat, and she never right in de head 'gain.

"When de war broke, de Union soldiers has a camp not so far from we'uns and I slips down dere when old missy not lookin', 'cause de soldiers give me black coffee and sugar what I takes to my mammy. I had to walk in de sand up to de knees to git to dat camp. Lots more chillen went, too, but I never seed no cruelty by de soldiers. Dey gives you de sugar in de big bucket and when you puts de hand in it you could pinch de water out it, 'cause it not refined sugar like you gits now, but it sure tasted good.

"Mammy wrops me in both de Yankee and de 'federate flags when I goes to dat camp, and de soldiers takes off de 'federate flag, but I allus wears it 'round de house, 'cause old missy tell me to.

"When freedom come, old missy tell my mammy, 'You is free now, and you all jus' have to do de best you kin.' But mammy she never been 'way from old missy in her life, and she didn't want no more freedom dan what she had, so we jus' stays with old missy till she moved back to Crosby.

"When pappy sot free by Massa Albert McKinney, he didn't have nothin' - not even a shirt, so Massa Albert 'lowed him stay and work 'round de plentation. One day 'fore we goes back to Crosby, pappy come down to Galveston to see mammy and us chillen, 'cause he wants to take us back with him. He rid all de way on a mule, carryin' a wallet what was thrown over de back of de mule like de pack saddle, and he gives it to mammy. You know what was in dat wallet? He brung a coon and possum and some corn dodger, 'cause he thinks we don't have 'nough to eat down there. Mammy she give one look at de stuff and say, 'You, Tom, I's stayin' right here with old Missy Cunningham, and we has white folks eats,' and she throw de whole mess 'way. I sho' 'member dat happenin'.

"But old missy gittin' poorly and, like I told you, we move back to Crosby and mammy and pappy lives together 'gain. I gits me some small work here and there till I grows up, and I's worked hard all my life.

"All de old folks is gone now. Old missy, she die in Crosby, and mammy and pappy die, too, and is buried there. Doctor say I got dis and dat wrong and can't work no more, so I guess I go, too, 'fore long. But I still has love for my old missy, 'cause she loved us and sho' was good to us, and it make me feel kinda good to talk 'bout her and de old times.

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