

BARNEY STONE

HAMILTON CO.

Interviewed by Robert C. Irvin

District #2, Noblesville, Ind.

This is the life story of Barney Stone, a highly respected colored gentleman of Noblesville, Hamilton County seat. Mr. Stone is near ninety-one years old, is in sound physical condition and still has a remarkable memory. He was a slave in the state of Kentucky for more than sixteen years and a soldier in the Union army for nearly two years. He educated himself and taught school to colored children four years following the Civil War. He studied in 1868, and has been a preacher in the Colored Baptist Faith for sixty nine years, having been instrumental in the building of seven churches in that time. Mr. Stone joined the K. of P. Lodge, the I.O.O.F. and Masonic Lodge and is still a member of the latter.

This fine old colored man has always worked hard for the uplift and advancement of the colored race and has accomplished much in this effort in the States of Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. He, together with his preaching of the gospel, and his lecturing, has followed farming. He now has a field of sweet corn and a fine, large garden, which he plowed, planted and tended himself and not a weed can be found in either. He is the only ex-slave now living in Hamilton County, the others all deceased, and is one of three living members of Hamilton county G.A.R. the other two members being white.

Mr. Stone has given to the writer "My Life's Story", which he desires to call it, and in this story he pictures to the reader, "sixteen years of hell as a slave on a plantation," a story which will convince the reader that, even though much blood was shed in our Civil War, the war was a Godsend to the American Nation. This story is told just as given by Mr. Stone.

MY LIFE'S STORY

My name is Barney Stone, I was born in slavery, May 17, 1847, in Spencer County, Kentucky. I was a slave on the plantation of Lemuel Stone (all slaves bore the last name of their master) for nearly seventeen years and was considered a leader among the young slaves on our plantation. My Mammy was mother to ten children, all slaves, and my Pappy, Buck Grant, was a buck slave

on the plantation of John Grant, his master; my pappy was used much as a male cow is used on the stock farm and was hired out to other plantation owners for that purpose and was regarded as a valuable slave. His master permitted him to visit my mother each week-end on our plantation.

My master was a hard man when he was angry, drinking, or not feeling well, then at times he was kind to us. I was compelled to pick cotton and do other work when I was a very small boy. Master would never sell me because I was regarded as the best young slave on the plantation. Different from many other slaves, I was kept on the plantation from the day I was born until the day I ran away.

Slaves were sold in two ways, sometimes at private sale to a man who went about the Southland buying slaves until he has many in his possession, then he would have a big auction sale and would re-sell them to the highest bidder, much in the same manner as our live-stock are sold now in auction sales. Professional slave buyers in those days were called "nigger buyers". He came to the plantation with a doctor. He would point out two or three slaves which looked good to him and which could be spared by the owner, and would have the doctor examine the slave's heart. If the doctor pronounced the slave as sound, then the nigger buyer would make an offer to the owner and if the amount was satisfactory, the slave was sold. Some large plantation owners, having a large number of slaves, would hold a public auction and dispose of some of them, then he would attend another sale and buy new slaves, this was done sometimes to get better slaves and sometimes to make money on the sale of them.

Many times, as I have said before, our treatment on our plantation was horrible. When I was just a small boy, I witnessed my sister sold and taken away. One day one of the horses came into the barn and master noticed that she was crippled. He flew into a rage and thought I had hurt the horse, either that, or that I knew who did it. I told him that I did not do it and he demanded that I tell him who did it, if I didn't. I did not know and when I told him so, he secured a whip tied me to a post and whipped me until I was covered with blood. I begged him, "Master, master, please don't whip me, I do not know who did it." He then took out his pocket knife and I would have been killed if Missus (his dear wife) had not made him quit. She untied me and cared for me.

Many has been the time, I have seen my mammy beaten mercilessly and for no good reason. One day, not long before the out-break of the Civil War, a nigger buyer came and I witnessed

my dear Mammy and my one year old baby brother, sold. I saw her taken away, never to see her again until I found her twenty-seven years later at Clarksburg, Tennessee. My baby brother was with her, but I did not know him until Mammy told me who he was, he had grown into a large man. That was a happy meeting. After those experiences of sixteen long years in Hell, as a slave, I was very bitter against the white man, until after I ran away and joined the Union army.

At the out-break of the Civil War and when the Northern army was marching into the Southland, hundreds of male slaves were shot down by the Rebels, rather than see them join with the Yankees. One day when I learned that the Northern troops were very close to our plantation, I ran away and hid in a culvert, but was found and I would have been shot - had the Yankee troops not scattered them - and that saved me. I joined the Union army and served one year, eight months and twenty-two days, and fought with them in the battle of Fort Wagner, and also in the battle of Milikin's Bend. When I went into the army, I could not read or write. The white soldiers took an interest in me and taught me to write and read, and when the war was over I could write a very good letter. I taught what little I knew to colored children after the War.

I studied day and night for the next three years at the home of a lawyer, educating myself and in 1868, I started preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and have continued to do so for sixty-nine years. In that time I have been instrumental in the building of seven churches in Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana. I did this good work through gratefulness to God for my deliverance and my salvation. During my life, I have joined the K. of P. Lodge, and I.O.O.F and Masonic Lodge. I have preached for the up-life and advancement of the colored races. I have accomplished much good in this life and have raised a family of eight children. I love and am loyal to my country and have received great compensation from my government for my services. I am in good health and still able to work, and I am thankful to my God and my country."