

Bert Mayfield
Garrard County
Interview by Eliza Ison

Bert Mayfield was born in Garrard County, May 29, 1852, two miles south of Bryantsville on Smith Stone's place. His father and mother were Ped and Matilda Stone Mayfield, who were slaves of Smith Stone who came from Virginia. His brothers were John, Harrison, Jerry, and Laurence, who died at an early age. Bert can just remember his grandparents.

He lived on a large plantation with a large old farmhouse, built of logs and weatherboards, painted white. There were four rooms on the first floor, and there were also finished rooms on the second floor. An attic contained most of the clothes needed for the slaves. "Uncle Bert" in his own language says:

On Christmas, each of us stood in line to get our clothes; we were measured with a string that was made by a cobbler. The material had been woven by the slaves in a plantation shop. The flax and hemp were raised on the plantation. The younger slaves had to swingle it with a wooden instrument, somewhat like a sword, about two feet long and called a swingler. The hemp was hackled by the older slaves. The hackle was an instrument made of iron teeth, about four inches long, one-half inch apart and set in a wooden plank one and one-half feet long, which was set on a heavy bench. The hemp stalks were laid on these benches and hackled herds were then pulled through and heaped in piles and taken to the work shops where it was twisted and tied then woven, according to the needs. Ropes, carpets, and clothing were made from this fiber.

Our cabins were usually one room with a loft above which we reached by a ladder. Our beds were trundle beds with wheels on them to push them under the big beds. We slept on straw ticks covered with Lindsey quilts, which were made from the cast-off clothes, cut into squares and strips.

(I) would feed pigs; pulled parsley out of the garden for them and the pigs loved it mighty well. No money was paid for work. Bacon and pone bread baked in the yard in an oven that had legs and lid on top was the chief food and his favorite. The coals were put on top as well as under the oven. They drank sweet milk and butter milk, but no coffee; they also ate cabbage, squash,

sweet and Irish potatoes, which were cooked with, skins on, greased, and put in the oven. Possum and coon hunts were big events, they would hunt all night. The possums were baked in the ovens and usually with sweet potatoes in their mouths. The little boys would fish, bringing home their fish to be scaled by rubbing them between their hands, rolled in meal and cooked in a big skillet. We would eat these fish with pone corn bread and we sure had big eatin's!

Master Stone had a big sugar camp with 300 trees. We would be woken up at sunup by a big horn and called to get our buckets and go to the sugar camps and bring water from the maple trees. These trees had been tapped and elderwood spiles were placed in the taps where the water dripped to the wooden troughs below. We carried this water to the big poplar troughs which were about 10 feet long and 3 feet high. The water was then dipped out and placed in different kettles to boil until it became the desired thickness for "Tree Molasses". Old Miss Polly would always take out enough of the water to boil down to make sugar cakes for us boys. We had great times at these "stirring offs" which usually took place at night.

The neighbors would usually come and bring their slaves. We played Sheep-meat and other games. Sheep-meat was a game played with a yarn ball and when one of the players was hit by the ball that counted him out. One song we would always sing was;

"Who ting-a-long?

Who ting-a-long?

Who's been here since I've been gone?

A pretty girl with a josey on".

There was no slave jail on the Stone place, and I never saw a slave sold or auctioned off. I was told that one of our slaves ran off and was gone for three years. Some white person wrote him to come home that he was free. He was making his own way in Ohio and stopped in Lexington, Kentucky for breakfast; while there he was asked to show his Pass papers which he did, but they were forged so he was arrested. Investigators soon found that his owner was Mr. Stone who did not wish to sell him and sent for him to come home. Uncle Ned's own Tim said he would go fetch him back but instead he sold him to a southern slave trader.

My old missus Meg taught me how to read from an old national spelling book, but I did not learn to write. We had no church, but the Bible was read to us on Sunday afternoons by some of the white folks. The first Church I remember was the Old Fork Baptist Church about four miles from

Lancaster on the Lexington Pike. The first preacher I remember was Burdette Kemper. I heard him preach at the old church where my missus and master took me every Sunday. The first Baptizing that I remember was on Dix Fiver near Floyd's Mill. Preacher Kemper did the Baptizing and Ellen Stone, one of our slaves was Baptized there with a number of others—whites and blacks too. When Ellen came up out of the water she was clapping her hands and shouting. One of the songs I remember at this Baptizing was:

"Come sinners and Saints and hear me tell

The wonders of E-Man-u-el,

Who brought my soul with him to dwell

And give me heavenly union."

The first funeral sermon I remember was preached by John Moran, negro at the first Baptist here in Lancaster.

The Negroes would talk among themselves, but never carried tales to the white folks. I never heard of any trouble between blacks and whites. On Sunday's we would hold prayer meetings among ourselves. The neighbors would come when slaves were sick. Old Missus looked after us, giving us teas made of catnip and vermifuge. Poultices of dock leaves and slippery elm were also used when were sick. Some of the slaves wore rabbit feet for charms and skins of snakes for a belt as a charm.

My first wedding was 53 years ago. The woman was named Emma Barren, raised by Dr. Pettus. I had no children. We went to Mr. Spencer Hubble to live, in Lincoln County. We had no child [TR: This sentence appears to have been unfinished or erased.]

I received the first news of freedom joyfully. I went to old man Onstott's to live. I lived there two or three years. I think Abe Lincoln a great man. He did not believe in slavery and would have paid the southern people for their slaves if he had lived. All the slaves on Master Stone's place were treated well.