

**BETTY JONES**

**429 Oak Street, Evansville, Ind.**

**Interviewed by Lauana Creel**

**Vanderburgh County, District No. 5**

"Yes, Honey, I was a slave, I was born at Henderson, Kentucky and my mother was born there. We belonged to old Master John Alvis. Our home was on Alvis's Hill and a long plank walk had been built from the bank of the Ohio river to the Alvis home. We all liked the long plank walk and the big house on top of the hill was a pretty place."

Betty Jones said her master was a rich man and had made his money by raising and selling slaves. She only recalls two house servants were mulattoes. All the other slaves were black as they could be.

Betty Alvis lived with her parents in a cabin near her master's home on the hill. She recalls no unkind treatment.

"Our only sorrow was when a crowd of our slave friends would be sold off, then the mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends always cried a lot and we children would grieve to see the grief of our parents."

The mother of Betty was a slave of John Alvis and married a slave of her master. The family lived at the slave quarters and were never parted. "Mother kept us all together until we got set free after the war," declares Betty. Many of the Alvis negroes decided to make their homes at Henderson, Kentucky. "It was a nice town and work was plentiful."

Betty Alvis was brought to Evansville by her parents. The climate did not agree with the mother so she went to Princeton, Kentucky to live with her married daughter and died there.

Betty Alvis married John R. Jones, a native of Tennessee, a former slave of John Jones, a Tennessee planter. He died twelve years ago.

Betty Jones recalls when Evansville was a small town. She remembers when the streetcars were mule-drawn and people rode on them for pleasure.

"When boats came in at Evansville, all the girls used to go down to the bank, wearing pretty

ruffled dresses and everybody would wave to the boatmen and stay down at the river's edge until the boat was out of sight."

Betty Jones remembers when the new Court House was started and how glad the men of the city were to erect the nice building. She recalls when the old frame buildings used for church services were razed and new structures were erected in which to worship God. She does not believe in evil spirits, ghosts nor charms as do many former slaves, but she remembers hearing her friends express superstitions concerning black cats. It was also a belief that to build a new kitchen onto your old home was always followed by the death of a member of the immediate family and if a bird flew into a window it had come to bring a call to the faraway land and some member of the family would die.

Betty Jones was not scared when the recent flood came to within a block of her door. She had lived through a flood while living at Lawrence Station at Marion County, Indiana.

"We were all marooned in our homes for two weeks and all the food we had was brought to our door by boats. White River was flooded then and our home was in the White River Flats. What God wills must happen to us, and we do not save ourselves by trying to run away. Just as well stay and face it as to try to get away."

The old negro woman is cared for by her unmarried daughter since her husband's death. The old woman is lonely and was happy to receive a caller. She is alone much of the time as her daughter is compelled to do housework to provide for her mother and herself.

"Of course I'm a Christian," said the aged negress. "I'm a religious woman and hope to meet my friends in Heaven. I would like to go back to Henderson, Kentucky once more, for I have not been there for more than twenty years. I'd love to walk the old plank walk again up to Mr. Alvis' home but I'm afraid I'll never get to go. It costs too much."

So desire remains with the aged and memories remain to comfort the feeble.