

CARL BOONE

Anderson, Indiana

MADISON COUNTY

Interviewed by Robert C. Irvin

District No. 2, Noblesville, Ind.

This is a story of slavery, told by Carl Boone about his father, his mother and himself. Carl is the last of eighteen children born to Mrs. Stephen Boone, in Marion County, Kentucky, Sept. 15, 1850. He now resides with his children at 801 West 13th Street, Anderson, Madison County, Indiana. At the ripe old age of eighty-seven, he still has a keen memory and is able to do a hard day's work.

Carl Boone was born a free man, fifteen years before the close of the Civil War, his father having gained his freedom from slavery in 1829. He is a religious man, having missed church service only twice in twenty years. He was treated well during the time of slavery in the southland, but remembers well, the wrongs done to slaves on neighboring plantations, and in this story he relates some of the horrors which happened at that time.

Like his father, he is also the father of eighteen children, sixteen of whom are still living. He is grandfather of thirty-seven and great grandfather of one child. His father was born in the slave state of Maryland, in 1800, and died in 1897. His mother was born in Marion County, Kentucky, in 1802, and died in 1917, at the age of one hundred and fifteen years.

This story, word by word, is related by Carl Boone as follows:

My name is Carl Boone, son of Stephen and Rachel Boone, born in Marion County, Kentucky, in 1850. I am father of eighteen children, sixteen are still living and I am grandfather of thirty-seven and great grandfather of one child. I came with my wife, now deceased, to Indiana in 1891, and now reside at 801 West 13th street in Anderson, Indiana. I was born a free man, fifteen years before the close of the Civil War. All the colored folk on plantations and farms around our plantation were slaves and most of them were terribly mistreated by their masters.

After coming to Indiana, I farmed for a few years, then moved to Anderson. I became connected with the Colored Catholic Church and have tried to live a Christian life. I have only missed church service twice in twenty years. I lost my dear wife thirteen years ago and I now live with my son.

My father, Stephen Boone, was born in Maryland, in 1800. He was bought by a nigger buyer while a boy and was sold to Miley Boone in Marion County, Kentucky. Father was what they used to call "a picked slave," was a good worker and was never mistreated by his master. He married my mother in 1825, and they had eighteen children. Master Miley Boone gave father and mother their freedom in 1829, and gave them forty acres of land to tend as their own. He paid father for all the work he did for him after that, and was always very kind to them.

My mother was born in slavery, in Marion County, Kentucky, in 1802. She was treated very mean until she married my father in 1825. With him she gained her freedom in 1829. I was the last born of her eighteen children. She was a good woman and joined church after coming to Indiana and died in 1917, living to be one hundred and fifteen years old.

I have heard my mother tell of a girl slave who worked in the kitchen of my mother's master. The girl was told to cook twelve eggs for breakfast. When the eggs were served, it was discovered there were eleven eggs on the table and after being questioned, she admitted that she had eaten one. For this, she was beaten mercilessly, which was a common sight on that plantation.

The most terrible treatment of any slave, is told by my father in a story of a slave on a neighboring plantation, owned by Daniel Thompson. "After committing a small wrong, Master Thompson became angry, tied his slave to a whipping post and beat him terribly. Mrs. Thompson begged him to quit whipping, saying, 'you might kill him,' and the master replied that he aimed to kill him. He then tied the slave behind a horse and dragged him over a fifty acre field until the slave was dead. As a punishment for this terrible deed, master Thompson was compelled to witness the execution of his own son, one year later. The story is as follows:

A neighbor to Mr. Thompson, a slave owner by name of Kay Van Cleve, had been having some trouble with one of his young male slaves, and had promised the slave a whipping. The slave was a powerful man and Mr. Van Cleve was afraid to undertake the job of whipping him alone. He called for help from his neighbors, Daniel Thompson and his son Donald. The slave, while the Thompsons were coming, concealed himself in a horse-stall in the barn and hid a large knife in the manger.

After the arrival of the Thompsons, they and Mr. Van Cleve entered the stall in the barn. Together, the three white men made a grab for the slave, when the slave suddenly made a lunge at the elder Mr. Thompson with the knife, but missed him and stabbed Donald Thompson.

The slave was overpowered and tied, but too late, young Donald was dead.

The slave was tried for murder and sentenced to be hanged. At the time of the hanging, the first and second ropes used broke when the trap was sprung. For a while the executioner considered freeing the slave because of his second failure to hang him, but the law said, "He shall hang by the neck until dead," and the third attempt was successful."