

MRS. ELLEN CAVE

By Grace Monroe

Dist. 4, Jefferson County

Assistant editor of "The Rising Sun Recorder" furnished the following story which had appeared in the paper, March 19, 1937.

Mrs. Cave was in slavery for twelve years before she was freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. When she gave her story to Aubrey Robinson she was living in a temporary garage home back of the Rising Sun courthouse having lost everything in the 1937 flood.

Mrs. Cave was born on a plantation in Taylor County Kentucky. She was the property of a man who did not live up to the popular idea of a Southern gentleman, whose slaves refused to leave them, even after their freedom was declared.

When she was a year old her mother was sold to someone in Louisiana and she did not see her again until 1867, when they were reunited in Carrolton, Kentucky. Her father died when she was a baby.

Mrs. Cave told of seeing wagon loads of slaves sold down the river. She, herself was put on the block several times but never actually sold, although she would have preferred being sold rather than the continuation of the ordeal of the block.

Her master was a "mean man" who drank heavily, he had twenty slaves that he fed now and then, and gave her her freedom after the war only when she would remain silent about it no longer. He was a Southern sympathizer but joined the Union army where he became a captain and was in charge of a Union commissary. Finally, he was suspected and charged with mustering supplies to the rebels. He was imprisoned for some time, then court-martialed and sentenced to die. He escaped by bribing his negro guard.

Mrs. Cave said that her master's father had many young women slaves and sold his own half-breed children down the river to Louisiana plantations where the work was so severe that the slaves soon died.

While in slavery, Mrs. Cave worked as a maid in the house until she grew older when she was forced to do all kinds of outdoor labor. She remembered sawing logs in the snow all day. In the summer she pitched hay or any other man's work in the field. She was trained to carry three buckets of water at the same time, two in her hands and one on her head, and said she could still do it.

On this plantation, the chief article of food for the slaves was bran-bread, although the master's children were kind and often slipped them out meat or other food.

Mrs. Cave remembered seeing General Woolford and General Morgan of the Southern forces when they made friendly visits to the plantation. She saw General Grant twice during the war. She saw soldiers drilling near the plantation. Later she was caught and whipped by night riders, or "pattyrollers", as she tried to slip out to negro religious meetings.

Mrs. Cave was driven from her plantation two years after the war and came to Carrollton Kentucky, where she found her mother and soon married James Cave, a former slave on a plantation near hers in Taylor county. Mrs. Cave had thirteen children.

For many years Mrs. Cave has lived on a farm about two and one-half mi. south of Rising Sun. Everything she had was washed away in the flood and she lived in the courthouse garage until her home could be rebuilt.