

**George Henderson:
Garrard County
Interviewed by Eliza Ison
HW: Ky 13**

Uncle George tells me that he was born May 10, 1860 near Versailles, in Woodford County, Kentucky. His father's name was Bradford Henderson, who was a slave of Milford Twiman who belonged to the Cleveland family. He does not know where his family came from. There were 21 children including two or three sets of twins. All died while young, except his brothers: Milford, Sam, and Joe; and sisters: Elle and Betsy. All the slaves lived in log cabins and there were about 30 or 40 of them on a plantation of 400 acres.

The cabin I was born in had four rooms, two above and two below. The rooms above were called lofts, and we climbed up a ladder to get to these rooms. We slept on trundle-beds, which were covered with straw ticks. Our covers were made in big patches from old cast-off clothes. When we got up in the morning we shoved the trundle bed back under the big bed. Some boy would ring a great big bell, called the "farm bell" about sunrise. Some went to the stables to look after the horses and mules. Plowing was done with a yoke or oxen. The horses were just used for carriages and to ride. My work was pulling weeds, feeding chickens, and helping to take care of the pigs. Master Cleveland had a very bad male hog and had to keep him in a pen about 10 feet high. Sometimes he would break out of the pen and it would take all the bulldogs in the county to get him back. I never did earn any money, but worked for my food and clothes. My daddy used to hunt rabbits and possums. I went with him and would ride on his back with my feet in his pockets. He had a dog named Brutus which was a watchdog. My daddy would lay his hat down anywhere in the woods and Brutus would stay by the hat until he would come back. We ate all kinds of wild food, possum, and rabbits baked in a big oven. Minnows were fished from the creeks and fried in hot grease. We ate this with pone cornbread. We had plenty of vegetables to eat. An old negro called "Ole Man Ben" called us to eat. We called him the dinner bell because he would say "Who-e-e, God-damn your blood and guts".

Our clothes were made of jeans and linsey in winter. In the summer we wore cotton clothes. They gave us shoes at Christmas time. We were measured with sticks. Once I was warming my shoes on a back log on the big fireplace, they fell over behind the logs and burnt up. I didn't marry while on the plantation.

My master and mistress lived in the big brick house of 15 rooms, with two long porches. One below and one below. My mistus was Miss Lucy Elmore before she married. Her children were named Miss Mat, Miss Emma, and Miss Jennie.

I saw the slaves in chains after they were sold. The white folks did not teach us to read and write. We had church on the plantation but we went from one plantation to another to hear preaching. White folks preacher's name was Reuben Lee, in Versailles. A meeting of the Baptist Church resulted in the first baptizing I ever saw. It was in Mr. Chillers pond. The preacher would say 'I am baptizing you in Mr. Chillers pond because I know he is an honest man'. I can't remember any funeral.

I remember one slave named Adams who ran away and when he came back my old master picked up a log from the fire and hit him over the head. We always washed up and cleaned up for Sunday. Sometimes the older ones would get drunk.

On Christmas and New Years day we would go up to the house and they would give us candy and fruit and fire-crackers. We were given some of all the food that the white folks had, even turkey. Would have heaps of corn-shuckings, the neighbors would come in and then we'd have big dances and old Master would always have a "jug of liquor".

If a cat crossed our path we would turn backwards for a while. When I was about 9 or 10 years old I went from the cabin to the big kitchen to make the fire for my mammy to get the breakfast and I saw ole man Billie Cleveland standing looking up in the sky. He had been dead about 3 or 4 years; but I saw him.

The white folks looked after us when we were sick. Used dock leaves, slippery elm for poultices. They put polk root in whiskey and gave it to us.

When the news came we were freed everybody was glad. The slaves cleared up the ground and cut down trees. Stayed with Master Cleveland the first year after the war. Have heard the Ku Klux Klan ride down the road, wearing masks. None ever bothered me or any of Master Cleveland's slaves.

I married years after I left Master Cleveland. Married Lucy Mason the first time and had three children, two girls and 1 boy. I didn't have children by my second marriage, but the third time I had four. One died. I have eight grandchildren.

We had no overseer but Master Hock was the only boy and the oldest child. We had no white trash for neighbors. I have seen old covered wagons pulled by oxen travelling on the road going to Indianny and we children were whipped to keep us away from the road for fear they would steal us.