

Harriet Mason
Garrard County
Interviewed by Eliza Ison
HW: Ky 11

She was born one mile below Bryantsville on the Lexington Pike in Garrard County, and was owned by B.M. Jones. She gives the date of her birth as April 14, 1847. Aunt Harriet's father was Daniel Scott, a slave out of Mote Scott's slave family. Aunt Harriet's mother's name was Amy Jones, slave of Master Briar Jones, who came from Harrodsburg, Ky. The names of her brothers were Harrison, Daniel, Merida, and Ned; her sisters were Susie and Maria. Miss Patsy, wife of Master Briar gave Maria to Master Sammy Welsh, brother of Miss Patsy's and who lived with his sister. He taught school in Bryantsville for a long time.

General Gano who married Jane Welsh, adopted daughter of Master Briar Jones, took my sisters Myra and Emma, brother Ned, and myself to Tarrant County, Texas to a town called Lick Skillet, to live. Grapevine was the name of the white folks' house. It was called Grapevine because these grapevines twined around the house and arbors. Sister Emma was the cook and Myra and I were nurses and house maids. Brother married Betty Estill, a slave who cooked for the Estill family. Mr. Estill later bought Ned in order to keep him on the place.

I didn't sleep in the cabins with the rest of the Negroes; I slept in the big house and nursed the children. I was not paid any money for my work. My food was the same as what the white folks ate. In the summer time we wore cotton and tow linen; and linsey in the winter. The white folks took me to church and dressed me well. I had good shoes and they took me to church on Sunday. My master was a preacher and a doctor and a fine man. Miss Mat sure was hard to beat. The house they lived in was a big white house with two long porches. We had no overseer or driver. We had no Poor white neighbors. There were about 300 acres of land around Lick Skillet, but we did not have many slaves. The slaves were woken up by General Gano who rang a big farm bell about four times in the morning. There was no jail on the place and I never saw a slave whipped or punished in any way. I never saw a slave auctioned off. My Missus taught all the slaves to read and write, and we sat on a bench in the dining room. When the news came that we were free General Gano took us all in the dining room and told us about it. I told him I wasn't going to the cabins and sleep with them niggers and I didn't.

At Christmas and New Year's we sure did have big times and General Gano and Miss Nat would buy us candy, popcorn, and firecrackers and all the good things just like the white folks. I don't remember any weddings, but do remember the funeral of Mr. Marion who lived between the big house and Lick Skillet. He was going to be buried in the cemetery at Lick Skillet, but the horses got scared and turned the spring wagon over and the corpse fell out. The mourners sure had a time getting things straightened out, but they finally got him buried.

They used to keep watermelon to pass to company. We children would go to the patch and bring the melons to the big spring and pour water over them and cool 'em.

When news came that we were free we all started back to Kentucky to Master Jones' old place. We started the journey in two covered wagons and an ambulance. General Gano and Miss Nat and the two children and me rode in the ambulance. When we got to Memphis we got on a steam boat named "Old Kentucky". We loaded the ambulance and the two wagons and horses on the boat. When we left the boat, we got on the train and got off at Georgetown in Scott County and rode from there to General Gano's Brother William in Scott County, on a stagecoach. When I took the children, Katy and Maurice, upstairs to wash them I looked out the window into the driveway and saw the horses that belonged to Master Briar Jones. They nickered at the gate trying to get in. The horses were named Henry Clay and Dan. When the children went down I waved at the horses and they looked up at the window and nickered again and seemed to know me. When we were coming back from Texas, Maurice held on the plait of my hair all the way back.

I didn't marry while I belonged to the Gano family. I married Henry Mason after I came to Lancaster to live about sixty years ago. I am the mother of nine children, three boys and six girls. There are two living. I have no grand-children. I joined the church when the cholera epidemic broke out in Lancaster in 1878. The preacher was Brother Silas Crawford, of the Methodist Church. I was baptized in a pond on Creamery Street. I think people ought to be religious because they live better and they love people more.

With whom she lives is considered one of the high class of colored people. Aunt Harriet lived at the present behind the White Methodist Church in Lancaster. The daughter lives in Lancaster. She holds an A.B. Degree, teaching in the colored city school, and is also a music teacher. She

stands by the teaching of her mother, being a Good Methodist; giving of her time, talent, and service for her church.

Harriet Mason

GARRARD CO.

Interviewed by: Sue Higgins

When I was seven years old my missis took me to Bourbon County, when we got to Lexington I tried to run off and go back to Bryantsville to see my mammy. Master Gano told me if I didn't come the sheriff would get me. I never liked to go to Lexington since.

One Sunday we were going to a big meeting' we heard some rattling in the weeds. It was a big snake, it made a track in the dust. When we got home, Missis asked me if I killed any snakes. I said to missis, "Snake like to got me and Gilbert, too."

They used to have dances at Mrs. Dickerson's, a neighbor of General Gano (a preacher in the Christian Church). Mrs. Dickerson wouldn't let the Padaroes come to the dances. If they did come, she would get her pistol and make them leave.

When General Gano went from Texas to Kentucky, he brought 650 head of horses. He sold all of them but Old Black.

Master Gano went back to Texas to take up a child he had buried there. The boat blew up, and he came nigh getting drowned.

One time I was out in Master's wheat field. I would get the wheat heads and make chewing wax. I told Missis I want to go up to Bryantsville to see my mammy. Master took me in about a week.

Up at Miss Jennie West's house they had an old icehouse. Some boys made out like they had a bear up there to scare everybody away.

I saw a flock of wild geese fly over one evening late. Some boys saw them and one boy shot the leader. The rest of the flock wound round and round, they didn't know where to go.

One time when I was acting nurse for Missis, there was another nigger gal there and we were playing horseshoes. Celia hit me in the head. It got blood all over the baby's dress. Missis came out, she said, "I'll hit you niggers if you don't stop playing with horseshoes." The scar is on my head yet where Celia hit me. I ain't played since. Do you blame me?

Missis told her brother Sam one day to whoop me. Every time he hit me, I'd hit him. I wasn't afraid then. I didn't know any better. Look like white folks going to have their way and niggers goin' to have theirs.

I used to say I wish I'd died when I was little. But now I thank The Lord I'm here and I want to stay here as long as Lilly (my daughter) lives.

Missis wanted all of us little niggers to call Kate, Missis' little daughter, Miss Kate. But Missis say, 'They will call me Old Missis then'. Kate had red hair. A little nigger boy say, 'Look! Harriet, the town's on fire', I say get away from here nigger, I ain't going to have you making fun of my children.

Me and Missis were going to a neighbor's house one day in a sleigh. The baby was wrapped up in a comforter (it had a hole in it). The baby slipped out. I say, 'Lord missis, you've lost that baby.' "No, I haven't", Missis said. We stopped and shook the comfort and John was gone. 'Ain't that awful, Miss Mat?' We went back and found him a mile behind.

I asked Aunt Harriet to sing. She said, I have to wait for the spirit to move me. (S. Higgins).