

**Mrs. Mary Crane
Mitchell, Indiana
Interviewed by Emery Turner**



I was born on the farm of Wattie Williams, in 1855, and am eighty-two years old. I came to Mitchell, Indiana, about fifty years ago with my husband, who is now dead, and four children and have lived here ever since.

I was only a girl, about five or six years old when the Civil War broke out but I can remember very well, happenings of that time. My mother was owned by Wattie Williams, who had a large farm, located in Larue County, Kentucky. My father was a slave on the farm of a Mr. Duret, nearby.

In those days, slave owners, whenever one of their daughters would get married, would give her and her husband a slave as a wedding present, usually allowing the girl to pick the one she wished to accompany her to her new home. When Mr. Duret's eldest daughter married Zeke Samples, she chose my father to accompany them to their home.

Zeke Samples proved to be a man who loved his toddies far better than his bride and before long he was "broke". Everything he had or owned, including my father, was to be sold at auction to pay off his debts.

In those days, there were men who made a business of buying up negroes at auction sales and shipping them down to New Orleans to be sold to owners of cotton and sugar cane plantations, just as men today buy and ship cattle. These men were called "Nigger-traders" and they would

ship whole boat loads at a time, buying them up, two or three here, two or three there, and holding them in a jail until they had a boat load. This practice gave rise to the expression, "sold down the river."

My father was to be sold at auction, along with all of the rest of Zeke Samples' property. Bob Cowherd, a neighbor of Matt Duret's owned my grandfather, and the old man, my grandfather, begged Col. Bob to buy my father from Zeke Samples to keep him from being "sold down the river." Col. Bob offered what he thought was a fair price for my father and a "nigger-trader" raised his bid \$25. Col. said he couldn't afford to pay that much and father was about to be sold to the "nigger-trader" when his father told Col. Bob that he had \$25 saved up and that if he would buy my father from Samples and keep the "nigger-trader" from getting him, he would give him the money. Col. Bob Cowherd took my grandfather's \$25 and offered to meet the trader's offer and so my father was sold to him.

The negroes in and around where I was raised were not treated badly, as a rule, by their masters. There was one slave owner, a Mr. Heady, who lived nearby, who treated his slave worse than any of the other owners but I never heard of anything so awfully bad happening to his "niggers". He had one boy who used to come over to our place and I can remember hearing Master Williams call to my grandmother to cook, "Christine, give Heady's Doc something to eat. He looks hungry." Master Williams always said "Heady's Doc" when speaking of him or any other slave, saying to call him, for instance, Doc Heady would sound as if he were Mr. Heady's own son and he said that wouldn't sound right.

When President Lincoln issued his proclamation freeing the negroes, I remember that my father and most all of the other younger slave men left the farms to join the Union army. We had hard times then for a while and had lots of work to do. I don't remember just when I first regarded myself as "free", as many of the negroes didn't understand just what it was all about.

Ed. Note: Mrs. Crane will also pose for a picture.