

Mrs. Sam Duncan
WAYNE CO.
Interviewed by Gertrude Vogler

After the War was over Mammy's old man did not want us with them, so he threatened to kill us. Then my old mammy fixed us a little bundle of what few clothes we had and started us two children out to go back to the Campbell family in Albany. The road was just a wilderness and full of wild animals and varmints. Mammy gave us some powder and some matches, telling us to put a little down in the road every little while and set fire to it. This would scare the wild animals away from us. We got to the river at almost dark and some old woman set us across the river in a canoe. She let us stay all night with her, and we went on to 'Grandpap Campbells' (We always called him Grandpap instead of Master, as the others did.) When he saw us coming he said 'Lord have mercy here comes them poor little children'.

I stayed with them from that time until I was big enough to be a house girl. Then I went to live with the Harrison family in Albany; and I lived with them till I married old Sam Duncan and came to Wayne County to live. I've raised a family of nine children and have thirty-seven grandchildren and twenty great-grandchildren.

Every one of my children wears a silver dime on a string around their leg, to keep off the witches spell. One time, before my daughter Della began wearing it, she was going down the road, not far from our house, when all at once her leg gave way and she could not walk. Of course, I knew what it was. So I went after Linda Woods, the witch doctor. She came with a bottle of something, all striped with all colors, but when you shook it up it was all the same color. She rubbed her leg with it and told me to get all the life everlasting (a weed, you know) that I could carry in my arm, and brew it for tea to bathe her leg in. Then pour it in a hole in the ground, but not to cover it up. Then not to go down the same road for nine days. We did all she said, and her leg got all right as soon as we bathed it. But she did not wait nine days and started down the road the next day. The very same thing happened to her again. Her leg gave way under her and she could not walk a step. I went after Linda Woods again. This time she said, 'D--m her, I told her not to go over that road for nine days.' But she came with the striped bottle and destroyed the witch spell again, telling her this time if she went over the road again for nine days that she would remain a cripple all her life, for she would not cure her again. Della stayed off that road for nine days this time, and all the family has worn the silver dime around their legs ever since.

Another time my old man Sam got down in his back. Well, he went to Henry Coulter (he was another witch doctor). He just shot in the back with a glass pistol and cured him. Of course, there was not any bullet in the pistol, but it cured him. He could draw a picture of a chicken on a paper and shoot it, and a chicken would fall dead in the yard, yes sir. I've seen him do it. Old Henry is dead now though. When he died he had a whole trunk full of the queerest looking things you ever saw. And they took it all and buried it. Nobody would touch it for anything. I always keep a horseshoe over my door to keep the spirits away. We live very close to the graveyard, and my boy Ed said he had been seeing his brother Charley in his room every night. If he was living right he would not be seeing Charlie every night. Charlie never bothers me. He was my boy that died and is buried in this graveyard above our house.