

RACHEL GAINES

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Lordy! I don't know how old I am. I believe I am around 95 to 100 years. The first thing I remember is I was taken in a wagon to Trenton, Kentucky and sold to Dr. Bainbridge Dickerson just like they sold cows and horses. My sister was sold in the same way at Bowling Green, Kentucky to another master. I was sold only one time in my life and that was when Master Dickinson bought me.

After freedom was declared the master told all his slaves that they could go wherever they pleased, but if they couldn't make their own living to come to him and he would help them. Missus Dickinson kept me there because I was the nurse to their son, Howard, who was sure a wild one. I remember how he would tote out fried chicken, pig meat and other good stuff to us darkies.

They agreed to pay me \$35.00 a year (and keep) and it was given me every Christmas morning. They treated me good, gave me all the clothes and other things I needed, as if I were one of the family.

Every two weeks the master would send for Jordan McGowan, who was the leader of a string music band. They would get there Friday night early and the slaves would dance in the grape house that night and all day Saturday up to midnite. You don't have now as good dance music and as much fun as the ole time days had. We always had a big barbecue and watermelon feast every time we had a dance. Never again will there be as good times as we used to have. In my time we never heard of workhouses or pen, but now they are all filled. I can see now in my mind the ole ice house on the plantation. In the winter the slaves would fill it with ice they got off the creek and it was not used 'till warm weather came.

Another thing I remember is the pattyrollers (she refers to the Police Patrol of that day) who would catch and whip runaway slaves and slaves away from their own plantations without a pass with their master's name signed on it.

I remember when Nashville first had street cars pulled along by horses or mules, and I also remember the old dummy cars, run by steam, to Glendale Park also New Town (now called West Nashville).

We had some bad and good luck signs but I'm forgetting some. I remember about a black cat crossing over the path in front of you that you would have bad luck. When dat happened to me, I would spit on the ground, turn around and back over the place the cat crossed and the bad luck was gone from me. If you found an old horseshoe that had been dropped by a horse, it meant good luck. Some people, white and black, when they find a horseshoe, they would tack it up on the front door frame with the toe to the ground.

After the master and missus died, I went to Nashville and made my way for many years by washing and ironing for white people, but after I went blind, I came here to live with my daughter.