

Richard Miller

Mrs. Sarah H. Locke

1109 North West Street. District #6, Marion County

Interviewed by Anne Pritchett

1200 Kentucky Avenue

Richard Miller was born January 12, 1843 in Danville, Kentucky.

His mother was an English subject, born in Bombay, India, and was brought into America by a group of people who did not want to be under the English government. They landed in Canada, came on to Detroit, stayed there a short time, then went to Danville, Kentucky. There she married a slave named Miller. They were the parents of five children.

After slavery was abolished, they bought a little farm a few miles from Danville, Kentucky.

The mother was very ambitious for her children and sent them to the country school. One day, when the children came home from school, their mother was gone; they knew not where. It was learned she was sending her children to school, and that was not wanted. She was taken to Texas, and nothing was heard from her until 1871. She wrote to her brother she was coming to see them and try to find her children if any of them were left.

The boy, Richard, was in the army. He was so anxious to see his mother, to see what she would look like. The last time he saw her, she was washing clothes at the branch, and was wearing a blue cotton dress. All he could remember about her was her beautiful black hair, and the cotton dress. When he saw her, he didn't recognize her, but she told him of things he could remember that had happened, and that made him think she was his mother.

Richard was told who had taken the mother from the children, went to the man and shot and killed him; nothing was done to him for his deed.

He remembers a slave by the name of Brown, in Texas, who was chained hand and feet to a woodpile, oil thrown over him, and the wood, then fire set to the wood, and he was burned to death.

After the fire smoldered down, the white women and children took his ashes for souvenirs.[1]

When slavery was abolished, a group of them started down to the far south, to buy farms, to try for themselves, got as far as Madison County, Kentucky and were told if they went any farther south, they would be made slaves again, not knowing if that was the truth or not, they stayed there, and worked on the Madison County farms for a very small wage. This separated families, and they never heard from each other ever again.

These separations are the cause of so many of the slave race not being able to trace families back for generations, as do the white families.

George Band was a very powerful slave, always ready to fight, never losing a fight, always able to defend himself until one night a band of Ku Kluxers came to his house, took his wife, hung her to a tree, hacked her to death with knives. Then went to the house, got George, took him to see what they had done to his wife. He asked them to let him go back to the house to get something to wrap his wife in, thinking he was sincere in his request, they allowed him to go. Instead of getting a wrapping for his wife, he got his Winchester rifle, shot and killed fourteen of the Kluxers. The county was never bothered with the Klan again. However, George left immediately for the North.

The first Monday of the month was sale day. The slaves were chained together and sent down in Miss., often separating mothers from children, husbands from wives, never to hear of each other again.

Interviewer's Comment

Mr. Miller lives with his family in a very comfortable home.

He has only one eye, wears a patch over the bad one.

He does not like to talk of his early life as he said it was such a "nightmare" to him; however he answered all questions very pleasantly.

Submitted December 9, 1937

Indianapolis, Indiana