

WATT JORDAN

Clark County, District #6

Age 80, 1/15/41

I was eight years old when freedom was declared. My parents were Roe and Martha Jordan. They were owned by some Jordans of Flemingsburg and Kentucky and were owned by Dick Spencer. I remember him selling us to old man Peedicky and then trading a piece of land for us the same day, and getting us back.

The Spencer plantation wasn't big and there weren't so many slaves on it. My grandmother lived on the same plantation as us, but they sold her off somewhere, and we never saw or heard tell of her again. Once, ole man Spencer gave her a good whipping, because she stole food from the house for us children, and I remember it because we never got hardly anything to eat.

Spencer's plantation was just next to the country school, and we children could see the white children going to school and playing. But if the white folks caught us all with a book, we got a whipping.

There were thirteen of us children. I remember best, Molly, Walker, Charles, Aggie, Henry, and Zeke. They were fixing to sell us again when freedom was declared. My mother was sick, and she feared we would all be sold down south somewhere and she'd never see us again.

They furnished shoes for the grownups to wear in the winter, but in summer they went barefoot. And children went barefoot all the time; when it was cold weather they were supposed to stay in the cabin. Our cabin sat way down under the hill, and it wasn't very comfortable, because we didn't have any furniture besides the beds and stools. We had big rope beds and little trundle beds for us children, and they used straw ticks, but we did have plenty of liver. We children didn't have anything to play with, and no books or papers to look at.

When freedom was declared, ole man Spencer told Mother she could stay on until she got well, and he wanted to know what she was going to do about us children. So she bound several of us out and I went to Matt Clay, who took me to stay until I was 21. I've never seen Mother again.

I left Clay's after he flew into a rage one day and was going to whip me. I was eighteen then, and I knew I was just as good a man as Clay was; so, when he started to whip me, I just whipped him and left. He tried to get me back, then came to town and raised a racket, but folks all told him I was free to do what I wanted, so he left me alone.

Finally, I went to Carlisle, Kentucky. I lived there until I came to Springfield. I farmed and was able to save a little money and buy property. I belong to the Second Baptist Church. When I farmed I raised tobacco, corn, wheat, and turkeys. And I remember that Spencers raised a lot of turkeys, corn, wheat, and all their stock.

Jean pants and old, coarse hickory shirts were what slaves wore when I was a boy, and they didn't have much to eat. Sometimes folks were treated just like dumb animals - and some of them not as good. I've seen it pretty hard in my day. I've seen more than I can think of now. And I am the only one of the thirteen children still living.

Interviewed at his daughter's residence, 1362 West Clark St.

Editor's note: Watt Jordan is 80, a full-blooded Negro of medium height and slender build. He is almost bald and his eyesight is failing. He has a comfortable home with his married daughter.