

**Mississippi Narratives**  
**Prepared by**  
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**For the State of Mississippi**  
**Isaac Stier age 99**

"Miss, my name is Isaac Stier, but folks calls me 'Ike.' I was named by my pappy's young Marster an' I aint never tol' nobody all o' dat name. It's got twenty-two letters in it. It's wrote out in de fam'ly Bible. Dat's how I knows I'll be one hund'ed years old if I lives 'til de turn o' de year. I was born in Jefferson County 'tween Hamburg an' Union Church. De plantation joined de Whitney place an' de Montgomery place, too. I b'longed to Marse Jeems Stowers. I don't rightly 'member how many acres my Marster owned, but 'twas a big plantation wid eighty or ninety head o' grown folks workin' it. No tellin' how many little black folks dey was.

"My mammy was Ellen Stier an' my pappy was Jordon Stier. He was brought to dis country by a slave dealer from Nashville, Tennessee. Dey traveled all de way through de Injun Country on afoot. Dey come on dat Trace road. Twant nothin' but a Injun Trail.

"When dey got to Natchez de slaves was put in de pen 'tached to de slave markets. It stood at de forks o' St. Catherine Street an' de Liberty road. Here dey was fed an' washed an' rubbed down lak race hosses. Den dey was dressed up an' put through de paces dat would show off dey muscles. My pappy was sol' as a twelve year old, but he always said he was nigher twenty.

"De firs' man what bought him was a preacher, but he only kep' 'im a little while. Den he was sol' to Mr. Preacher Robinson. He was a Methodis'.

"De slaves was well treated when dey got sick. My Marster had a standin' doctor what he paid by de year. Dey was a horspital building near de quarters an' a good old granny woman to nuss de sick. Dey was five or six beds in a room. One room was for mens an' one for wimmins. Us doctor was name Richardson an' he tended us long after de war. He sho' was a gent'man an' a powerful good doctor.

"Us had a overseer on de place, but he warnt mean lak I'se heard o' other folks havin'. He was Mr. William Robinson. He was good to ever'body, both white an' cullud. Folks didn' min' workin' for him, 'cause he spoke kin'. But dey dassen' sass 'im. He was poor. My pappy b'longed to his pa, Mr. John Robinson. Dat was a nice fam'ly wid sho' 'nough 'ligion. Whilst dey warnt rich, dey had learnin'.

"As a little tike I wore long slip-lak shirts. When dey sont me to town I put on britches an' stuffed de tail o' my slip in 'em so's it pass' for a shirt. I always lived in de Big House an' played wid de white chillun. I sorta looked after 'em. I carried 'em to school. Den whilst dey was in school I roamed de woods a-huntin'. Sometimes I'd git a big beg o' game, mos'ly used to feed de slaves.

"My mistis was Miss Sarah Stowers an' she teached me how to read. She teached me how to be mannerly, too. On church days I \*driv' de carriage. I was proud to take my folks to meetin'. I always set in de back pew an' heard de preachin' de same as dey did.

"De bes' times I can 'member always come 'roun' de Fourth o' July. Dat was always de beginnin' o' camp-meetin'. Aint nothin' lak dat in dese days.

"Ever'body what had any standin' went. Dey cooked up whole trunks full o' good things t'eat an' driv' over to de camp groun's. De preacher had a big pavilion covered wid sweet-gum branches an' carpeted wid sawdust. Folks had wagons wid hay an' quilts whar de men-folks slep'. De ladies slep' in little log houses an' dey took dey feather beds wid 'em. I always driv' de carriage for my white folks. Whilst dey was a-worshipin' I'd slip 'roun' an' tas' out o' dey basket. Ever' day I'd eat 'til I was ready to bus'. One day I got so sick I thought I'd pop wide open. I crawled down to de spring an' washed my face in col' water, but I kep' gittin' worse an' worse. Dan somebody called out: 'Captain Stier, yo' Nigger's a-dyin'!' My marster called de doctor. He sho' was shamed in public, 'cause, he knowed pos'tive I'd been a-pilferin' in dem baskets. Dem sho' was good old days. I'd love to live 'em over ag'in.

"Us slaves mos'ly sung hymns an' \*sa'ms. But I 'member one song 'bout a frog pond an' one 'bout 'Jump, Mr. Toad.' I's too wordless to sing 'em now, but dey was funny. Us danced plenty, too. Some o' de men clogged an' pidgeoned, but when us had dances dey was real cotillions, lak de white folks had. Dey was always a fiddler an', on Chris'mus an' other holidays, de slaves was 'lowed to 'vite dey sweethearts from other plantations. I use to call out de figgers: 'Ladies, sasshay, Cents to de lef', now all swing.' Ever'body lak my calls an' de dancers sho' moved smooth an' pretty. Long after de war was over de white folks would 'gage me to come 'roun' wid de band an' call de figgers at all de big dances. Dey always paid me well.

"Old Mis' 'ud let us cook a gran' supper an' Marse 'ud slip us some likker. Dem suppers was de bes' I ever et. Sometimes dey'd be wil' turkey, fried fish, hot corn pone, fresh pork ham, baked yams, chitlins, pop corn, apple pie, pound cake, raisins, an' coffee. Law, Miss! de folks now-a-days don't know nothin' 'bout good eatin', nohow.

"When de big war broke out I sho' stuck by my marster. I \*fit de Yankees same as he did. I went in de battles 'long side o' him an' both fit under Marse Robert E. Lee. I reckon ever'body has heard 'bout him. I seen more folks dan anybody could count. Heaps of 'em was all tore to pieces an' cryin' to Cod to let 'em die. I toted water to dem in blue de same as dem in gray. Folks wouldn' b'lieve de truf if I was to tell all I knows 'bout dem ongodly times.

"Fore de war I never knowed what it was to go empty. My marster sho' set a fine table an' fed his people de highes'. De hungriest I ever been was at de Siege o' Vicksburg. Dat was a time I'd lak to forgit. De folks et up all de cats an' dogs an' den went to devourin' de mules an' hosses. Even de wimmin an' little chillun was a-starvin'. Dey stummicks was stickin' to dey backbones. Us Niggers was sufferin' so us took de sweaty hoss blankets an' soaked 'em in mudholes where de hosses tromped. Den us wrung 'em out in buckets an' drunk dat dirty water for pot-likker. It tasted kinda salty an' was strength'nin', lak weak soup.

"I tell you, dem Yankees took us by starvation. Twant a fair fight. Dey called it a vict'ry an' bragged 'bout Vicksburg a-fallin', but hongry folks aint got no fight lef' in 'em. Us folks was starved into surrenderin'.

"De slaves spected a heap from freedom dey didn' git. Dey was led to b'lieve dey would have a easy time - go places widout passes - an have plenty o' spendin' money. But dey sho' got fooled. Mos' of 'em didn' fin' deyse'ves no better off. Pussonally, I had a harder time after de war dan I did endurin' slav'ry.

"De Yankees passed as us frien's. Dey made big promises, but dey was poor reliance. Some of 'em meant well towards us, but dey was mistol' 'bout a heap o' things. Dey promised us a mule an' forty acres o' lan'. Us aint seen no mule yet. Us got de lan' all right, but twant no service. Fac' is, 'twas way over in a

territory where nothin' 'ud grow. I didn' know nothin' 'bout farmin', nowhow, I'd always been a coachman an' play companion to de white chillun.

"De war was over in May 1865, but I was captured at Vicksburg an' hel' in jail 'til I 'greed to take up arms wid de Nawth. I figgered dat was 'bout all I could do, 'cause dey warnt but one war at Vicksburg an' dat was over. I was all de time hopin' I could slip off an' work my way back home, but de Yankees didn' turn me loose 'til 1866.

"Den I worked in a saloon in St. Louis. Dat was 'bout all I knowed to do. All de time I was a-cravin' to come back to Kississippi. It sho' suits my tas' better'n anywhere I'se ever been.

"When I landed back home my white folks welcome me. After awhile I married a gal what was real smart 'bout farmin' an' chicken raisin'. So us share-cropped an' raised a fam'ly. Somehow us always scrapped along. Sometimes it was by de hardes', but us always had plenty t'eat.

"All de cullud folks what lived to git back home took to de lan' ag'in. If dey marster was dead dey went to his frien's an' offered to share-crop. Dey was all plumb sick o' war. Is sho' is ongodly business. I never will forgit de fearsome sight o' seein' men die 'fore dey time. War sho' is de debbil's own work.

"De Klu Klux Klan didn' bother me none. Course, I was feared of 'em at firs', but I soon learnt dat long as I b'haved myse'f an' tended my business dey warnt after me. Dey sho' disastered dem what meddled wid de white folks. Nobody but a smart Alec would a-done dat. Only Niggers huntin' trouble mixed into white folks bus'ness. Onct or twict I seen Klu Klux's ridin' by, but dey always traveled fas' an' I kep' my \*mouf shut.

"After de war my marster come back home. De fences was gone, de cattle was gone, de money an' de Niggers was gone, too. On top o' all dat de whole country was over-run an' plumb took over by white trash. It was cautious times.

"After awhile, robbers an' low down trash got to wearin' robes an' pretendin' dey was Klu Klux's. Folks called dem de 'white caps.' Dey was vicious, an' us was more scared of 'em dan us'd ever been o' de Klan. When dey got likkered up de debbil sho' was turnt loose.

"Mr. Jefferson Davis was pretty good 'bout some things. But if he hadn' a-been mulish he could-a 'cepted de proposition Mr. Abe Lincum made 'im. Den slav'ry would-a lasted always. But he flew into a

huff an' swore dat he'd whip de Yankees wid corn stalks. Dat made Mr. Lincum mad, so he sot about to free de slaves.

"Mr. Lincum was a good man, but dey tells me he was poor an' never cut much rigger in his clothes. Dat's why he never did un'erstan' how us felt 'bout us white folks. It takes de quality to un'erstan' such things.

"Right now, I loves my marster an' his wife in de grave. Dey raised me an' showed me kindness all dey lives. I was proud of 'em. At de present time I's under treatment o' young Dr. Stowers, my marster's gran'chil'. I trusts him an' he is sho' good to me.

"I rents a place on Providence Plantation 'bout three miles south o' Natchez. De trip to Natchez in a rickety old wagon is mos' too much in de hot weather. My heart's mos' wore out. I can't las' long, 'cause I's had a heap \* sposure.

"I's jus' a bag o' bones now, but onct I stood nearly six feet in my stockings an' weighed 'bout one hundred an' eighty pounds. I was well muscied, too. Now I's gittin' kinda gray an' gittin' bald at de same time. Black folks lak me don't hardly ever git bald.

"I's gittin' real feeble. De doctor say I got a bad heart. Sometimes I jus' has to set on de curb an' res' myse'f a spell. I gits kinda windless when I thinks 'bout all I been through.

"My wife is been dead 'bout seventeen years an' my chillun is so scattered dat I don't know where dey is. De folks I stays wid is powerful good to me an' sees after me same as dey was my own. I reckon I don't need nothin else.

"Dis generation aint got much sense. Dey's tryin' to git somewheres too fas'. None of 'em is sat 'fied wid plain livin'. Dey wants too much.

"Nobody needs more dan dey can use, nowhow."

