

**WPA in Ohio
Federal Writers' Project
Bishop & Isleman
Reporter: Bishop
[HW: Revised]**

**Topic: Ex-Slaves.
Jefferson County, District #5
July 6, 1937**

**GEORGE JACKSON
Ex-Slave, 79 years**

I was born in Loudon County, Virginny, Feb. 6, 1858. My mother's name was Betsy Jackson. My father's name was Henry Jackson. Dey were slaves and was born right der in Loudon County. I had 16 brothers and sisters. All of dem is dead. My brothers were Henry, Richard, Wesley, John and me; Sisters were Annie, Marion, Sarah Jane, Elizabeth, Alice, Cecila and Meryl. Der were three other chillun dat died when babies.

I can remember Henry pullin' me out of de fire. I've got scars on my leg yet. He was sold out of de family to a man dat was Wesley McGuest. Afterwards my brother was taken sick with small-pox and died.

We lived on a big plantation right close to Bloomfield, Virginny. I was born in de storeroom close to massa's home. It was called de weavin' room—place where dey weaved cotton and yarn. My bed was like a little cradle bed and dey push it under de big bed at day time.

My grandfather died so my mother told me, when he was very old. My grandmother died when se bout 96. She went blind fore she died. Dey were all slaves.

My father was owned by John Butler and my grandmother was owned by Tommy Humphries. Dey were both farmers. My massa joined de war. He was killed right der where he lived.

When my father wanted to cum home he had to get a permit from his massa. He would only cum home on Saturday. He worked on de next plantation joinin' us. All us chillun and my mother belonged to Massa Humphries.

I worked in de garden, hoein' weeds and den I washed dishes in de kitchen. I never got any money.

I eat fat pork, corn bread, black molasses and bad milk. The meat was mostly boiled. I lived on fat meat and corn bread. I don't remember eatin' rabbit, possum or fish.

De slaves on our plantation did not own der own garden. Dey ate vegetables out of de big garden.

In hot weather I wore gean pants and shirt. De pants were red color and shirt white. I wore heavy woolen clothes in de winter. I wore little britches wid jacket fastened on. I went barefooted in de summer.

De mistress scold and beat me when I was pullin' weeds. Sometimes I pulled a cabbage stead of weed. She would jump me and beat me. I can remember cryin'. She told me she had to learn me to be careful. I remember the massa when he went to war. He was a picket in an apple tree. A Yankee soldier spied and shot him out of de tree.

I remember Miss Ledig Humphries. She was a pretty girl and she had a sister Susie. She married a Mr. Chamlain who was overseer. Der were Robert and Herbert Humphries. Dey were older dan me. Robert wuz about 15 years old when de war surrender.

De one that married Susie was de overseer. He was pretty rough. I don't remember any white neighbors round at dat time.

Der were 450 acres of de plantation. I can't remember all de slaves. I know der were 80, odd slaves.

Lots of mornings I would go out hours fore daylight and when it was cold my feet would 'most freeze. They all knew dey had to get up in de mornin'. De slaves all worked hard and late at night.

I heerd some say that the overseer would take dem to de barn. I remember Tom Lewis. Then his massa sold him to our massa he told him not to let the overseer whip him. The overseer said he would whip him. One day Tom did something wrong. The overseer ordered him to de barn. Tom took his shirt off to get ready for de whippin' and when de overseer raised de whip Tom gave him one lick wid his fist and broke de overseer's neck.

Den de massa sold Tom to a man by de name of Joseph Fletcher. He stayed with old man Fletcher til he died.

Fore de slaves were sold dey were put in a cell place til next day when dey would be sold. Uncle Marshall and Douglas were sold and I remember dem handcuffed but I never saw dem on de auction block.

I never knew nothin' bout de Bible til after I was free. I went to school bout three months. I was 19 or 20 years old den.

My uncle Bill heard dey were goin' to sell him and he run away. He went north and cum back after de surrender. He died in Bluemont, Virginny, bout four years ago.

After de days work dey would have banjo pickin', singin' and dancin'. Dey work all day Saturday and Saturday night those dat had wives to see would go to see dem. On Sunday de would sit around.

When Massa was shot my mother and dem was cryin'.

When Slaves were sick one of the mammies would look after dem and dey would call de doctor if she couldn't fix de sick.

I remember de big battle dey fought for four days on de plantation. That was de battle of Bull Run. I heard shootin' and saw soldiers shot down. It was one of de worst fights of de war. It was right between Blue Ridge and Bull Run mountain. De smoke from de shootin' was just like a fog. I saw horses and men runnin' to de fight and men shot off de horses. I heard de cannon roar and saw de locust tree cut off in de yard. Some of de bullets smashed de house. De apple tree where my massa was shot from was in de orchard not far from de house.

De Union Soldiers won de battle and dey camped right by de house. Dey helped demselves to de chickens and cut their heads off wid their swords. Dey broke into de cellar and took wine and preserves.

After de war I worked in de cornfield. Dey pay my mother for me in food and clothes. But dey paid my mother money for workin' in de kitchen.

De slaves were awful glad bout de surrender.

De Klu Klux Klan, we called dem de paroles, dey would run de colored people, who were out late, back home. I know no school or church or land for negroes. I married in Farguar [HW: Farquhar] Co., state of Virginny, in de county seat. Dat was in 1883. I was married by a Methodist preacher in Leesburg. I did not get drunk, but had plenty to drink. We had singin' and music. My sister was a religious woman and would not allow dancin'.

I have fourteen chillun. Four boys are livin' and two girls. All are married. George, my oldest boy graduated from grade school and de next boy. I have 24 grandchillun and one great grandson. John, my son is sickly and not able to work and my daughter, Mamie has nine chillun to support. Her husband doesn't have steady work.

The grandchillun are doin' pretty well.

I think Abraham Lincoln was a fine man. It was put in his mind to free de colored people. Booker T. Washington was alright.

Henry Logan, a colored man that lives near Bridgeport, Ohio is a great man. He is a deacon in de Mt. Zion Baptist church. He is a plasterer and liked by de colored and white people.

I think it wuz a fine thing that slavery was finished. I don't have a thing more than my chillun and dey are all poor. (A grandchild nearby said, "We are as poor as church mice".) My chillun are my best friends and dey love me.

I first joined church at Upperville, Virginnny. I was buried under de water. I feel dat everybody should have religion. Dey get on better in dis life, and not only in dis life but in de life to cum.

My overseer wuz just a plain man. He wasn't hard. I worked for him since the surrender and since I been a man. I was down home bout six yares ago and met de overseer's son and he took me and my wife around in his automobile.

My wife died de ninth of last October (1936). I buried her in Week's cemetery, near Bridgeport, Ohio. We have a family burial lot there. Dat where I want to be buried, if I die around here.

Description of GEORGE JACKSON [TR: original "Word Picture" struck out]

George Jackson is about 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighs 145 lbs. He has not done any manual labor for the past two years. He attends church regularly at the Mt. Zion Baptist church. As he only attended school about four months his reading is limited. His vision and hearing is fair and he takes a walk everyday. He does not smoke, chew or drink intoxicating beverages.

His wife, Malina died October 9, 1936 and was buried at Bridgeport, Ohio. He lives with his daughter-in-law whose husband forks for a junk dealer. The four room house

that they rent for \$20 per month is in a bad state of repairs and is in the midst of one of the poorest sections of Steubenville.
