

**James Immel, Reporter**  
**Folklore**  
**Washington County, District Three**  
**SARAH WOODS BURKE**  
**Aged 85**

"Yessir, I guess you all would call me an ex-slave cause I was born in Grayson County, West Virginia and on a plantation I lived for quite a spell, that is until when I was seven years old when we all moved up here to Washington county."

"My Pappy's old Mammy was supposed to have been sold into slavery when my Pappy was one month old and some poor white people took him ter raise. We worked for them until he was a growed up man, also 'til they give him his free papers and 'lowed him to leave the plantation and come up here to the North."

"How did we live on the plantation? Well—you see it was like this we lived in a log cabin with the ground for floors and the beds were built against the walls jus' like bunks. I 'member that the slaves had a hard time getting food, most times they got just what was left over or whatever the slaveholder wanted to give them so at night they would slip outa their cabins on to the plantation and kill a pig, a sheep or some cattle which they would butcher in the woods and cut up. The wimmin folks would carry the pieces back to the cabins in their aprons while the men would stay behind and bury the head, skin and feet."

"Whenever they killed a pig they would have to skin it, because they didn't dare to build a fire. The women folk after getting home would put the meat in special dug trenches and the men would come erlong and cover it up."

"The slave holders in the port of the country I came from was men and it was quite offen that slaves were tied to a whipping stake and whipped with a blacksnake until the blood ran down their bodies."

"I remembers quite clearly one scene that happened jus' afore I left that there part of the country. At the slaveholders home on the plantation I was at it was customary for the white folks to go to church on Sunday morning and to leave the cook in charge. This cook had a habit of making cookies and handing them out to the slaves before the folks returned. Now it happened that on one Sunday for some reason or tother the

white folks returned before the regular time and the poor cook did not have time to get the cookies to the slaves so she just hid them in a drawer that was in a sewing chair."

"The white folks had a parrot that always sat on top of a door in this room and when the mistress came in the room the mean old bird hollered out at the top of his voice, 'Its in the rocker. It's in the rocker'. Well the Missus found the cookies and told her husband where upon the husband called his man that done the whipping and they tied the poor cook to the stake and whipped her till she fainted. Next morning the parrot was found dead and a slave was accused because he liked the woman that had been whipped the day before. They whipped him than until the blood ran down his legs."

"Spirits? Yessir I believe in them, but we warnt bothered so much by them in them days but we was by the wild animals. Why after it got dark we children would have to stay indoors for fear of them. The men folks would build a big fire and I can remember my Pappy a settin on top of the house at night with a old flint lock across his legs awaiting for one of them critters to come close enough so he could shoot it. The reason for him being trusted with a gun was because he had been raised by the poor white man who worked for the slaveholder. My Pappy did not work in the fields but drove a team of horses."

"I remembers that when we left the plantation and come to Washington County, Ohio that we traveled in a covered wagon that had big white horse hitched to it. The man that owned the horse was Blake Randolls. He crossed the river 12 miles below Parkersberg. W. Va. on a ferry and went to Stafford, Ohio, in Monroe County where we lived until I was married at the age of 15 to Mr. Burke, by the Justice of the Peace, Edward Oakley. A year later we moved to Curtis Ridge which is seven miles from Stafford and we lived their for say 20 year or more. We moved to Rainbow for a spell and then in 1918 my husband died. The old man hard luck came around cause three years my home burned to the ground and then I came here to live with my boy Joe and his family."

"Mr. Burke and myself raised a family of 16 chilluns and at that time my husband worked at farming for other people at \$2.00 a month and a few things they would give him."

"My Pappy got his education from the boy of the white man he lived with because he wasn't allowed to go to school and the white boy was very smart and taught him just as he learned. My Pappy, fought in the Civil War too. On which side? Well, sho nuff on the site of the North, boy."