

**WPA in Ohio  
Federal Writers' Project**

**Topic: Ex-Slavery  
Jefferson Co, District #2**

**FLEMING CLARK  
Ex-Slave, 74+ in years**

My father's name wuz Fleming Clark and my mother's name wuz Emmaline Clark. Both of dem wuz in slavery. Der massa's name wuz David Bowers. I don't know where dey cum from but dey moved to Bad Creek after slavery days.

Der wuz three of us chillun. Charles, de oldest, den Anthony next and den me, de youngest. I wuz workin' for a white man and wuz old enough to drive cows and work in de 'bacco fields, pickin' worms off de leaves. De other brudders worked wid my father on another plantation. De house where I lived wid de white Massa Lewis Northsinge and his Missus, wuz a log house wid just two rooms. I had just a little straw tick and a cot dat de massa made himself and I hed a common quilt dat de missus made to cover me.

I hear dat my grandmother died during slavery and dat my grandfather wuz killed by his massa during slavery.

On Sunday I would go home and stay wid my father and mother and two brothers. We would play around wid ball and marbles. We had no school or church. We were too far away for church.

I earned no money. All I got wuz just my food and clothes. I wuz leasted out to my massa and missus. I ate corn bread, fat hog meat and drank butter milk. Sometimes my father would catch possum and my mother would cook them, and bring me over a piece. I used to eat rabbit and fish. Dey used to go fishin' in de creek. I liked rabbit and groundhog. De food wuz boiled and roasted in de oven. De slaves have a little patch for a garden and day work it mostly at night when it wuz moonlight.

We wore geans and shirts of yellow cotton, we wore no shoes up til Christmas. I wore just de same during de summer except a little coat. We had no under shirt lik we have now. We wore de same on Sunday. Der wuz no Sunday suit.

De massa and missus hed one boy. De boy wuz much older than I. Dey were all kind to me. I remember plenty poor white chillun. I remember Will and John Nathan. Dey were poor white people.

My massa had three plantations. He had five slaves on one and four on another. I worked on one with four slaves. My father worked on one wid my brother and mother. We would wake up at 4 and 5 o'clock and do chores in de barn by lamp light. De overseer would ring a bell in de yeard, if it wuz not too cold to go out. If it wuz too cold he would cum and knock on de door. It wuz 8 or 9 o'clock fore we cum in at night. Den we have to milk de cows to fore we have supper.

De slaves were punished fore cumin' in too soon and unhitching de horses. Dey would bend dem accross a barrel and switch dem and den send dem back to de fields.

I head dem say dey switch de blood out of dem and salt de wound den dey could not work de next day.

I saw slaves sold. Dey would stand on a block and men would bid for dem. De highest bidder bought de slaves. I saw dem travel in groups, not chained, one white man in front and one in back. Dey looked like cattle.

De white folks never learned me to read or write.

Der were petrollers. Dey were mean if dey catch you out late at night. If a slave wus out late at night he had to have a notice from his massa. Der wuz trouble if de slaves were out late at night or if dey run off to another man.

De slaves worked on Saturday afternoons. Dey stay in de cabins on Saturday nights and Sundays. We worked on New Years day. De massa would give us a little hard cider on Christmas day. Dey would give a big supper at corn huskin' or cotton pickin' and give a little play or somethin' lik dat.

I remember two weddings. Dey hed chicken, and mutton to eat and corn bread. Dey all ganged round de table. Der wur milk and butter. I remember one wedding of de white people. I made de ice cream for dem. I remember playin' marbles and ball.

Sometimes a racer snake would run after us, wrap round us and whip us with its tail. The first one I remember got after me in de orchard. He wrapped right round me and whipped me with his tail.

My mother took care of de slaves when dey were sick. You had to be awful sick if dey didn't make you go out. Dey made der own medicine in those days. We used asafetida

and put a piece in a bag and hung it round our necks. It wuz supposed to keep us from ketchin' diseases from anyone else.

When freedom cum dey were all shoutin' and I run to my mother and asked her what it wuz all bout. De white man said you are all free and can go. I remember the Yankee soldier comin' through the wheat field.

My parents lived very light de first year after de war. We lived in a log cabin. De white man helped dem a little. My father went to work makin' charcoal. Der wuz no school for Negroes and no land that I remember.

I married Alice Thompson. She wuz 16 and I wuz 26. We hed a little weddin' down in Bushannon, Virginy. A Baptist preacher named Shirley married us. Der were bout a dozen at de weddin'. We hed a little dancin' and banjo play in'. I hed two chillun but dey died and my wife died a long, long time ago.

I just heard a little bout Abraham Lincoln. I believe he wuz a good man. I just hed a slight remembrance of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. I have heard of Booker T. Washington, felt just de same bout him. A pretty good man.

I think it wuz a great thing that slavery anded, I would not lik to see it now.

I joined de Baptist church but I have been runnin' round from place to place. We always prosper and get along with our fellowmen if we are religious.

De overseer wuz poor white trash. His rules were you hed to be out on de plantation before daylight. Sometimes we hed to sit around on de fence to wait for daylight and we did not go in before dark. We go in bout one for meals.