

**Sarah Probst, Reporter
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**Folklore: Ex-Slaves
Meigs County, District Three**

**MR. WILLIAM NELSON
Aged 88**

"Whar's I bawnd? 'Way down Belmont Missouri, jes' cross frum C'lumbus Kentucky on de Mississippi. Oh, I 'lows 'twuz about 1848, caise I wuz fo'teen when Marse Ben done brung me up to de North home with him in 1862."

"My Pappy, he wuz 'Kaintuck', John Nelson an' my mammy wuz Junis Nelson. No suh, I don't know whar dey wuz bawnd, first I member 'bout wuz my pappy buildin' railroad in Belmont. Yes suh, I had five sistahs and bruthahs. Der names—lets see—Oh yes—der wuz, John, Jim, George, Suzan and Ida. No, I don't member nothin' 'bout my gran'parents."

"My mammy had her own cabin for hur and us chilluns. De wuz rails stuck through de cracks in de logs fo' beds with straw on top fo' to sleep on."

"What'd I do, down dar on plantashun? I hoed corn, tatahs, garden onions, and hepped take cair de hosses, mules an oxen. Say—I could hoe onions goin' backwards. Yessuh, I cud."

"De first money I see wuz what I got frum sum soljers fo' sellin' dem a bucket of turtl' eggs. Dat wuz de day I run away to see sum Yankee steamboats filled with soljers."

"Marse Dick, Marse Beckwith's son used to go fishin' with me. Wunce we ketched a fish so big it tuk three men to tote it home. Yes suh, we always had plenty to eat. What'd I like best? Corn pone, ham, bacon, chickens, ducks and possum. My mammy had hur own garden. In de summah men folks weah overalls, and de womins weah cotton and all of us went barefooted. In de winter we wore shoes made on de plantashun. I wuzn't married 'til aftah I come up North to Ohio."

"Der wuz Marse Beckwith, mighty mean ol' devel; Miss Lucy, his wife, and de chilluns, Miss Manda, Miss Nan, and Marse Dick, and the other son wuz killed in der

war at Belmont. Deir hous' wuz big and had two stories and porticoes and den Marse Beckwith owned land with cabins on 'em whar de slaves lived."

"No suh, we didn't hab no driver, ol' Marse dun his own drivin'. He was a mean ol' debel and whipped his slaves of'n and hard. He'd make 'em strip to the waist then he's lash 'em with his long blacksnake whip. Ol' Marse he'd whip womin same as men. I member seein' 'im whip my mammy wunce. Marse Beckwith used the big smoke hous' for de jail. I neber see no slaves sold but I have seen 'em loaned and traded off."

"I member one time a slave named Tom and his wife, my mammy an' me tried to run away, but we's ketched and brung back. Ol' Marse whipped Tom and my mammy and den sent Tom off on a boat."

"One day a white man tol' us der wuz a war and sum day we'd be free."

"I neber heard of no 'ligion, baptizing', nor God, nor Heaven, de Bible nor education down on de plantashun, I gues' dey didn't hab nun of 'em. When Marse Ben brung me North to Ohio with him wuz first time I knowed 'bout such things. Marse Ben and Miss Lucy mighty good to me, sent me to school and tole me 'bout God and Heaven and took me to Church. No, de white folks down dar neber hepped me to read or write."

"The slaves wuz always tiahed when dey got wurk dim in evenins' so dey usually went to bed early so dey'd be up fo' clock next mornin'. On Christmas Day dey always had big dinna but no tree or gifts."

"How'd I cum North? Well, one day I run 'way from plantashun and hunted 'til I filled a bucket full turtl' eggs den I takes dem ovah on river what I hears der's sum Yankee soljers and de soljers buyed my eggs and hepped me on board de boat. Den Marse Ben, he wuz Yankee ofser, tol 'em he take cair me and he did. Den Marse Ben got sick and cum home and brung me along and I staid with 'em 'til I wuz 'bout fo'ty, when I gets married and moved to Wyllis Hill. My wife, was Mary Williams, but she died long time 'go and so did our little son, since dat time I've lived alone."

"Yessuh, I'se read 'bout Booker Washington."

"I think Abraham Lincoln wuz a mighty fine man, he is de 'Saint of de colured race'."

"Good day suh."

