

FRANCES BANKS

I was born on a farm near Doaksville, east of Hugo, Okla., befo' de Civil War. My parents belonged to an Indian fam'ly, an we moved to Boggy Depot when I was jest a little child. After de Rebellion we stayed on wid de fam'ly an I lived near de fam'ly of Governor Allen Wright for sixty years. I nussed all his chillun an den later, 'long come dey's chillun and I nussed dem, an I'se even nussed de great gwan'chillun.

After de War I was what you call a freedman. De Indians had to give all dey slaves forty acres of land. I'se allus lived on dis land which jines dat of Ole Master's and I'se never stayed away from it long at a time. I'se allus been willing to go an nuss de sick an 'flicted, but I allus come back home for a while.

I makes dis liniment of my own p'escription, an it's good for nearly everything dat ails you. A while back a man an a boy got snake-bit, an I put dis liniment on 'em an day was well in no time a'tall.

I has no real record of my being bawn but I thinks I'se allus had good health an can do most any kind cf work I wants to. My grandfather, Uncle Wallace, was a slave of the Wright fam'ly when dey lived near Doaksville, and he and my grandmother would pass de time by singing while dey toiled away in de cotton fields. Grandfather was a sweet singer. He made up songs and sung 'em. He made up "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and "Steal away to Jesus." He made up lots more'n dem, but a Mr. Reid, a white man liked dem ones de best and he could play music and he helped grandfather to keep dese two songs. I loves to hear 'em.

I don't 'member much 'bout slavery days, 'cepting us chillun had a right good time playing. We ain' never had no jobs to speak of, cause Ole Master wanted all his young slaves to grow up strong and natchel like, and none of us never done no hard work till we was plumb grown and matured. Ole Master was allus good and kind to us. I'se allus lived 'round white folks. I guess I'se de lone sentinel 'round here now. I'se 'bout all dat's left of de old days. Ever'body have gone and left me. I loves my home here cause dese hills and valleys never change. I loves to hear de Bible read too. I never did learn to read though, some day I'se gwine to be wid my old friends and if our skins here are black, dey won't be no colors in Heaven. Our souls will all be white.