

Cruze, Rachel  
81 years  
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Cuyahoga County  
District 4  
240 -ex-slaves

(Ohio ex-slave narrative found in Archive of Folk Song,  
Music Division, of the Library of Congress.)

As the opening strains of the City Mission Hour spread through the large, high-ceilinged rooms of the Cleveland Home for Aged Colored People, old men and women are seen coming slowly down the broad stairs on their way to the sitting room. None of them have an easy time in the descent. Some are steadied by canes, others hold on to the banister, and all the little old figures show a touching frailty.

Then, just as the devotional service begins, Rachel Cruze appears. Here is no uncertainty, no shriveling!

A vitality inconsonant with her 81 years pervades the tall, commanding figure; even her cane does not detract from the healthful atmosphere she brings into the room.

Her story marks a quick association of pertinent facts culled from an almost perfect memory.

"I was born on the ninth of March, 1856, on the farm of Major William Holden, at Strawberry Plains, Knox County, Tennessee. Strawberry Plains -- it is now called Straw Plains, I believe -- was the name of a little depot on the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, now called the Southern

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Railroad. There used to be a college there but the war tore it up and the little place does not amount to much, just a jumping-off spot is about all. There were many large farms around it, though. Major Holden's farm was a very large one. Then there was Davey Adams' place, and Springfield's, and Ed Dox's, and the Thompson's, and all the Meeks' farms -- five or six of them. Across the river was the Macabee place. The biggest and most important of these was the Holden, Meeks and Macabee farms. This was not in the cotton country but up in the farming section northeast of it, where they grow corn, wheat, potatoes and other vegetables. We were just 16 miles from Knoxville.

"My father was William Holden Jr., the youngest child of Major Holden. My mother, Eliza Moley, was the colored cook. Later she married John Meek and then went by the name of Meek. She had 12 children -- I was the oldest.

"When Miss Melindy, old Major's daughter, married John Luttraw, my mother and brother Frank were handed over to Miss Melindy, but John Luttraw, although a Southerner, hated the colored folk and did not want to be bothered with the ownership of any, so he persuaded Miss Melindy to sell my mother down South.

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"Miss Melindy thought heaps of mamma, too. She taught her to talk just like the white folks. She would not let her do any 'flat' talking. Mamma had ways just like Miss Melindy, too.

"Mamma was quite dark, but she had a pretty little sharp nose. Her father was a dark man, although my grandmother was very light.

"My great grandmother and her brothers and sisters all had straight black hair. My great grandmother was over 100 when she died, and up to the last she was real bright, and so were her brothers.

"And the blood kept coming down and coming down to another.

"My mamma always thought Major Holden's refusal to let me go to Miss Melindy at that time had something to do with old Luttrow's idea of selling her to a nigger trader. When the subject was mentioned to ole Major he made short work of the suggestion: "What you mean? No, sir! You're not pulling her off her mistress' lap or keeping her from staying here and waiting on me!"

"When Miss Nancy, the wife of Major Holden, heard of what the Luttrows intended doing she went right over to Rufus Meeks and asked him to buy mamma, as she did not

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believe in breaking up families in this manner. Mr. Meek did this, and from then on mama lived with my stepfather, John Meek. The Meek farm was just two miles from ole Major's place, and I used to visit mamma whenever I wanted to, and she came to see us often. But at that time I did not think of her as my mother, but called her Eliza. Until I was about 12 years old I looked upon Miss Nancy as my mother, when in reality she was my white grandmother. I lived with ole Major's family until I was that age, when I was sent over to the Meeks' place to live with my mother and stepfather. Miss Nancy felt I should get to know my mother better. Then, too, by that time the Major's oldest son, John, had married a woman who believed in beating the slaves and slapping them around. She slapped me once, and I tell you the ole Major cussed her out. It was partly because of her that I was sent to mamma.

"I lived in ole Major's house as a member of the family all those years. I was their baby, and my first recollections are of sleeping in a little bed at the foot of the one occupied by the Major and Miss Nancy. As I look back on those times I can see that Miss Nancy took especially good care of me, always looking me up to see what I was doing. She was particularly interested in my clothes and for years after I left her and was living with mamma, she clothed me. I always felt particularly close to her, and one time when my stepfather

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gave me a lick I ran the two miles to tell Miss Nancy about it. I had never been whipped, and I thought I was ruined when my stepfather struck me. It was with Miss Nancy that I went to my first Sunday school and church. My days with her and ole Major were carefree, happy ones, the hardest thing I had to do being a trip to the spring for a glass of water for the Major, or getting his pipe for him.

"No, I never received anything from my father's estate. My colored grandmother always used to tell me I would get 13 acres, a plot of land my father, William, had been given by old Major, also a cow and horse, but I never got anything.

"You see, my father William, died when I was a little girl, before the war. Drink was possibly the real cause of his death but it was a fever that took him off. Yes, he always kept hid a quart bottle of whiskey in a hole in an apple tree I knew, and then another quart down in the crusher. Crusher? That was where we ground up the corn for the stock. It was as big as this room and was turned by a horse.

"When William was sick with the fever it happened I was the one to give him his last drink of water. Miss Nancy had said, 'Go, keep the flies off William,' and when I went in to him he said, 'Baby, go get me a drink of water

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and don't let anybody see you.' You see, people with fever were not to have water, but I did as William told me, and I crept down to the spring and brought him a right big coffee cup of water. He took some of it and I hid the cup under his bed. I was so little, I remember, I had to climb up onto the bed to put the cup to his lips. Well, the minute he took that water it caused a change for the worse. I was frightened and ran to Miss Nancy for to come to William. She took one look at him and said, "You have given him water." He asked to be carried over to the fireplace and he died there shortly after. Miss Nancy was heartbroken because he was her youngest child and she said to me, 'You have killed Will with that drink.'

"Ole Major's farm was on right level ground, but there were hills all around. The house was white and lay right along the road, with a porch running its full length both at the front and back. The front porch was a real fine one, with broad steps and nice-turned spindles, and at the time and where old Major used to sit there was a tea rose growing right up to the top of the porch. The other was the dirt porch, and the women in the kitchen used to sit there when they would be preparing vegetables for dinner.

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"The creek over which the spring house was built came to us from high up over the hill, and before it struck the lower level of the farm the water passed through two caves, one much higher than the other, so that the water, being shielded from sun and dust, was cold and sparkling. Sometime in summer, when some big doings meant the killing of sheep or hogs, the fresh meat would be placed in the upper cave and covered with walnut leaves, and it would keep there just as though it were in a refrigerator. All the neighbors round about used it at times.

"The spring house stood close to the big house, and here was kept the butter, cream and milk and such like that had to be kept cool. There were shelves built in it to accommodate the food in case of heavy rains. Apples and other fruits were often kept in the upper part.

"My colored grandmother cooked for the hands down at the quarters. When she wanted vegetables she just sent some one up into the master's garden for it, and if she wanted meat or lard she went over to the smokehouse where every fall ole Major stored 100 to 120 hogs. There never was no stint in the food given ole Major's people.

"Miss Nancy had a hen house up near the big house where she kept the chickens for the family, and then there was another group around the barn, for the hands. Sometimes

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Miss Nancy's chickens wouldn't get as nice and fat as the ones down at the barn; then she would go down and get some of them.

"The material for the cotton clothes worn on the farm in summer was woven right in our own kitchen. We bought the raw cotton usually, but sometimes we would grow a small patch. Then we would card it, spin it and weave on the big loom in the kitchen. I have spun many a broach. They take it off and wind it on a reel, and make a great hank of thread - there would be four cuts in a hank. They would first size the thread by dipping it in some solution, and then, when it was dry, they would dye it. Dye stuffs would be gotten from the barks and roots of different trees, and with these we would be able to make red, brown and black dyes. We would then weave it into jeans, a heavy cotton for men's coats and pants, or the lighter linsey for women's clothes.

"Counterpanes and coverlids were made of wool. Yes, we raised sheep - by the hundreds. The raw wool was first sent to the mill to be carded, then we would spin it into a thread, to be dyed just as the cotton was. The wool, too, would be woven into jeans for the heavier winter clothing for the men and into linsey-woolsey for the women's warmer dresses.

"I can still hear the lam-lam-lam-lam, lam-lam-lam-lam of the big loom.



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"We grew flax, too, and made plough lines out of it. I reckon that was before the leather harness had come in. The flax field was so pretty. The long shoots, no thicker than a pencil, would bloom -- the purtiest little pink and white flowers -- and when the wind would sweep over the field it would ripple and wave like silk. When the seed appeared it was carefully picked -- flax seed seemed to be precious -- then, the flax would be cut down and left to dry where it fell. When the sun had dried it the outside skin would crack, and then they'd scutch it and it would fly out like feathers. Then they'd wind it on a big ball, and it would then be spun into thread by the flax wheel.

"Many slaves had a wife on a neighboring farm, and Miss Nancy was always good about seeing that the men quit work at 12 o'clock on Saturday; then they'd get their selves cleaned up and go to visit their wives until Sunday night. She always sent along with each man, as a present to his wife, food of some kind. Sometimes it would be meat, or butter, or sweet potatoes, or maybe grapes -- but something always sent with the man for his wife. Miss Nancy said she didn't want anyone feeding her niggers. If any of the men had truck patches they were welcome to work these on Saturday afternoons.

"Saturday afternoons and Sunday nights were the times the young fellows looked about for likely mates. Gainan Macabee,

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who owned a large farm across the river, had a great number of lively-looking girl slaves, and all the young men in the neighborhood would make it their business to get over there if possible. Gainan he watched his girls closely -- used to sit on a chair between his two houses where he could see everything -- and if a skinny reedy-sort of nigger made his appearance among the young people Gainan would call him over and say, 'Whose nigger are you?' The boy would tell him. Gainan would look him over and say, 'Well, that's all right, but I don't want you comin' over to see my gals. Yo' ain't good stock.' And it would just be too bad for that nigger if Gainan caught him there again.

"But when he saw a well-built, tall, husky man in the crowd Gainan would call him and say, 'Whose nigger are you?' And when he was told he'd say, 'Well, that's all right. You can come over and see my gals anytime you want. You're of good stock.'

"Everybody leaving the farm had to have a pass. If they didn't, the old paddyrollers worked on them. Yes, those paddyrollers were poor white trash. Nobody who amounted to anything would go about the country like they did -- just like dogs hunting rabbits.

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"Uncle Ben, one of the boys on the farm, was the only one of Major Holden's people who had any trouble with them, and then it wasn't his fault, really. Miss Melindy, she was going over to see the daughter of a neighbor and she told Ben he could go with her, that he didn't need a pass as she would explain to 'pappy'. When they arrived at the neighboring farm, as Ben was about to leave her for the quarters,

Miss Melindy says, 'You just call me if anybody says anything.' Well, sure enough one of those paddyrollers came snooping around and he sees Ben and he says, 'Where's yur pass?' and Ben says, 'Miss Melindy will explain.' But the paddyrollers grabbed him, 'We'll Miss Melindy you.' They dragged him off towards the woods to whip him, but as they passed the big house Ben called Miss Melindy and told her, and didn't she bless them out! She just dared them to touch Ben, and she went right home and told ole Major, and he immediately notified them that they were never to touch a nigger of his under any circumstances, that if his niggers did anything that wasn't right the paddyrollers might come and tell him, but he would do his own whipping.

"Ole Major said he'd do his own whipping right bravelike, but he really wasn't very successful at it. First time he tried to whip a slave was before I was born. Mamma told me the story. The slave was an old one who belonged to Miss Nancy.

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but instead of ole Major punishing him he whipped ole Major. And that was the end of that.

"Some years after that a young boy named Sico needed punishment, and old Major set out to hold him by sticking Sico's head between his knees and hitting him with a corn stalk. Sico howled and leaned over and bit him. Then old Major he howled and called to Miss Nancy, 'Take dis rascal away -- he done bit me.'

"The third and last time for ole Major was when he set out to lick Uncle Henry. I called all the men on the farm 'Uncle'. Uncle Henry was a goodlooking young fellow -- carried himself straight as a stick. He had grown up with my father, William, and he was forever getting into trouble with William for stealing William's horse out of the barn at night and riding him all around the county until the pore horse would be nearly dead. William had complained and complained to ole Major and old Major had threatened to tear open Henry's back, but nothing had happened. Finally Henry brought the matter to white heat by riding the horse so hard one long night that it died as it reached its stall next morning.

"The whole house then decided Henry must be whipped. William was furious and he saw to it himself that the big piece of

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perforated leather was fastened to the paddle. When anybody asked him what he was doing he'd mutter, 'Pappy's going to lick Henry.' After the leather was securely fastened on the paddle, William went over to the pump and wet the leather good. Then he filled a pñ with water into which had been poured salt and pepper. This is the way a whipping like this acted; first, the back was beaten with the perforated leather thong, the perforations raising blisters which were smartly broken open with a well-handled buggy whip. Then the salt and pepper water was poured into the cuts to keep the man in lively suffering.

"Well, ole Major came out to the barn, and Henry was tied up to a branch, having first been stripped to the waist. William sat by on his hunkers, whittling a piece of wood -- he was always whittling. Ole Major raised the paddle and the leather thong came swishing down upon the back of the groaning Henry. A second time it cracked through the air, mingling with the age-old cry of the slave, 'Pray, master.' This was too much for William, who jumped up and with one slash of his sharp knife cut Henry down.

"Henry just lay where he fell and groaned as he held his side. William and ole Major were beside themselves and between them they got Henry up to the house and laid him on a bed in the dining room. Miss Nancy was horrified. 'Now I suppose

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you are satisfied since you've killed him. William run and get Dr. Sneed.'

"Henry's mother, Julia, had come up from the quarters, and she was frantic. Henry had never ceased groaning and holding his side, and ole Major he'd say, 'Now, Henry, you mustn't die.'

"Dr. Sneed finally arrived and examined Henry thoroughly, then he gravely ordered some medicine to be given regularly, with complete rest. Julia followed the doctor to the door, asking him, 'Doctor, is he goin' ter die?' The doctor leaned over and whispered, 'Julia, there is not a damn thing the matter with Henry.' And, do you know, that Henry laid up there for two weeks, right in the Major's dining room.

"Henry had high ideas. Sometimes he'd walk off with ole Major's gold-headed cane and strut around the neighborhood with it, putting it back the next morning before the Major was up. He had even been known to steal out with ole Major's overcoat. These, however, were easily forgiven, but, when he stole the preacher's shoes, ole Major solemnly told Miss Nancy, 'I'll just have to kill that Henry after all.'

"The preacher was staying overnight and, as is usual, he left his shoes outside his door at bedtime to be shined. Well, Henry came along and saw the boots and proceeded to <sup>put</sup> them on for his nightly strut. His feet were much larger than those of the preacher and, by the time morning came, Henry's feet were so

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swollen he couldn't get the boots off. He tried and tried and, finally giving up, he threw himself on mamma's bed in the kitchen and fell asleep.

"Those boots were the first things Miss Nancy saw when she came into the kitchen. Everybody tried to get the boots off but they could not be budged. So ole Major was called. That is when he told Miss Nancy, 'I'll just have to kill that Henry.'

"Miss Nancy started to giggle, 'Pears to us de preacher needs a new pair of shoes anyhow. Just look at 'em.' Ole Major looked at the shoes and agreed and sent a servant down to his store for a pair. The preacher was more than delighted, and it was decided to let Henry have the old ones.

"But all the people we knew were not so lenient to their slaves. There was a rich farmer by the name of MacMillan who lived not far from us who was so stingy and mean to his colored people he did not allow them to eat sweet potatoes -- said they were too good for 'em. And the mean old man would <sup>go</sup> round about 10 o'clock, searching through their cabins to see if they had stowed any away.

"Well, it happened that Mr. MacMillan's brother had borrowed Jim, one of his slaves, to help him hoe yams one day, and as Jim finished the work, the brother picked up a nice big yam and told him to have that for his supper. "Oh, no, thank you,' said Jim, 'the Marster he don' 'low us ter have yams nohow.' But the brother insisted. So Jim took the yam to his cabin, made up a good fire in his fireplace and put the

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yam in the hot ashes to bake. It was Jim's intention to hide the yam until after his master had made his nightly round and then enjoy his feast. He baked the yam to a beautiful golden brown, and set it out to cool. But as Jim sat there, in the cool of the evening, watching his yam and thinking how good it was going to be, he fell asleep, and the next thing he knew he was lying on the ground with a cracked head. His master had come up while he was sleeping and, seeing the potato, decided Jim had stolen it; so, after cracking Jim over the head with his heavy stick he picked up the yam and took it home and ate it for his breakfast.

"Jim always laughed fit to kill himself when he told about that yam. I have noticed so many times that when a colored person is telling of some real cruel treatment they have had at the hands of their master they seem to think it funny and they'll laugh and laugh. I can't understand it.

"The wife of Jim Johnson -- that was Miss Nancy's brother -- was mean to her slaves, too. She brought down Miss Nancy's anger when Miss Nancy went over there one time and found that she had the colored folk wearing clothing made of hemp, which was coarse and scratchy. Her men were in the fields wearing long garments like nightshirts, made of this hemp. No, nothing else on them but those long tailed shirts, no trousers or anything. She made dresses of the same coarse scratchy material for the house girls.



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"Miss Nancy, she just blew up when she found how that hempen material had scratched and bruised their skin. 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself,' she cried. 'Why, their skin is all scratched up from that coarse hemp.' Jim's wife claimed, 'Niggers are just too lazy, and I find this makes them right smart.' But Miss Nancy wouldn't listen. She went out in the field and blest out Jim about it. He was a lot like Miss Nancy about things concerning his people, and when she told him about that scratched, bleeding skin he went into the house and raised such a fuss about it his wife went and bought a bolt of domestic, or muslin, or something of that sort, and made up dresses out of that. She was that mad at Miss Nancy. 'Just getting all the slaves to like her; that's what she wants,' she told Uncle Jim. 'I don't care what she had in mind,' he said. 'I'm not having any nigger of mine working in tow clothes.'

"Miss Nancy walked the line with them all. Whatever she said went. Her black hair turned white later on, but she was peppery right to the last -- always seeing that everybody was being taken care of. Lots of nights, when a person would be thinking she was in bed she was slipping around to see what her colored people were doing. Both she and ole Major looked upon all their people as their children.

"Ole Major did most of his overseeing with his horse and buggy, and I always sat on the seat beside him, and if he got

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down to walk around a little he handed me the lines -- just as though I could have done anything with that horse if he had a mind to act up. You see, ole Major had a bad leg -- he always walked with a limp. He was hit by an Indian's poisoned arrow in a war he always spoke of as the Revolution, but it must have been the War of 1812. We had a picture of him when he was wearing his uniform, and it had gold epaulets on the shoulders. When I was a child I played with those epaulets -- the fringe was like gold wire. The box they were in had a sword and lots of other things from that early war.

"When war came all the men left the plantation but one colored man whom I called Uncle Reeves -- a young man of twenty. Well, ole Major knew that when the war was over the others would come back freemen and that he'd never get any money out of them again, so he undertook to sell Uncle Reeves to a farmer there who had been teasing him for sometime to sell Uncle Reeves to him. Ole Major never believe in selling his people, but he finally agreed to see Uncle Reeves for \$1,200. A contract was drawn up between the two men, the agreement calling for the payment of the \$1,2000 at the end of the war, in the currency of the one who whipt. The ole Major put the contract away in his big iron safe -- about the size of that upright piano there -- and then he took Uncle Reeves over to his new master. But before Uncle Reeves left Miss Nancy called him aside and told

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him not to sleep in the quarters that night but to sleep in the barn and then, when the others were sleeping, to return to the farm. Uncle Reeves did this and when he returned about midnight he was put into a Union uniform. Ole Major was waiting for him in the horse and buggy, and out came Miss Nancy and a servant with a carpet bag filled with clothes and food. That night ole Major drove him down to Fort Sanders at Knoxville, Tennessee.

"Four years later, when the war was over, all ole Major's people returned to him, and among them was Uncle Reeves, and about the first thing he said to ole Major was, 'Did you ever git dat money fo' me? And ole Major replied, 'No, but I'm going to get it right now.' And he did, although it meant that the other man had to sell his farm to pay the note.

"Don't understand by this that ole Major was Union. No, he was a rebel -- but Miss Nancy was Union and whatever she said was the thing done. You see, most of the slaves belonged to Miss Nancy from her first marriage, and of course she had the full say over them. All her people loved Miss Nancy. Even after they were free and many of them had gone to work on other farms they would come back regularly to the Holden place to see Miss Nancy. Not a week went past without some of them being there. And if they got sick they would send at once for Miss Nancy, and she'd get on her old horse and go to them.

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"Ole Major played safe with both sides during the war and, in fact, he and Miss Nancy were kind to both of them. The ole Major had both a Rebel and a Union suit, and he wore whichever seemed to be most fitting at the time. Sometime a spy would come along in advance of an army, and I'd call to ole Major, who was sitting on the porch, 'Major, here comes a spy.' And ole Major he'd start up from his chair and bawl, 'Who-o-w-a-at?' If I said, 'It's a Johnny,' and he was in a Rebel suit, he'd throw out his chest and prepare to greet them; but if I said, 'Union,' he'd sneak to his room, change into the blue uniform with its red lined cape, and come back out on the porch. As he sat down he'd throw back the corner of his blue cape to show its red lining.

"Those were such purty uniforms. These drab uniforms our boys wear now -- there's nothing purty about them -- but the blue of those Union uniforms was a beautiful bright shade, and all the men had those lovely capes lined in red, and bell pants coming well over the foot. I tell you they were purty. The capes of the officers were decorated so as to distinguish them from the common soldiers.

"Ole Major and Miss Nancy gave freely to both sides. Time and again they gave a corn field to the army who happened to be in the neighborhood -- and there always seemed to be soldiers around us during those times. One time, after Miss Nancy had given a corn field to the Union boys, some of them went into another field and stole some roastin' ears from that

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field. The Union officers learned of it and the next morning, on parade, the one who had stolen the corn had the roasin' ears tied to his wrists and arms, and forced to march along with the other men. I was standing on the porch with ole Major, and he said, ' See the one who is decorated? That's the one who stole our roasin' ears.'

"The house was here, and there below was the brook, and up there on a high hill was a field -- Ridge Field we called it. Both the Union boys and the Johnnies camped there at times, and trained new recruits there. I have seen them in a bayonet drill, when the bayonets would flash so close to the bodies of the men you would say they couldntt help going through them. And I have seen the men going along on their knees, and crawling down towards the brook, as they would have to do in ambush.

"If the Rebels had won the war ole Major would have been wealthy. At the beginning of the war he had put the bulk of his money into a seegar box, and he took out a couple of small stones from the foundation of the house and said, 'Now, Baby, look sharp and dig a hole inside there large enough to hide this box, and never tell anybody about this money.' I was

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rather afraid to crawl into the darkness under the house but I did as I was told, and nobody ever knew anything about that money but ole Major and I. When the soldiers would say, 'Where's the Major's money?' I'd always point to the big iron safe and say, 'All the Johnny money is in there.' Well, they were not looking for Johnny money, so they never bothered to open it. After the war was over, ole Major had me crawl under the house again and bring out the seegar box filled with money, but it wasn't worth anything. I used to play house with it.

"I just seemed to mix up with soldiers most of the time. The Union men were at Fort Macabee, right across the river from us -- it was the Holston River, I believe -- and they could look right into our farm with their powerful field glasses. No, our farm did not run along the river. Dr. Sneed's farm was between us and the river. Well, one day a man -- a most foolish one -- road into our yard on a white horse and proceeded toward the barn. I ran after him to see what he was going to do and, just as I got there, a cannon ball fell a few feet from me, covering the horse and rider and myself with black dirt. The outlooks at the fort across the river had recognized him as a Johnny, but seeing me follow him had thrown the ball wide just to give him warning and to save hitting me. That Johnny, when he got his breath, went

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lickety split down the road toward the place he had come from. The officer in charge at the fort then sent ole Major a note asking him to keep 'that child' out of sight so I wouldn't get hurt.

"Those 10th Michigan men at Fort Macabee were great fighters. There were 500 of them there. They were located on a hill on the Macabee farm, so that they could see an enemy coming down the hill a long way off. One time they saw a large army coming down and, knowing their little group could not expect to stand up against that long line on the hill, they sent messengers to Knoxville for reinforcements. Then some of them ran to the bridge crossing the river a little distance up stream from them and set<sup>the</sup>/out side of the bridge on fire, so that by the time the troops got there it was too far gone to be used. The enemy divided its forces, some going down the stream two miles to ford across and the others going back upstream aways to do the same thing.

"Well, those Michigan men saw the whole maneuver, and they turned some of their cannons to meet the approach from down stream and the rest to hold the enemy up above. Those cannons were terrible things, holding about a half bushel of powder, and then the gunners would put heavy iron log chains in, and iron pots. They waited until all the enemy down below was in the water and then they let them have the full effect of that

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awful blast. The river turned red with the slaughter. Then they turned their attention to the others coming downstream and let loose upon them.

"The survivors left in a hurry, I tell you, and by the time the messengers returned with reinforcements the enemy had disappeared. We saw it all from the top of a hill near the house, but it was not until I grew up that I realized the full horror of that fight.

"Miss Nancy even took care of the soldiers when they got sick. One time somebody told her a Union soldier -- he was a twin -- was took with fever. She said, 'Bring him over to the dirt porch and call Dr. Sneed.' The doctor decided a bleeding would let out the fever, and he slit both of the feet of the soldier. I don't know how much blood he let out, but it broke the fever and the boy got better.

"Bleeding seemed to be the recognized method of dealing with fevers in those days. Dr. Sneed used to bleed the Major regularly once a year -- in the spring. Ole Major would lie down on the bed with both arms extended, and the doctor would puncture the arms on the inside of the elbow joints, and I could see the blood smoking with fever as it left the arm. It always broke the Major's fever.



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"One day, when I was at the quarters with my colored grandmother, we heard the whine of a rifle in the nearby woods, but we didn't know it for that, and so we went into the woods to investigate. We hadn't gone very far when we came upon a Johnny, sitting upright beside a steaming kettle of stew and dog ham. He had the purtiest potato on his fork, just ready to plump it into his mouth, and there he sat, never turning his eyes, nor telling us what that noise was. But, pretty soon up came a Union sniper and he said, 'I'll make him talk,' and he gave the Johnny a blow that knocked him right over on the ground. We knew then that he was dead because as he fell he still held that same position. The sniper explained that he had been up in a tree and that he caught the Johnny right in the back of the neck, paralyzing him.

"Dog ham? Why, yes, when they got real hungry they'd kill dogs. He hadn't even bothered to skin the ham, but had just drawn the skin back from the meat of the ham and stuck the ham into the boiling stew. Oh, but I wanted some of that stew! The grease was floating on top of it as thick as butter. I didn't care at all about the Johnny, it seems. My mind was all taken up with the stew.

"Yes, those soldiers would get so hungry sometimes they'd eat most anything. Uncle Henry, the young fellow who figured in the whipping by ole Major, told me that sometimes when they were on forced marches and perhaps had nothing but parched corn all day,

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they would grab an ear of raw corn right out of a horse's mouth and eat it; and if they came across a chicken they'd kill it, take off a few feathers and bite into the raw meat of the bird.

"Henry came back to the farm once at the head of a dozen soldiers. He had become a recruiting officer. Now, I think they call it drafting.

When it was explained that in recruiting one is asked to join up and that in drafting one is forced to join, she laughed and said, "They meant just the same then, for when you were asked to join up a bayonet was shoved into your back and it stayed there until you were safe in the fort.

"Now ole Major was sitting in his favorite chair on the porch when he saw Henry coming with those soldiers and he like to fell, he was that scairt. You see, so many times the slaves had returned to kill their masters, and poor ole Major thought Henry remembered that whipping.

"But Henry drew the men up in front of ole Major and he said, 'This is my master, Major Holden. Honor him, men.' And the men took off their caps and cheered old Major. And he nearly like to fell again -- such a great big burden was off his shoulders then.

"When Henry commanded his men to stack arms, and they all stacked their guns together in front of ole Major except one soldier, who was the lookout. The others then went into the

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house to see Miss Nancy; and Miss Nancy sent out to have some chickens killed, and in no time at all those men were all seated around the dining room table having a regular feast. That is, all but the one who had to watch the guns, and he was fed later.

"But interested as Miss Nancy was in the Freedom Cause she wouldn't let John, her oldest son, join up. Indeed, he didn't want to and would hide in caves when soldiers appeared. When Susan Adams, her neighbor, told her Sammy Adams was joining up, Miss Nancy said, 'That's all right if you want Sammy killed, but they're not going to kill John.' 'Oh, what's the matter with you?' cried Susan. 'You know the Unions can't hit anything. All they do is shoot straight up.'

"One day Miss Nancy was startled to hear loud cries coming from up on the hill where the Adamses lived, and up she went and I after her. I was always with her, just like a little dog trotting at her heels. When Mrs. Adams saw Miss Nancy, she sobbed, 'Oh, they have killed my Sammy.' 'I thought they couldn't shoot,' said Miss Nancy. 'They miscalculated and hit my Sammy,' was poor Mrs. Adams' reply.

"Mrs. Adams' other son was a guerilla. The guerillas were the bands of robbers who followed both armies, stealing everything they could get. That's the way Jesse James got his start.

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"The first funeral I ever saw was that of Gran'pap Holden. I must have been quite young as I do not remember him being around the home alive. It must have been the coffin that so impressed me. They put the coffin in the spring wagon and took the long way round by road up to the burying ground on the hill. A young girl, Melindy Leaper, walked behind the wagon singing:

'We're travelin' to the grave,

We're travelin' to the grave,

We're travelin' to the grave,

To lay this pore body down.

"That same girl was the first person I ever remember to hear shoutin'. The preacher was holding evening service in his home. I was sitting close up to Miss Nancy, as usual, when all of a sudden, that girl, who had been sitting in the corner, jumped up and began shoutin' and clappin' her hands. I nudged Miss Nancy, 'What's bit her?' Miss Nancy frowned, 'Hush, child, she's happy!' But I didn't know what 'happy' meant, and I was horror-struck that a young girl should speak right out like that when the preacher was talking. Those were the days when children were not heard.

"I was about 13 years old before I went to school. That was about a year after the war ended, and the Freedman's Bureau of

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Philadelphia, sponsored by the Presbyterians, sent two colored teachers down to the new box-like affair they built on Dr. Sneed's land for a school. One of those teachers was meaner than the other. They treated the colored students more as if they were dogs than humans. Mr. Jones and Mr. Luck were their names. Mr. Jones, who had been a blacksmith in the North, was finally given a good whipping by the boy students, and the community sent both of them packing, and brought other teachers from Knoxville.

"I was lucky if I got to school two days in a week, but I learned to read and write. At that time I had gone to live with mammy and I found it much harder to live with my colored stepfather than I ever did with my white master. The day after Miss Nancy sent me to mamma my stepfather sent me into the field to drop corn. Sometimes in the early morning it would be snowing so hard I could not see the checks in which to plant the corn. Yet, by evening, it would be warm.

"Yes, I dropped corn, hoed corn, thinned corn, and in the fall I pulled corn. I was so little I had to pull the stalks down to me to reach the ears.

"My mamma and stepfather stayed a long time on the Meeks place after the war, renting a small acreage from their former master; then, they began to move about from place to place,

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depending on day work to see them through, as so many of the colored people did when they were freed. When they were renting from the Meeks farm they paid for their acreage by giving to the owner two-thirds of their crop.

"I don't know the year I was married -- I have the certificate upstairs -- but it was on the second day of January and I would have been twenty on the ninth of March coming. I married William Cruze, of North Carolina. No, I don't know what part he came from. At that time he was doing day work on the farm of Captain Parret, where he was paid ten dollars a month and was furnished with a house and garden. If one had a cow, pasture was furnished for it, and the family could raise hogs and chickens, or whatever was wanted.

"I had six children -- four boys and two girls. They were Walter, Sylvester, Harry, Max, Edna and Roberta. Then there were two grandchildren -- Walter Jr. and William -- that I raised. All of them are gone but Harry, and I have lost track of him. I do not know whether he is living or not. He was William Junior's father. William is here in the city somewhere but I never see him.

"I came north in 1910. Walter, my son, was living here in Cleveland and wanted I should come for a visit. I came and liked it, so I stayed. No, my husband didn't come with me.

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"Six years ago I had a stroke. I was going to church one Sunday morning when I was taken. At first my whole right side was affected. I could not move my arm or foot on that side without the help of the left arm or foot, but now I am all right again except I need a cane to steady me some. I was always pretty careful about taking care of myself and getting the proper rest -- not flying about half naked and smoking like the young uns do now. The only time I smoked was before I was married, when I had a toothache, but after I got settled I didn't do any of that.

"Oh, yes, I learned to read and write both. I was reading, reading all the time. I used to love detective books and adventure books. But the stroke affected my eyes so, I haven't read much since. They bought me glasses and it seems as though the glasses are all right, but my eyes are weak.

"Do you know, the pore white folks of the South mostly had a harder time than the colored folks under slavery, because the other white folks did not want them around. Many poor white folks would have starved if it had not been for slaves who stole food from their masters to feed the white folks.

"Fanny Oldsby was one of the pore whites who lived near Miss Nancy, and Miss Nancy would sometimes give her sewing to do, but she had to take it home to do it. Miss Nancy

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wouldn't have her around the place. I used to get pretty lonesome sometimes because there wasn't a child of my age to play with. Fanny Oldsby had a little girl, who came with her sometimes, but do you think Miss Nancy would let me play with her? No, ma'am. I'd no more than sit down close to the little girl than I'd hear, 'Rachel, you come here this minute.' And, when I would go to her, Miss Nancy would say, 'Don't you sit near her. Why, she'll bite you and she'll get your head full of lice.' The pore child would look at me and I'd look at her, but I didn't want her to bite me, so I didn't get close to her.

"I used to love to have stories told me. Once I heard my colored grandmother and grandfather tell a story of something that happened some years before the war, probably before I was born. A nigger trader had been around the neighborhood buying up tall husky men for the cotton fields down South, and as he bought each one he put handcuffs on him and shackled him to the others. And they accompanied him on foot day after day, as he traveled on horseback through the section. He had with him several wagons in which they could lie at night, but during the day they had to walk.

"As they walked together they talked about their future, and they all agreed that death would be preferable to the living death of the cotton fields. And they decided that the first time they had to ferry across the river with the nigger trader they would



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walk on to the ferry boat and keep right on walking until they had walked off the other end. At the end of Dr. Sneed's farm was a ferry to carry people over the Macabee farm on the other side, and when the nigger trader drove them on the ferry that is exactly what they did -- they all walked off into the deep of the river at the other end. If there was any among them who was lukewarm he was shoved in by the ones behind him.

"That nigger trader was nearly crazy because of the money loss. He had not bought all the men outright, but had paid some down on every one of them, with a signed contract to complete payment when he received his money from the cotton raisers. Now he had to make good those notes.

"Some years after the war had ended some boys in the neighborhood were fording the river about a mile downstream from Dr. Sneed's place, and they found 15 handcuffs, bright and shining and all fastened together. When the father of one of the boys saw them he recalled the drowning up at Dr. Sneed's place. He wrote the government at Washington, giving them the history of the handcuff train, and an answer asked him to send them at once to Washington. So he packed the handcuffs in a box and sent them north.

"But there are heaps of pleasant things to look back on. The week before Christmas was always a lively one, what with

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dances and corn huskin's in the neighborhood. I've seen many a corn huskin' at ole Major's farm when the corn would be piled as high as the house. Two sets of men would start huskin' from opposite sides of the heap. It would keep one man busy just getting the husks out of the way, and the corn would be thrown over the husker's head and filling the air like birds. The women usually had a quilting at those times, so they were pert and happy.

"About midnight the huskin' would be over and plenty of food would make its appearance -- roast sheep and roast hogs and many other things -- and after they had their fill they would dance till morning. Things would continue lively in the neighborhood until New Year's Day, and then they got down to work -- as it was that time the yearly cleaning and repairing of the farm took place.

"And now I think you've got all I have. Take good keer of yourself."