

B. E. Davis
Palestine County
District #8

Armstead Barrett

I was born in Walker County, in 1847, and owned by Ben Walker. My mother was allowed to keep me. My father was owned by Stafford Barrett. As I was the last child of my mother, she was allowed to keep me. After I was set free and my father and mother lived together, I went by his name.

My father's name was Henry Barrett. He was brought to Texas by Stafford Barrett from Richmond Virginia and mother came from Kentucky. We lived in the town Huntsville Texas. Jane was my mother's name and she was cook. When we was set free our master --he was good to us because we was his wife's property. Ben Walker, our master, he was not allowed to sell us because Miss Ann, our mistress, owned us as her father Simes gave us to Ann when she married Ben Walker, and all her increase and she would not allow us to be sold because our master was a ^[speculator?] spectator and so he hired us out all but me because I was too young and he keep me at home to wait on his wife, our young mistress, but he collect all our wages.

Jane, our mother, had five boys and three girls. When Ann's first child was born, a little boy, mammy had to nurse it on her breast, and cook with the little boy in her arms. Ann called my mammy, mammy all de time--long after we was sot free.

I hear my father say he was allowed a little tobacco patch back at Virginia. And he was allowed to work it on Saturday evening, and then he sold his tobacco and was allowed a little money. Dat was all de money we had.

We eat just suches as de ole master eat. I likes just anything dat is good. He had purty home--our master he make us stay in barn in back yard.

We was allowed to go to church with de ole master. He make colored man talk and talks. I'se went with my mistress. She makes us drive her to de church and hold de team while de preacher preach. We did not learn to read or write. Yessir, we sung de ole song dat youse likes to hear, like dis: "The gospel, gospel calls for volunteers, I cannot tarry here". Dat was the happy time when weuns had dee old running games--den we play marbles. I'se run till I sweat and lather like a horse. De white chilluns dey play with us.

De ole master, he bring doctor to see us cause weuns was too valuable. Just like if I'se has fat beef, master he good to us. He see the doctor and the doctor he makes us well. De marster he pay our bills, he would.

I'se member justa lots of things dat happen when weuns are young, our master he would go other states and get men, boys and womans, he would and bring them back to sell, cause he was a spectator. He was ju't likes we was cattle. He would make us wash up good den he would sell us.

Most time we went naked. Just have on one shirt and some wouldnt have on no shirts a tall. Sometimes in winter we gave out towels clothes to make us shirts outs of den we just had one at de time. Da was no travel for us slaves at dat time unless weuns got pass from our master. If we got on another man property he catch

us to see iffen we had pass. Iffen we didnt he would tell our master and he would whip us with rawhide. I'se member one time master sent me and my brother to catch chickens for Mr. Simes, and weuns make too much racket and he whip my brother with cow hide. He whipped him cross de back and make big whelps. Den he whip him across de hips and den de blood would fly. I'se member when peace was declared they was shouting all the negroes, and womans she was hollering. I'se free, I'se free and I saw a white man come up with a hi stepping horse with a hi head. He rides close to her and I see him get his knife out and open it and cut her wide open across the stomach then he put his hat inside his shirt and left like a streak of lightning. I was in master yard he have fence around it like stock pen. I'se on it when negro woman was put in a wagon and they drove off with her. I never did hear anything atall more about her or the white man that took her off.

I'se make crop the first year I was sot free. Never made much cause the hi water went over my crop.

We had a big home wedding had plenty to eat for several days. I married Harret Glass. We have two boys and two girls. They are all farming except one boy that is working on WPA work. We have ten grand children, seven great grand children.

I have farmed nearly ever since I have been free, but the last few years. I have been unable to work I could not hold out so the government is giving me a pension now.