

WILLIAM MOORE NARRATIVE

William Moore was born a slave in Selma, Alabama, owned by Tom Waller. During the Civil War, the Wallers moved from Selma to Mexica, Texas, in the hopes of avoiding the United States soldiers. In this interview from the 1930s, Tom details the conditions of living as "Massa Tom's" property. His story, in his own words, follows.

Moving to Texas

Massa Tom heard they were going to emancipate the slaves in Selma, so he got his things and niggers together and come to Texas. My mammy [mother] said they come in covered wagons, but I wasn't old enough to remember nothing about it. The first reflections I got is down in Limestone County [Texas].

Massa Tom had a fine, big house painted white and a big prairie field in front of his house and two, three farms and orchards. He had five hundred head of sheep, and I spent most of my time being a shepherd boy. I started out when I'm little and learned right fast to keep good count of the sheep.

Mammy's name was Jane and Pa's was Hay, and I had a brother, Ed, and four sisters, Rachel and Mandy and Harriet and Ellen. We had a pretty hard time to make our and was hungry lots of times. Massa Tom didn't feel called on to feed his hands any too much. I remember I had a craving for victuals all the time. My mammy used to say, 'My belly craves something and it craves meat.' I'd take lunches to the field hands and they'd say, 'Lord God, it ain't enough to stop the gripe in your belly.' We made out on things from the fields and rabbits cooked in little fires.

We had little bitty cabins out of logs with puncheon beds and a bench and fireplace in it. We children made out to sleep on pallets on the floor.

Some Sundays we went to church some place. We always liked to go any place. A white preacher always told us to obey our massas and work hard and sing and when we die, we go to heaven. Massa Tom didn't mind us singing in our cabins at night, but we better not let him catch us praying.

Seems like the negroes just got to pray. Half their life they're praying. Some negro take turn about to watch and see if Massa Tom anywhere about, then they circle themselves on the floor in the cabin and pray. They got to moaning low and gentle, 'Some day, some day, some day, this yoke going to be lifted off of our shoulders.'