

PET FRANKS,
(92 years old, ex-slave)

Uncle Pet, the favorite of Ackers' Fishing Lodge which is situated 14 miles north of Aberdeen, might be from his appearance and his famed sayings a brother of Alley's Hambone. He is low, stockily built type, and has the wide nose and large mouth so truly characteristic of those negroes whose ancestry is pure African. Scarcely topping five feet one would say that the little darky weighs about 150 pounds. Though he walks with the slightest limp he is still very active and thinks nothing of cooking for the large groups who frequent the lodge, and has his own little garden and chickens which he tends with great care.

"Why Lawd yes, Miz Kolb, cose I knows all bout slavery and de war. I was right dere on de spot when it all happened. I wish to goodness we was back dere now, not in de war but in de slavery times. Niggers where I lived didn't have nothin' to worry bout in them days. They ain't got no sense now days. All dey believes in now is drinkin' and carousin'. Dey ain't got no use for nothin' but a little corn likker and a good fight! I doan believe in no such gwinens on, no

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sir ree. Dat's de reason I stays out here by myself all de time. I doan want to have nothin' to do with dem. I goes to town 'bout once a month to get s'plies but I doan never fool round wid dem niggers den. I gets 'long wid my white folks tho'. All de mens and womens what comes out here to de club is powerful good to me."

"I was borned up near Bartley's Ferry right on de river and de way I cal'clates my age makes me bout 92 years old. My fust marster was name Harry Allen but he died when I was a boy and I doan 'member much 'bout him. De Mistress dat was his wife married again and dat husband's name was Marse Jimmy Tatum. Dey was sho' good white folks. My mammy and pappy was name Martha and Martin Franks. Marse Harry brung dem down from Virginny I thinks. Or else he bought dem from Marse Tom Franks in West Point. Anyways dey come from Virginny and I doan know which one of dem brought dem down here. Dey did belong to Marse Tom tho' I knows."

"Bartley's useter be some place. My folks had a big hotel down on de river bank and dey was a heaps of stores right on de bank to. De river done wash dem all away now and ain't nothin' left. But Lawdy! When I was a kid de

boats useter come a sailin' up de river bout once a week and I useter know de names of all de big ones. Dey would stop there and pick up a load of cotton to carry to Mobile and when dey come back dey would be loaded wid all kinds of grand things. We chillen had a big time playin' round de dock. We had a good time anyways playin' hide de switch and Goose and Gander in de day time and den at nights when de moon was shinin' big an yeller we'd play "Ole Molly Bright", dat was what we'd call de moon, and we'd make up stories bout her. Dat was when we had de best time and sometimes de old folks would jine in and tell tales too. Been so long I fergits de tales but I know dey was good ones."

"When I got big enuf to work I helped round de lot mostly. Fact is I'se worked right round white folks most all my days. I did work in de field some but we had a good overseer, his name was Marse Frank Beeks and he was as fine a white man as ever lived. I doan never 'member him whippin' one of his niggers, leastways not real whippin's. I do 'member hearin' bout niggers on other places gettin' whipped tho' and I recollect one time when dere was snow on de groun' and it was freezin' cold and in de middle of de night we

heard somebody a knockin' at de door and when my pappy got up dere was a nigger man out in de cold without no shoes on and with mighty few other clothes on. He said he was freezin to death. My mammy got up and did all she could to help him but his feet was froze and two of his toes dropped off when dey thawed. Next mawnin' we called de mistress out to see him and she jest natchally cried when she look at him. When she found out whar he come from she made de marster hitch up de surry and go carry him back and de marster say he was gwine turn that owner over to de law or know de reason why. But 'fore he got there de nigger had done died."

"I member 'nother time but dat was durin' de war when I was ridin' on my horse over to Columbus to carry some clothes to de soldiers. On de way back I heard a bell ringin' and I tink it must be a cow strayed off but when I look I sees a nigger man with his hands in a iron halter up 'bove his head and a bell strung 'tween them. He say his marster had beat him and den for two days had kept his hands and feet nailed to a board, you could see de nail holes too, and den had put his arms in dat halter and turn him loose. He say it was all cause he marster heard tell dat he say he

would be glad if de Yankees won de war so's he could be free."

"Old Daddy Young was about de best preacher we ever had and we had some mighty good meetin's on our place. Dey was plenty of niggers dere cause it was a powerful big place. Old Daddy could sho' make de niggers shout and roll. You'd have to hold some of dem, dey'd get so happy. I knowed I had 'ligion when I got babtized. Dey took me out in de river and it took two of dem to put me under but when I come up I told dem to turn me loose I believe I could walk right on top of de water. Dey doan have no 'ligion like dat now days."

"All de niggers on de Tatum place had dey own patches where dey could plant what ever dey wanted to and dey could work dey patch on Satdays. When dey could sell anything from dey patch de mistress would let dem keep de money dey got for it and when de boats went down to Mobile we could send down for anything we wanted to buy. One time I had \$10.00 saved up and I bought lots of pretties with it. We allus had plenty to eat too. All de greens, de eggs, wheat, corn and meat dat you could want. And when hog-killin' time would come we'd allus have some meat left over from de year befo' and we'd take dat and make soap out of it."

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"When de war broke out I went right wid de marster up to Corinth and stayed up dere for de longest time a waitin' on de soldiers and nussing de sick ones. I never seed much of de real fightin' cause dey kept me in camp. But I heared de cannons roar and I waited on de soldiers what got wounded."

"After dey moved camp de marster sent me back home and I help look after de Mistress and de chillen. De 'Federates had some cattle hid away in our pasture and I looked after dem. One night when I was comin' home I met 'bout a hundred Yankees comin' over a hill and dey saw de cattle and went and took bout half of dem. I skidooed tho' and they diden catch me."

"After de war de Yankees, dey called demselves Publicans den, dey come down here and wanted all de niggers to vote de Publican ticket. Den, lemme tell you, I went to work for my white folks down here. Dey was holdin' big meetin's and speakin's but I was workin' too and on 'lection day I brung in 1500 niggers to vote de Democrat ticket. De folks what saw us comin' over de hill say we look like big black cloud, and I reckon we sounded like one too with all our hollerin' and shoutin'."

"All my folks was dead den and I went 'bout like I was in a trance for a while. I went fust one place an then 'nother. Then when I was on de Cox place I met Dora and we married. We had a big weddin' and a big feast afterwards. Later we moved over to de Troup place and stayed there for a long spell. While we was there I member the Ku Kluxers and all de carryin's on. Dey would dress up and come 'round and scare all de niggers and whip de ones what had been bad. Dey would put on white sheets and some of dem would get cow horns and put on dey heads and one time dey chased a nigger plum under de house jest playin' wid him and dey was a bellowin' jest like a bull!"

"No, miss, I can't read and write. I aint got much use for a nigger with a little eddication. I went to school twice; de fust teacher I had dey come and carried to de pententchary for signin' his old masters name. De other teacher, dey put in jail for stealin', so I jest 'cided it twas jest as well for me not to know how to read or write, or else I might get in some kinder trouble too."

"Dora and me is got three of our eight chillen livin' now. Dora and me doan live together no more case she likes

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to stay in town and I ain't got no patience wid town niggers and dere ways. So she stays wid our gal, Nanny, and I stays out here. I goes in to see her 'bout once a month."

"Me get lonesome? Lawdee no mam! I has my two dogs and den white folks is allus comin' out here and dey is good to me. Aint I got no colored neighbors? Yes mam, dere is one right peart nigger woman what lives down de road a piece. Her name is Katie and I goes down dere every once in a while when I gets tired of eatin' my own cookin' and she sets a plum good table."