

Neal, Peter
As told by Henry Neal
Jefferson County, Indiana

Grace Monroe

Reference: Mr. Henry Neal, a son. Fifth Street, Madison, Indiana

My father was a slave in the southern part of Carrol County, Kentucky about twelve miles from Madison. I also was a slave until I was eleven years old, when we received our freedom. I was always treated kindly by old Master but had to work at choring around as soon as I was old enough.

Our Master was a bachelor and one of the kindest men I ever knew. He was especially fond of all kinds of sports such as fox and deer hunting. He always took my father with him on all of these parties. My father was the overseer on the plantation, and it was a common occurrence for him to hear the following call about the middle of the afternoon: "Oh! Pete! Come in and get ready to go on a deer hunt!" or "Come in by four o'clock. We are going fox hunting tonight."

Hounds were used to tree the foxes. These hunts often lasted nearly [all] night and they would travel many miles in the chase. When a deer hunt was proposed, my father would row the skiff up or down the river as the master directed. They would go noiselessly through the water until they would come to the place where the deer were accustomed to come to drink. They would remain here quietly until the deer would arrive. As the deer lowered their heads into the water, they would strike them with the oar and kill them instantly.

When my father married, his master told him, if he wanted to he could go to my mother's master as he would probably be happier where his Maria was.

When the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect I will never forget my Master's voice as he called my father to him and said: "Now, Peter, you are free, just as free as I or anyone else in this United States. It is now your privilege to decide where you want to live and what you wish to do. You may leave this plantation--your home--and start anew or you may remain here and work for me. If you decide not to leave me, I will pay you wages in return for your help."

We remained for several years in the employ of this kind friend and my mother was also employed as cook. While here my father was permitted to tend some ground for himself and he raised chickens for market, instead of stealing as so many do now. He was a thrifty sort and kept what money he earned until he was able to own a home and furnish it as he desired.