

## Interview with Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, 1940

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John A. Lomax: What do you remember about the, when slavery was over?

Uncle Billy McCrea: When slavery was over, let me see if I can't tell you about that.

John A. Lomax: Well you said you, they all kept going, tell be about them coming through here with cannons.

Uncle Billy McCrea: Yes, yes. Now I'll tell you when slavery, way back in slavery time, I was standing at, that's when the Negro was free. I would, we all would go out every day, right here in town, to see the Yankees all going back home. I can recollect just as good. They'd just have, they'd have, uh, six and eight mules to a cannon, going through and bolts on them there, uh, uh cannon, cannon. Then they'd take the wagon, and have bolts all on them wagons. Now, walk, nothing but them mules, nothing but them mules, and one man a-riding, riding two mule, we all use to take a look at them. You understand? All day long be crossing, I remember just as well, and all the Yankees I recollect was blue, was dressed in blue clothes, I can remember it, with ??? blue junk right here, and had a little pin on, on the coat right there. In fact I'm, and course it was up here. You, yeah, I recollect just as well, day they come around, and they, black mules, have uh, maybe, oh I don't know how many black horses. Men they come along in with lot of these old gray mules, on it, hitched to them cannon, cannon. And then they come back with horses, sorrel horses. Horses to [*unintelligible*]. That way for two days, they was going out through

Jasper, two day. And I remember and the Yankees stop here, and the Yankees stop right here on the courthouse square. I was a good size boy then. And then what they call Freedman Bureau, you hear tell of it ain't you? And they prosecuting people you know, what they do, you know, and all like that, and I mean just as hard as they could. I've seen two mens they had they were punishing for what they do. And I see them just take them. I, uh, uh, uh, had [*unintelligible*] a big tent. We, we boys would go out and see them, and they'd take them, hang them up by his thumb. And just let that-tip- [*unintelligible*] hang out so many men then let him down. That's the punishment they got. I recollect an old man that they had in town, an old dep, uh, sheriff. His name was Yankee White. And the man, the judge's name, I forgot his name. But anyhow I know you recollect Yankee White. That's when you was young. Well then they come, and my old master, old Col. M. he bought one, two of the horses from him. I recollect, I rode the horse a many a time. One of those big horse they

call Yankee Tom, big sorrel horse. And another big old horse was a saddle horse, old Col. M. bought, and he was called B[oston (?)]. He was a great big black horse. Now [*unintelligible*] he took them all down to the farm, I recollect all of that. I was a big, big boy then. A good big boy. And the Yankees had come, and after a while there'd be a whole troop of men come, they said they was Yankees. All walking, all walking. That crew of Yankees would go through. Next time you see, there come a whole troop of Yankees, all riding horses, big guns a-hanging on in there, and all like that you know. Yeah. We all would standing looking at them, all going home. And I said, I ask them, I said, I ask them, I say, "Mama, where they, where they going?" Said, "They all going home now." And old Col. M. that was our master, he was in there, and he say, "Well, Harriet, all of you niggas is all free now. Yankees all going home." I remember that just as well. Right, right in town where we living at. Right above the new, the new, uh, Post Office. That was my old, old master's home, right, uh, up, up above the old new Post Office. Well that is his square, from that Post Office clean down to the Citizen Bank. All that was his whole square there. And clean over to the old part, coming on up to, toward the Methodist Church. That was my old master's place. I can remember he was a speculator. I can remember it, I was good big boy then. He had a big old shed there. And he, and he had cotton all in that shed, and we boys would all go up and play in that shed everyday. And he had, a, had wagon, every, everyday he'd load up all them wagon and take all that cotton and go off, go off. Now you see, that, that was in slavery time. I recollect just as well, and he'd bring back whole lot the colored people. Old Col. M., they said he was a speculator. And he sell them to all these people around this country. There's lot of old people, they all dead now, what he brought there and sold. He'd go off and bring them in. I recall that my old, my old, my old papa was his wagoner. I used to go, he used to carry me with him all the time. Used to haul cotton, carry cotton from Jasper to Wise's Bluff. And, and carry it to Wise's Bluff, and they'd carry cotton over here and weigh it up at a place they call uh, forgot that place now. Carry cotton there and weigh it. I remember he used to be, he used to always work. I was good, big boy at the time, and he had a oxen, had a old, had a oxen, had a old oxen name Brandy. That how come he was his wagoner. He'd get tired and sit down. "Bill." "Yes sir." "Get on, that, get this whip and get on it." And I'd ride old Brandy. Ride old Brandy, drive the rest of them. Ride him, till I get tired and get down, then walk side of them. I been, I own it, I been through a heap [*laughs*] all that stuff. That, that was in slavery time, that was old slavery time, it was. And I remember I can tell you some more about slavery time. Right down, [*mumbles*], right down close to Miss, uh, M.'s place there was an old jail house there, old log jail house. Old log jail house was there. That, that's only, that's all, that's the, that's the way, and wasn't no, wasn't no court, wasn't no, uh, some king of courthouse, I recollect it. And used to put prisoners in that jailhouse. And me, me and another young white fellow I believe his name C. M., [*unintelligible*]. And we used to go home to people that worked in the kitchen. We used to go home and steal bread and stuff and poke it through them little bars to the prisoners. We was boys. That's right here in Jasper. And it was an old log jailhouse. And all around [*unintelligible*]. And I recollect one time, we all was looking at it. And they, and they brought in, had hounds. And

they brought them hound in and brought three niggas with them hound, runaway niggas, you know, caught in the wood. And they, right, right across, right at the creek there, they take them niggas and put them on, and put them on a log lay them down and fasten them. And whup them. You hear them niggas hollering and praying on them logs. And there was a nigga bring them in. Then they take them out down there and put them in jail.

Ruby T. Lomax: That'll be enough. [*slight pause*]

Uncle Billy McCrea: Now I see all of that I was a boy. [*tape gets stuck and interview ends*]

**END OF SIDE A**