



## NATH WILCOXEN by Bob Jernigan

Many family members have heard about Nath. But just who was Nath, and how did he fit into the Mack Moten and Polly Wilcoxen Segler family? Many thanks to Bob Jernigan, husband of Theresa Blackman Jernigan, (Willie's granddaughter), for the excellent research and for sharing this story about whom many called "Old Nath"!

Nathan was born in approximately 1875 in Bullock County, Alabama and died in about 1945 in Dale County, Alabama. Grace and Ruth Blackman, Willie's daughters, and several others strongly believe that Nath was buried in the cemetery at St. Louis Baptist Church in Elemville, AL. There is evidence supporting this because there are several unmarked graves, and his is quite possibly one of them.

Polly Wilcoxen and her sister, "Evie", (Evaline) came from Union Springs, AL, in Bullock Co. between 1866 and 1868 and settled near what is now the Segler Old Home Place. Evie was older than Polly, but her actual age is unknown.

At sometime later, the sisters went back to Bullock County. Both sisters were probably married by now. Their father had purchased a slave for \$500.00, a great deal of money at that time. The slave's son, Nath, returned with the two sisters to the home of Evie Wilcoxen Powell. I speculate that Nath lived in either Evie's or Polly's home.

Nath, by now, was like a family member. Mack or Polly gave Nath the last name of Wilcoxen, in honor of Polly's family name. During the time from 1878 to 1890, Nath probably did what other kids did, playing with the other children and doing chores with the Powells and later with Mack and Polly. Mack and Polly were married around 1883 or 1884, based on Cora's known birth in 1885.

I'm quite sure that Nath lived with Mack and Polly after their marriage. There were always many things to do around a farm including feeding stock, milking cows, hoeing cotton and corn, etc. Nath helped with those duties and probably helped watch over the children during those times when Cora, Malcolm, Willie and other children were being born.

Nath was like a brother to the Segler children and was held in high esteem by Mack and Polly. Around 1910, Mack deeded Nath 94 acres of his property. The land is about ¼ mile due west of the Old Home Place. A house and barn were built and Nath lived there for several years. He farmed corn, cotton, tobacco and vegetables on his property.

Nath married Ella around the time he received the land. Ella was the mother of Maggie Williams. Mag, as she was called, was a dear lady who worked with the Seglers, Grady Blackman and my family, the Jernigans. Nath and Ella had a daughter and named her Polly.

No one knows for sure what happened to Ella, but Nath married again. His second wife had previously been married and already had two young boys. Aunt Grace and Aunt Ruth remember them well and said one was called "Big Short" and the other "Little Short". Some time later, this wife and her boys left Nath for an unknown reason.

Ruth and Grace also remember going to visit "Old Nath" at his home and sitting near a large fireplace in the winter and enjoying his "fiddle playing". They also told me that during their visits Nath would be near his barn making "White Oak Baskets". Apparently Nath was quite a talented craftsman.

At this time, in the late 1920's, Mr. Shelby Blackman, his wife Willie and their five children were living in the Old Home Place. I assume all the Segler children had left home, even Mattie, the youngest, Aunt Grace remembers very vividly on Christmas mornings that Nath would come toward the home yelling "It's Christmas morning", it's Christmas morning!" They would always have gifts for Nath, and Willie would always have Christmas cakes to give him.

The depression era had begun and things were really tough. There wasn't much money and Nath possibly had some crop failures. At any rate, Nath was wronged by a local farmer. A foreclosure followed and Nath lost everything. The local farmer purchased his property as a result of the disastrous events.

Nath moved to his daughter's home and probably lived there for the rest of his life. Her name was Polly Knight. I imagine Nath worked with Shelby on his farm as well as the "Round Logging" business which he was involved with.

The Blackman's moved from the Old Home Place in the late 1930's to a new home that Shelby and others had built. It was located very near to where the homes of Grace Griffin, Ruth Boutwell and Bob Jernigan are today, south of Arifton on SR 123. Aunt Grace and Ruth remember very little about Nath after they moved into their new home.