

## THE WILD MAN OF THE NAVIDAD

Slaves along the Navidad River in Lavaca and Jackson Counties called it “The Thing that Comes,” for, though no one saw it, there was always evidence that Something had come.

On moonlit nights from as early as 1836, people would find food missing from their cabins, even though an intruder would have had to step over sleeping dogs to reach it. Families stopped fattening hogs, because a fat hog would inevitably be replaced by a scrawny one. Though valuables such as watches or money were never taken, sometimes tools would disappear only to reappear later, beautifully polished. Occasionally searchers would find a camp, but “The Thing” never returned while they waited.

Finally, in 1851, residents of the county captured a solitary African who wore no clothes and spoke no English. Later that year, a sailor who spoke the man’s African dialect came traveling through. Turned out, the man was a prince who’d been sold into slavery as a child. After reaching Texas, he and a companion had escaped, but the companion had died from exposure after a few years.

The Wild Man of the Navidad was sold into slavery in Victoria and lived in Refugio and Victoria Counties until his death in 1884.

---

McIlvane, Myra Hargrave, *Shadows on the Land: An Anthology of Texas Historical Marker Stories*. Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1984, p. 79.

© Institute of Texan Cultures, 1997