

Mr. Ank Bishop was interviewed Ruby Pickens Tartt in Livingston, Alabama.

“My name is Ank Bishop, en I was born in 1849, August 16th, at Ward, Alabama. My mother’s name was Amy Larken, an’ my father was Tom Bishop. I had three brothers, Alf, Volen an’ Jim, an’ two sisters, Cely an’ Matildy. Us belonged to Lady Liza Larkin at Ward, right nigh Coke’s Chapel.

“My mother was brought out from South Car’lina in a speculator drove, an’ Lady Liza bought her at de auction at Coke’s Chapel. She lef’ her mammy an’ daddy back dere in South Car’lina an’ never did see ‘em no more in dis life. She was bidded off an’ Lady Liza got her, jes’ her one from all her family. She was got fer Lady Liza’s house gal. But sometimes she cooked or was de washer, den ag’in be milker. Twas my job for to min’ de calves. Sometimes I went to Mr. Ed Western’s sto’ at Gaston, three miles from us house, to see iffen was any mail for Lady Liza, but ‘twa’n’t none.



Ank Bishop, Age 88.

Source: Interview with Ank Bishop, Works Progress Administration Slave Narratives, Alabama, vol. 1, (Washington D.C.: The Federal Writers Project, 1941), 35-38. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn010/>. Image: Ank Bishop, Age 88. *United States Alabama, 1936. Between 1936 and 1938. Photograph.* <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesnp010035>.

A Note on Language of the WPA Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938

These oral histories reflect both the experiences of formerly enslaved people and the historical moment in which the interviews were recorded. Interviewers often tried to record the interviewee’s spoken language as they heard it. But this process was not as straightforward as it seems. Historians recognize that “what most interviewers assumed to be ‘the usual’ patterns of speech of their informants’ speech was unavoidably influenced by preconceptions and stereotypes.”

For more information: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/articles-and-essays/note-on-the-language-of-the-narratives/>