

*Josephine Howard was born enslaved on the Walton plantation near Tuscaloosa, Alabama. At the time of her interview, she did not know her exact age, but remembers that when Mr. Walton moved to Texas before the Civil War, she was old enough to work in the fields. In 1937, she lived with her daughter at 1520 Arthur Street in Houston, Texas.*

It was long time since I was born, long 'fore de war. Mammy's name was Leonora and she was cook for Marse Tim Walton what had de plantation at Tuscaloosa. Dat am in Alabama. Papa's name was Joe Tatum and he lived on de place 'jinin' [adjoining] oun. Course, papa and mammy wasn't married like folks now, 'cause dem times de white folks jes' put slave men and women together like hosses or cattle.

"Dey allus done tell us it am wrong to lie and steal, but why did de white folks steal my mammy and her mammy? Dey lives clost to some water, somewheres over in Africa, and de man come in a little boat to de sho' and tell dem he got presents on de big boat. Most de men aa out huntin' and my mammy and her mammy gits took out to dat big boat and dey locks dem in a black hole what mammy say so black you can't see nothin'. Dat de sinfullest stealin' dey is.

"De captain keep dem locked in dat black hole till dat boat gits to Mobile and dey is put on de block and sold. Mammy is 'bout twelve year old and dey am sold to Marse Tim, but grandma dies, in a month and dey puts her in de slave graveyard.

"One mornin' we is all herded up and mammy am cryin' and say dey gwine to Texas, but can't take papa. He don't 'long to dem. Dat de lastes' time we ever seed papa. Us and de women am put in wagons but de men slaves am chained together and has to walk.

"Marse Tim done git a big farm up by Marshall but only live a year dere and his boys run de place, Dey jes' like day papa, work us and work us. Lawd have mercy, I hear dat call in de mornin' like it jes' yesterday, 'All right, everybody out, and you better git out iffen you don't want to feel dat bullwhip 'cross you back."



*The Clotilda, the last known slave ship to reach U.S. shores landed in Mobile, Alabama in 1860. Researchers have finally located the ship's remains, buried in the Mobile River.*

SOURCE: *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 16, Texas, Part 2, Easter-King.* 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material, p. 323-330. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn162/>. Image Credit: Master Shooter, via <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/last-known-slave-ship-discovered>.

Researchers believe the *Clotilda* carried 109 West Africans who were captured and trafficked to the United States as slaves. For more information on the *Clotilda* see: Allison Keyes, "The 'Clotilda,' the Last Known Slave Ship to Arrive in the U.S. is Found," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 22, 2019. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/clotilda-last-known-slave-ship-arrive-us-found-180972177/>

#### **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/>