

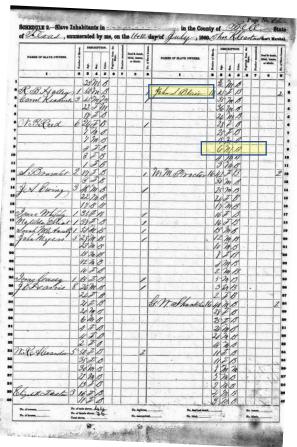
## WPA INTERVIEW WITH JAMES BROWN

At the time of his interview, James Brown was described as an 84-year-old blind man. He was formerly enslaved to Mr. Berney in Bell County, Texas, in 1853. While still an infant, he and his mother were sold to Mr. John Blair, who farmed four miles south of Waco, Texas. At the time of the interview, Mr. Brown lived alone in a "shack" located at 408 W. Belknap, Fort Worth, Texas.

"De fust [first] work I does is drivin' de Marster to town. Marster have fine horses. Marster have hims office in Waco and we drive dere every day. I'se stays all day ready to drive him home. Mos' every day hims give me five cents or maybe de dime. Hims was a big law man and went to de legislature down in Austin. His picture am in Austin, 'cause I'se down dere years ago and seen

his picture in a case wid Gov'ner Ross' picture.

Anudder [Another] thing dat Marster does powe'ful good am trade de n-----. He buys and sells 'em all de time. You see, dere was traders dat traveled from place to place dem days and dey takes sometimes as much as 100 niggers for to trade. Dere was sheds outside of town, whar dey keeps de niggers when dey comes to town.



The highlighted box identifies John Blair. The men, women, and children indicated along with his name are the people he enslaved in 1860. They are described by their age, sex, and color. The 6-year-old male is likely James Brown

good am trade de ere was traders dat sometimes as much of town, whar dey

"De Marster and de trader talks dis away: 'How you trade?' 'I'se give you even trade.'

'No, I'se wants

\$25.00 for de diff'runce.' 'I's gives you \$5.00.' Dat's de way dey talks on and on. Maybe dey makes de trade and maybe dey don'.

"Dey have auction sometime and Marster allus tend 'em. At de auction I'se seen dem sell a family. Maybe one man buy de mammy, anudder buy de pappy and anudder buy all de chillens or maybe jus' one, like dat. I'se see dem cry like dey at de funeral when dey am parted. Dey has to drag 'em away.

"When de auction begin, he says: 'Dis n---- is so and so ole, he never 'bused, he soun' as a dollar. Jus' look at de muscle and de big shoulders. He's worth a thousan' of any man's money. How much am I offered?' Den de biddin' starts. It goes like dis: \$200 I'se hear, does I'se hear \$250, does I hear \$300.' Den de n-----takes hims clothes—dey have one extry suit—and goes wid de man dat buys him.

SOURCE: Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 16, Texas, Part 1, Adams-Duhon. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn161/

Images: Top Right, James Brown, Age 84. United States Texas, 1936. Between 1936 and 1938. Photograph. <a href="https://www.loc.gov/item/mesnp161160/">https://www.loc.gov/item/mesnp161160/</a>. Bottom Left, 1860 U.S. Federal Census--Slave Schedules, Bell County, Texas. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860. M653, 1,438 rolls.