

*Ms. Viney Baker is identified as 78 years old at the time of her interview. She lived on South Harrington Street in Raleigh, North Carolina. Ms. Baker was interviewed by Ms. Mary A. Hicks.*



*Viney Baker, age 75.*

“One night I lay down on de straw mattress wid my mammy, an’ de nex’ mo’nin’ I woked up an’ she wuz gone.

When I axed ‘bout her I fin’s dat a speculator comed dar de night before an’ wanted ter buy a ‘oman. Dey had come an’ got my mammy widout wakin’ me up. I has always been glad somehow dat I wuz asleep.

“Dey uster tie me ter a tree an’ beat me till de blood run down my back, I doan ‘member nothin’ dat I done, I jist ‘members de whuppin’s. Some of de rest wuz beat wuser dan I wuz too, an’ I uster scream dat I wuz sho’ dyin’.

“Yess’um I seed de Yankees go by, but dey ain’t bodder us none, case dey knows dat ‘hind eber’ bush jist about a Confederate soldier pints a gun. ...

“I reckon I wuz twelve years old when my mammy come ter de house an’ axes Ms. Allen ter let me go spen’ de week en’ wid her. Mis’ Allen can’t say no,

case Mammy mought go ter de carpet baggers so she lets me go fer de week-en’. Mammy laughs Sunday when I says somethin’ ‘bout goin’ back. Naw, I stayed on wid my mammy, an’ I ain’t seed Mis’ Allen no mo’.”

SOURCE: *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 6, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>. Image: Viney Baker, Age 75. *United States North Carolina, 1936*. Between 1936 and 1938. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesnp111001a/>.

#### **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/>