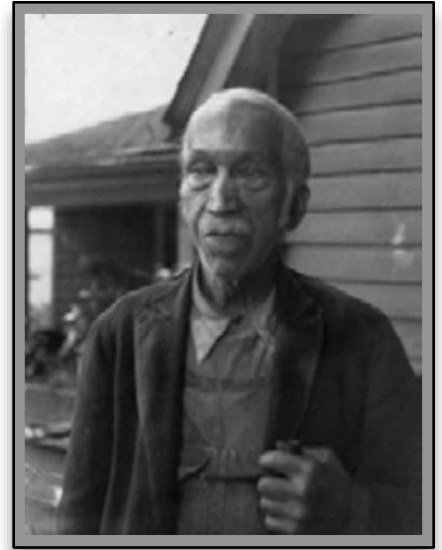


*Mr. W. L. Bost was interviewed by Marjorie Jones. At the time of the interview, he lived at 63 Curve Street in Asheville, North Carolina.*

Lord child, I remember when I was a little boy, 'bout ten years, the speculators come through Newton with droves of slaves. They always stay at our place. The poor critters nearly froze to death. They always come 'long on the last of December so that the n----- would be ready for sale on the first day of January. Many the time I see four or five of them chained together. They never had enough clothes on to keep a cat warm. The women never wore anything but a thin dress and a petticoat and one underwear. I've seen the ice balls hangin' on to the bottom of their dresses as they ran along, jes like sheep in a pasture 'fore they are sheared. They never wore any shoes. Jes run along on the ground, all spewed up with ice. The speculators always rode on horses and drove the pore n-----. When they get cold, they make 'em run 'til they are warm again.

The speculators stayed in the hotel and put the n----- in the quarters jes like droves of hogs. All through the night I could hear them mournin' and prayin'. I didn't know the Lord would let people live who were so cruel.



W. L. Bost, 1937

The gates were always locked and they was a guard on the outside to shoot anyone who tried to run away. Lord miss, them slaves look jes like droves of turkeys runnin' along in front of them horses.

I remember when they put 'em on the block to sell 'em. The ones 'tween 18 and 30 always bring the most money. The auctioneer he stand off at a distance and cry 'em off as they stand on the block. I can hear his voice as long as I live.

If the one they going to sell was a young Negro man this is what he say: "Now gentlemen and fellow-citizens here is a big black buck Negro. He's stout as a mule. Good for any kin' o' work an' he never gives any trouble. How much am I offered for him?" And then the sale would commence, and the n----- would be sold to the highest bidder.

If they put up a young n----- woman the auctioneer cry out: "Here's a young n----- wench, how much am I offered for her?" The pore thing stand on the block a shiverin' an' a shakin' nearly froze to death. When they sold many of the pore mothers beg the speculators to sell 'em with their husbands, but the speculator only take what he want. So maybe the pore thing never see her husband' agin.

Source: Interview with W. L. Bost, Works Progress Administration Slave Narratives, North Carolina, vol. XI, part 1, (Washington D.C.: The Federal Writers Project, 1941), 138-147. <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/111/111.pdf>

#### **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/>