

James Martin

Born 1847 Virginia- Texas- Interviewed at age 90(1937)

All quotations are James' and attention is paid in spelling and punctuation to convey his speech pattern and tonal inflections from the recording.

Original typescript found at the Library of Congress, Works Progress Administration 1936-1938. Volume 16 Texas p 62-64 in original format 67-69 of 285 in LOC digital format.

"Slaves are put in stalls like the pens they use for cattle
a man and his wife with a child on each arm
And theres a curtain
Sometimes just a sheet,
over the front of the stall so the bidders can't see the stock too soon.
The overseer standing just outside with a big black snake whip and pepperbox pistol in his belt .

Across the square a little piece
Theres a big platform with steps leading to it
Then they pulls up the curtain and the bidders is crowdn around
Them in back can't see
so the overseers drives the slaves out to the platform
He tells the ages of the slaves and what they can do.

They have white gloves there
and one of the bidders takes a pair of gloves and rubs his fingers over a mans teeth
And he says to the overseers:
"You call this buck here 20 years old? Why, there's cut worms in his teeth! , he's forty years old if he's a day!"
so they knock this buck down for a thousand dollars (roughly 30,000 today)

They call the Men's bucks and the women's wenches

When the slaves is on the platform
What they call the block
The overseers yell
"Tom!" or
"Jessup!
Show the bidders how ya walk."
And the slave steps across the platform and the biddin starts

At these slave auctions the overseer yells
"Say you bucks and you wenches Get in ereya' all! Come out 'ere!"
They need to make em hop
Make em trot
Make em jump

"How much?" he yells for this here buck?"
"A thousand,
eleven hundred, (roughly \$33,000 today)
1200 dollars?" (roughly \$36,000 today)
Then bidders make offers depending on the size and build.