

CAREY VOSS

Henry Banner

I was sold
the third year of the war
for fifteen years old.
That would be
in 1864.

I must have been
twelve year old
when the war started
and sixteen when
Lee surrendered.

I was born and raised
in Ol' Virginny.
Sold out of Russell County
during the war.

Ol' Man Menefee refugeed me
into Tennessee near Knox-
ville.

They sold me down there
to a man named Jim Maddison.
He carried me down in Virginny
near Lynchburg

sold me to Jim Alec Wright.
He was the man I was with
in the time of the surrender.
Then I was in a town
called Liberty.

The last time
I sold for
two thousand
three hundred dollars.

More than I'm worth now.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“Henry Banner” is crafted from Henry Banner’s interview with Samuel S. Taylor recorded in the Arkansas volume of the Work Projects Administration/Federal Writers’ Project *Slave Narratives* collection (gathered 1936-1938, collated 1941).

About the poem and process of creating it, Carey says:

“The WPA *Slave Narratives* collection contains more than ten thousand typed pages and represents more than two thousand interviews with former slaves. Because of the nature of the interviews, I tried to limit the role of my own voice in their interpretation. My interest in working with this text is not to transform it, but to uncover and draw attention to powerful storylines in each narrative.”

Carey Voss is an artist and curator living in Little Rock, Arkansas. She earned an MFA in painting from American University.

